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**The development and the controversies
of the U.S. school system through the
history of its textbooks**

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Index

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>1 American school nowadays: how is the educational system developed and its main controversies</i>	7
1.1 The American Constitution: main stages	7
1.1.2 The importance of the Fourteenth Amendment in education.....	8
1.2 American school system: structure and organization	10
1.2.1 Pre-school and elementary (or primary) education	14
1.2.2 Secondary and post-secondary (or tertiary) education	15
1.2.3 Vocational education.....	16
1.2.4 Main difference between college and university.....	17
1.3 Types of schools: private, public, and special education	18
1.3.1. How are students graded?	20
1.4 American school controversies: money and guns	22
1.4.1 Student loan debt.....	22
1.4.2 School safety and security.....	22
1.5 Comparison to other educational systems: Italy	26
1.5.1 The education system in Italy.....	26
1.6 Conclusion	30
<i>2 Origins and development of the American education system</i>	31
2.1 Function of governmental agencies	31
2.2 Pre-revolutionary era	34
2.2.1 Southern colonies	37
2.2.2 Middle colonies	37
2.2.3 Native Americans during the pre-revolutionary period	38
2.2.4 African Americans during the pre-revolutionary period.....	38
2.3 Revolutionary era	39

2.4 After the Revolution era	42
2.5 State vs. Religion	44
2.6 Black and Native Americans: Controversies Related to the Minorities	47
2.6.1 Black Americans	47
2.6.2 Native Americans	49
2.7 Conclusion.....	50
3 Textbooks.....	52
3.1 Introducing textbooks	52
3.2 Adoption of textbooks: the process.....	53
3.2.1 Local-level adoption.....	54
3.2.2 State-level adoption.....	55
3.3 Historical development of textbooks: from the colonial times until nowadays	58
3.4 Controversies	70
3.4.1 Black Americans	70
3.4.2 The New York Times study	73
3.4.2 Censorship.....	75
3.5 Conclusion.....	76
Conclusion	78
Appendix.....	80
Bibliography	93
Sitography.....	105

Introduction

The United States is a federal democracy constituted of fifty states, the federal district, District of Columbia, and five territories¹. According to the doctrine of the separation of powers, which is embodied in the Constitution, the federal government is split into three branches: the legislative, (assessed in Article I, which determines the legislative branch as consisting of the bicameral Congress), the executive branch (Article II establishes the branch being composed of the President and subordinate officers), and the judicial branch (consisting of the Supreme Court and other federal courts: Article III)². As far as education is concerned, the Constitution does not specifically address it. The only mention to the school system can be partially found in the 10th Amendment which stipulates that states' governments are recognized any authority not expressly granted to the federal government or particularly assigned to it³. This has resulted in decentralization and wide diversity in schooling across the nation. However, the 1787 Constitution's proclamation of citizens' equality and freedom did not apply to all people. Different levels of freedoms and privileges were accorded to different people living in the American territories. Indeed, *Jim Crow laws*, the post-Reconstruction era black codes, and the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (which upheld 'separate but equal' doctrine) all prevented minorities' rights, particularly those of African Americans, in education for many years (1896). Indeed, the debate (and the issue) over education and the right to have an education has its roots in the colonial history of the country, which has had an impact on the development of the educational system and, consequently, the future of students across the United States.

The objective of the dissertation is that to understand how and why the school system, and eventually the textbooks, developed so differently across the country and resulted in being shaped not only by cultural and social patterns but also religious and political ones too. Thus,

¹ The last admitted state was Hawaii in 1959. The five territories that are part of the United States are American Samoa (Pacific), Guam (Pacific) (physically part of the Marianas Islands but politically separate), northern Mariana Islands (Pacific), Puerto Rico (Caribbean) and the U.S. Virgin Islands (Caribbean) (uses 'U.S.' in name to distinguish from neighboring British Virgin Islands). See "How Are U.S. States, Territories, and Commonwealths Designated in the Geographic Names Information System?", U.S. Geological Survey, www.usgs.gov, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/how-are-us-states-territories-and-commonwealths-designated-geographic-names-information-system>.

² National Archives, "The Constitution of the United States: A Transcription," National Archives (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 2018), accessed January 29, 2023, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript>.

³ The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people. (U.S. Const. amend. X).

the dissertation's thesis aims to show how politics and religion, particularly Christianity, have always been intertwined and how American society's intense politicization has impacted the educational system.

Although at the beginning the intent was that of gathering as many primary sources-meaning U.S. textbooks from different part of the country and published throughout the history-as were available, due to remote locations and absence of a digital substantial and organic textbooks' database, space was left for potential future study. Since the main question of the dissertation was to understand whether and how the socio-economic but also the cultural and religious environment has influenced various aspects of society over time, particularly the school system and schoolbooks, primary sources such as schoolbooks used both in the past, as well as in the present day, were being sought. However, because of the above mentioned, a scarce number of available primary, the secondary sources were mostly consulted. All these resources made it possible to fully comprehend the American educational system and to thoroughly analyze it. The 2018 publication of Joe Spring's book, 'The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Age', was one of the resources used to learn more about the history and current state of the American educational system. Alternately, David Fremon's 'Jim Crow Laws and Racism in American History' published in 2000 discusses racism and particular American contexts and situations in relation to segregation and African Americans. As a result, an effort was made to employ numerous reliable sources in order to obtain a comprehensive and trustworthy information. There has been a reliance on statistics and information provided by the U.S. government and authoritative articles, such as those of the 'New York Times', dealing with such topics and that reported several examples and citation of textbooks. So, the broad secondary literature was helpful to contextualize educational debates and controversies on textbook.

In this dissertation, the school system is examined from three distinct perspectives in order to better understand how the current situation evolved and how social political principles shaped the development of the whole educational system: 1. schoolbooks, 2. their evolution, 3. and the differences in how they approach various topics were, in reality, the fundamental theme from which the thesis was based. The subject of racial discrimination, which is still a hotly debated issue in the United States, was the one that received the most in-depth analysis. So, there has been a focus on the history and development of the American school from its colonial beginnings to the present, starting with the first schools founded in colonial times to the issues that characterize American schools today, such as security or debt or even the quality and thus the choice of schools. It was then decided to compare the American and Italian educational

systems so that unique characteristics of each could be revealed. For instance, it was observed that the American educational systems had a different goal, namely freedom, while the various Italian school policies were designed to bring a highly divided nation together. Because of this peculiarity, American educational developments were therefore analyzed considering various historical eras and territorial divisions (north, south). Indeed, contextualizing the setting and historical era is essential for understanding specific decisions such as laws or regulations. For this reason a deep analysis of different textbooks was conducted, emphasizing how crucial and significant the social and political background has always been.

The dissertation is divided into three parts that evaluate the American educational system, it begins indeed with a description of the contemporary school system, moving on to its history, and concluding with a thorough examination of how the effects of the past on the present reflected in a selection of schoolbooks.

The first chapter ‘American school nowadays: how is the educational system developed and its main controversies’ does in fact discuss the American school system in contemporary society while taking into account the many realities of the nation. The fact that each state has its own autonomy has led to the establishment of various norms and rules that are entwined with the various political and social realities of each state⁴. The basic divisions of the American public school system are pre-primary, primary, and secondary education. Higher level specialization is possible with the addition of postsecondary or tertiary education. In the United States, there are additional options for children to acquire an education outside attending public schools. They are given the option of attending private schools or studying at home. Children who are homeschooled are in fact educated by their parents, who act in many ways as the schoolteacher’s replacement. For a variety of reasons, more and more parents are choosing alternatives to public education. Some disagree with the values and tenets of public institutions (especially in relation with religion), while others are doubtful about the caliber of instruction, while many more are concerned about their children’s safety⁵. This chapter concludes by using the educational systems of Italy and England as examples and contrasting them with the American system to determine how similar and how dissimilar they are.

⁴ For instance, compulsory education age is different from state to state. In some states children are required to start school at the age of five (as in Maryland), in others when they are six (like in California), or seven (for example in Alabama) or even eight years old (in states like Pennsylvania).

⁵ The selling of guns and their use, especially in schools, has always been a long-standing and very much controversial debate. There have been indeed numerous school shootings over the years in which students and teachers have perished; the first in terms of media resonance and one of the bloodiest occurred in 1999 at Columbine High School, where two boys just over the age of eighteen were responsible for thirteen fatalities and twenty-one injuries.

The second chapter, 'Origins and development of the American education system' examines the issue of educational system development starting from the colonial origins of the country. Different circumstances and social-economical systems emerged as a result of the numerous factors that led the Pilgrim Fathers from the United Kingdom to migrate (together with their values and beliefs, including religious ones) to the country's western coasts in the sixteenth century. The circumstances diverged from the north to south. In one hand, education began to be fostered by the issuing of laws and regulations and by the establishing of schools. For instance, Massachusetts enacted the law known as the *Old Deluder Satan Law* (1647) that obliged communities to promote education by constructing schools (grammar schools) and the Boston Latin School (founded on April 23, 1635), was regarded as the first and the oldest publicly founded school in America. On the other hand, the situation appeared to be very different in the southern colonies. Indeed, Anglican landowners moved to the southern part. They established plantations and for this reason their aim was for their slave-cultivated estates to prosper. Most African Americans had little to no formal education prior to the Civil War, especially in the south, where it was forbidden to teach slaves reading and writing. When in fact some free black people in the north achieved to become literate, and they started to be more interested in formal education as they realized how crucial it was to their freedom. These socioeconomic differences (the north had industries, while the south was more dependent on the primary sector, in the north there was more freedom, while in the south discrimination was constant) thus led to the development of different schools and teaching content in the two areas. For instance, a great variety of textbooks in southern states often make little or no mention of the slave-owning past of the country.

The third and final chapter named 'Textbooks', analyzes the development of the country's textbooks from their origins to the present day. The curriculum's design and, consequently, the knowledge imparted to American students are significantly influenced by the selection of schoolbooks. The content of books is significantly impacted by how the adoption process can change and differ depending on the state or level adoption processes. The first adopted schoolbook is known as the 'New England Primer'. It was initially published between 1687 and 1690 by Benjamin Harris (and in use for the following 150 years) and it reflected the strict and authoritarian Puritan religious ethos of colonial education. A number of schoolbooks have followed over the years including Noah Webster's 'Spelling book' (which promoted the American values) or 'William McGuffey's Readers' in the second half of the 19th century (that combined the teaching of school subjects with the moral values). The educational system subsequently was so entangled with society and its values that, in the 1930s, the Rugg textbooks

came under heavy criticism for being deemed un-American. These were undoubtedly the years when patriotism and the defense of American principles against enemies (like the communists) predominated. These examples demonstrate how therefore the school system, and especially schoolbooks were and are the reflection of the society in which they were embedded. Previously, in a predominately racist society, Kenneth M. Stamp showed for example how schoolbooks (especially those in the South) neglected the conditions of slavery and segregation of blacks. This is still true today for other topics, such those relating to abortion or LGBTQIA+ concerns, which many would rather avoid or discuss very little.

As analyzed, the education system has always been very tight with the culture and the society of the country, so much that both economic, political and even religious values and beliefs have affected the teaching content in American schools. This evolved with the years: at the beginnings Christianity had a great influence on what was better (or not) to teach to pupils, it then evolved with politics and cultural traditions. Moreover, the fact that textbooks can be adopted at state or local level it has a great impact on the 'allowed' publishing material (and eventually the information taught). Furthermore, because politics and public education have always been intertwined, and lately, political influences on education have dominated it more than ever, this led to the controversial phenomenon of the censorship.

The dissertation also includes an appendix with images that best illustrate the main themes discussed. In fact, the 14 pictures visually assemble the dissertation's main points. In fact, it firstly shows the way that American education is organized, from the nursery school to the postdoctoral study and research. The introduction of mandatory school attendance is then shown in the Figure 4's timeline, addressing the decision-making process by the various U.S. states. The statistics on student enrollment and distinctions between private and public schools are then analyzed, noticing, for instance, that private schools are expanding, in contrast to public schools. Indeed, parents are increasingly looking for alternatives out of concern for their children's safety given that 2022 was one of the years with the highest number of incidents involving firearms (Figure 5). As a consequence, parents opt for charter schools (Figure 6) or they decide to homeschool their children (Figure 7). Continuing on, the various methodologies of book adoption (state or local) are also analyzed, and described in Figure 11, where the states are divided depending on their textbook adoption policy. In conclusion, it can be found the New York Times research investigating the difference between school texts with the same author but published in different states, particularly Texas and California, noticing differences between the two in certain themes, in particular gender and sexuality (Figures 13 and 14).

In conclusion, the dissertation attempted to analyze various facets of American society and culture by using the educational system as a point of comparison in order to demonstrate how politics and society, culture, traditions have always interacted with one another, clashing, cooperating, and influencing one another too. This indeed led politics to interfere with the educational system or the selection of schoolbooks, their adoption policy, and their content. The Pilgrim Fathers' migration to the American coast had been motivated mostly by a desire for freedom. Since then, this idea has served as the cornerstone of practically all American history, education in particular. Even when compared to other nations, such as Italy, it can be noted that the United States privileges the pursuit and protection of freedom, which was, however, once taken from Native Americans and continues to be so today as evidenced by the phenomenon of self-censorship to avoid having to broach sensitive subjects. The debate that follows asks whether it is appropriate to self-censor in the name of freedom and whether it is appropriate to politicize the educational system so heavily, given that it is such an important system that shapes the consciousness and occasionally the identity of citizens. The American education system is undoubtedly innovative, but it also has several controversies.

1 American school nowadays: how is the educational system developed and its main controversies

1.1 The American Constitution: main stages

The American Constitution establishes the main governing bodies, their spheres of authority, and the fundamental rights of citizens⁶. Following the Revolutionary War (1775-1783)⁷, the thirteen colonies won their freedom from the British Empire, and ultimately, they constructed the Constitution that gave rise to the United States of America. It was drafted in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 1787 by 55 delegates to a Constitutional Convention that was convened ostensibly to amend the Articles of Confederation (1781-89)⁸. The fundamental rights of individuals are outlined in the Constitution- the Bill of Rights of 1791- and it represents the most substantial restraints on the authority of the government over each individual. Following the American Civil War (1861-65) that was fought between the United States of America and the Confederate States of America and ended with the abolition of the slavery, three new constitutional Amendments were passed⁹. Firstly, the Thirteenth (1865)¹⁰ outlawed slavery, the Fourteenth (1868)¹¹ gave former slaves citizenship, and thirdly

⁶ United States Senate, "U.S. Senate: Constitution of the United States," Senate.gov, February 15, 2017, accessed November 12, 2022, https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm.

⁷ Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, 6th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019)

⁸ The Articles of Confederation, which were approved on May 1, 1781, formed a structure of government that the American founders hoped would avoid the issues that the colonies under British domination had to deal with. The founders opposed centralized government as a consequence of colonial oppression, so they created a structure that preserved state sovereignty while giving the federal government only a limited amount of authority. The American founding fathers attempted to address the issues brought on by colonial authority, but the result was a national government that was incapable of handling the economic and social conditions in post-revolutionary America. Recognizing the failure of this initial social contract in 1787, the Continental Congress requested that each state send a delegation to a conference in Philadelphia that summer to amend the Articles of Confederation. John A. Altman, "The Articles and the Constitution: Similar in Nature, Different in Design," *Pennsylvania Legacies* 3, no. 1 (2003): 20-21.

⁹ "10 Facts: What Everyone Should Know about the Civil War," American Battlefield Trust, March 7, 2018, accessed November 12, 2022, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/10-facts-what-everyone-should-know-about-civil-war>.

¹⁰ Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865. "The Constitution: Amendments 11-27," National Archives, October 6, 2016, accessed November 12, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/amendments-11-27>.

¹¹ Passed by Congress June 13, 1866. Ratified July 9, 1868. "The Constitution: Amendments 11-27," National Archives.

the Fifteenth (1870)¹² guaranteed the right to vote for people who had previously been enslaved. As a result, the construction and preservation of the democratic system- that is, the division of power- as well as the recognition of various rights were all greatly advanced by the writing of the U.S. Constitution. In order to prevent abuses of power, the Constitution establishes three main branches of government: the executive, legislative, and judicial. These bodies are separate and different from one another. Although the numerous changes over the time, the basic and founding principles have been remaining unchanged. Citizens are indeed at the center of the country: they are granted all the same equality before the law, and they benefit equally from the right to the protection it provides¹³.

1.1.2 The importance of the Fourteenth Amendment in education

After rejecting the Fourteenth Amendment the previous year, Louisiana and South Carolina decided to approve it on July 9, 1868. After legally voting, the states ratified the Fourteenth Amendment into the Constitution¹⁴. The four sections established that all people who were born in the United States and who were under its authority were citizens of both the nation and the state in which they lived. This Amendment recognized all Americans born in the country as citizens, except for Native Americans who were under tribal, rather than federal jurisdiction, since the Congress did not accept them as citizens in 1924¹⁵. However, the Supreme Court took a while to determine how the new (and old) rights secured by the federal constitution applied to the states. Indeed, its attempt to protect civil rights was thwarted for many years by *Jim Crow laws* (there is to say any extensive system of legal segregation and marginalization that existed between the Reconstruction era and the mid 50s with the Civil Rights Movement)¹⁶, the post-Reconstruction era *black codes*¹⁷, and the U.S. Supreme Court's

¹² Passed by Congress February 26, 1869. Ratified February 3, 1870. "The Constitution: Amendments 11-27," National Archives.

¹³ United States Senate, "U.S. Senate: Constitution of the United States," Senate.gov, February 15, 2017, accessed November 12, 2022, https://www.senate.gov/civics/constitution_item/constitution.htm.

¹⁴ National Constitution Center, "10 Supreme Court Cases about the 14th Amendment," National Constitution Center, 2018, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/10-huge-supreme-court-cases-about-the-14th-amendment>.

¹⁵ The Indian Citizenship Act, passed by Congress on June 2, 1924, gave citizenship to all Native Americans born in the United States. But voting rights were limited by state law, and until 1957, some states prohibited Native Americans from exercising their right to vote. See Library of Congress, "Indian Citizenship Act," The Library of Congress, 2015, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/item/today-in-history/june-02/>.

¹⁶ David L Chappell, *Stone of Hope: A Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (The University Of North Carolina, 2005), Introduction.

¹⁷ In American history, black codes entered into effect in 1865 and refer to any of the several laws passed in the former Confederate states with the goal of maintaining white supremacy. They were actually designed to replace

decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that upheld ‘separate but equal’ (1896). The *Plessy v. Ferguson* case generated a controversial debate because it called into question the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which declared everyone living in a given jurisdiction having ‘equal protection of the laws’¹⁸. It all began in Louisiana, where a statute mandated that black and white passengers must ride separate, but equal, train cars. Police detained Homer Adolph Plessy in 1892 after he sat in the section designated for white people and refused to relocate to a separate railway compartment¹⁹. The Supreme Court rejected Plessy’s claim that his constitutional rights had been infringed upon, holding that a legislation that ‘implies only a juridical distinction’ between white people and black people was not unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court maintained then the ‘separate but equal’ principle’s justification for racial segregation. From May 18, 1896, through May 17, 1954, *Plessy v. Ferguson* was still the supreme law of the nation, (with one day missing)²⁰ until the Supreme Court finally overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* in the school segregation cases of *Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka*, et al., declaring the racial segregation in public school as unconstitutional. The Brown case started in 1951 with Oliver Brown and twelve other parents who were helped and represented by NAACP (The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), a volunteer-based group that was established in 1909 and has continually campaigned and fought for the rights of African Americans²¹. NAACP attorneys filed a lawsuit to overturn a Kansas statute that allowed but did not mandate local school segregation. In particular, Oliver Brown’s daughter was denied the opportunity to attend a white primary school just five blocks from her house and she instead had to cross railroad tracks and go twenty-one blocks to an all-black school. The segregated schools cited in the lawsuit were deemed to be ‘substantially equal’, according to the federal district court in Kansas, which used this justification to decide against

the social constraints of slavery. Physical punishment was regularly and ruthlessly employed and its implementation varied. Cfr. Michael J. Klarman, *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement: Abridged Edition of from Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹⁸ Alonzo Smith, “Separate is not Equal: Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Project Essay,” accessed November 13, 2022, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/resources/pdfs/projectessay.pdf>.

¹⁹ National Constitution Center, “10 Supreme Court Cases about the 14th Amendment”.

²⁰ Vann C. Woodward, “Plessy v. Ferguson,” *Americanheritage.com* 15, no. 3 (2019), accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.americanheritage.com/plessy-v-ferguson>.

²¹ John A. Morsell, “The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Its Strategy,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 357, no. 1 (January 1965): 97-101, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/000271626535700111>.

Oliver Brown²². In the Brown decision, the Supreme Court declared that the ‘separate but equal doctrine adopted in Plessy v. Ferguson, has no place in the field of public education’²³.

The Court’s ruling and that language had a significant influence on public education. The Supreme Court’s decision to eliminate racial segregation in public schools because it violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment was noteworthy. Despite the verdict, there was a lot of opposition, and efforts to desegregate public schools continued for about fifty years. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a significant civil rights movement grew as a result of the anger brought on by the sluggish progress of school integration and the persistence of various types of discrimination. Strong civil rights legislation was passed as a response from national political leaders to the civil rights movement²⁴.

1.2 American school system: structure and organization

‘Laws for the liberal education of youth, especially of the lower class of people, are so extremely wise and useful, that to a humane and generous mind, no expense for this purpose would be thought extravagant (Adam 1776)’²⁵.

The United States has emphasized education from its founding. Public schools were crucial tools in the Founding Fathers’ plan to protect freedom as the cornerstone of the country. They highlighted how important education was to the growth of freedom and democracy as well as the formation of a shared awareness and knowledge, as can be seen from Adam’s perspective expressed in his 1776 article ‘Thoughts on Government’²⁶. This idea kept evolving, with all of its contradictions to the point where numerous states opted to include it into their Constitutions. The Constitution of Georgia from 1777 is an example. It states in Article LIV that ‘schools shall be erected in each county and supported at the general expense of the state’²⁷. In the seventeenth century, the first school in America opened its doors to boys only: the Boston Latin Church which took as a model the English Free Grammar School. Regarded as the oldest

²² Joel H. Spring, *From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2018), 463-65.

²³ National Archives, “Brown v. Board of Education (1954),” National Archives, September 29, 2021, accessed November 13, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/brown-v-board-of-education>.

²⁴ Michael J. Klarman, *Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Movement*.

²⁵ “Thoughts on Government, April 1776,” *Founders.archives.gov*, National Archives, accessed November 13, 2022., <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-04-02-0026-0004>.

²⁶ “Thoughts on Government, April 1776,” *founders.archives.gov*, National Archives.

²⁷ Constitution of Georgia, February 5, 1777. “Constitution of Georgia; February 5, 1777,” *avalon.law.yale.edu* (Lillian Goldman Law Library, 2008), accessed November 13, 2022, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/ga02.asp#1.

school in the United States, the Boston Latin Church was founded on April 23, 1635, and it had a great impact on the educational system²⁸. Numerous events since then have permanently altered both the nation’s history and educational system²⁹. The Tenth Amendment is fundamental in understanding this type of development. It states that ‘the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the states, are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people’³⁰.

The federal government has indeed a primary and important function, but it does not have the authority to create a national education system or to define school rules and curricula. The ability to establish and manage public schools is one example of a choice that can be made at the district or state level. As a result, legislation governing the format and content of educational programs may differ significantly from one state to another and one district to another. The decentralization of the education can be found in the history of the nation, which was initially colonized by the Spanish, French, Dutch, and then the British³¹, led to the formation of thirteen colonies, some of which had local communities in charge of education. Thus, each area prioritized its own requirements and ideals and followed its unique setting (including religious) to determine the appropriate educational system to implement. The variety of options available to parents for their children’s education has grown during the past twenty years. Traditional alternatives to public schooling have been private schools, but there are now more possibilities for parents to select public charter schools, and more families are also opting for homeschooling their children. As the U.S. Department of Education illustrates, the educational system is divided as follows:

²⁸ “History of Boston Latin School. The Oldest Public School in America,” *web.archive.org*, May 2, 2007, accessed November 14, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20070502223937/http://www.bls.org/cfml/l3tmpl_history.cfm.

²⁹ This topic will be addressed in Chapter 2.

³⁰ “The Bill of Rights: A Transcription,” National Archives (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, September 24, 2018), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>.

³¹ Before European explorers arrived, it was inhabited by only partially sedentary Indian tribes. The region was first explored by Christopher Columbus (1492) and John Cabot then (between 1497 and 1498). The Spanish arrived in Florida in 1513, and then the French began exploring the northern coastlines. In the latter half of the 16th century, the first European settlements started to appear. But the British had the most influence over the east coast areas. (Andrew M. Baxter and Alex Nowrasteh, “A Brief History of U.S. Immigration Policy from the Colonial Period to the Present Day,” *cato.org*, 2021, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/brief-history-us-immigration-policy-colonial-period-present-day>)

	Type of school providing this education	Length of program in years	Age level from
Pre-primary	- Kindergarten - Nursery schools - Preschool programs - Child/day Care Centers.	2	From 3 to 6
PRIMARY	- Elementary school (grades 1-4 on average, but state and local practice may vary)	4	From 6 to 10
Primary	- Elementary schools (grades 1-6 or 7)	5/ 6	From 6 to 14
Middle	- Middle schools (Grades 4-6, 5-7 or 6-8)	3	From 10 to 14
SECONDARY	- High schools (grade 7-12 or 8-12)	6	From 13 to 18
Junior secondary	- Junior high schools (grades 7-8, 7-9 or 8-9)	3	From 13 to 15
Upper secondary	- High schools, Senior high schools (grades 9-12 or 10-12)	4	From 15 to 18

The Department continues by adding that **the postsecondary (or tertiary) education** includes non-degree programs that lead to certificates and diplomas (the two-year community or junior college; the four-year undergraduate college; and the university) plus six-degree levels: associate, bachelor, first professional, master, advanced intermediate, and research doctorate. The U.S. system does not offer a second or higher doctorate but does offer post doctorate research programs³².

Education is compulsory, but the starting age can vary according to the state. It begins on reaching children’s fifth birthday in eight states (Arkansas, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Mexico, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Virginia), at age six in twenty-one states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan,

³² See Figure 1 in the Appendix. “Structure of U.S. Education,” Ed.gov (U.S. Department of Education (USNEI), 2008), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html>.

Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming), when they are seven in nineteen states (Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont) and finally when they are eight years old in two states (Pennsylvania, Washington). Students must attend school until they are at least 16 years old, with several exceptions depending on when they first enter school (sometimes the legal age of 18 must be reached before legally leaving the school)³³.

Massachusetts was the first state to enact laws requiring compulsory school attendance in 1852 (whereas the last one was Alaska in 1930)³⁴. According to the law, children between the ages of 8 and 14 had to spend at least three months of the year in a learning environment, and at least six weeks of those months had to be consecutive. Then, in the first decade of the 1920s, the campaign for compulsory public education started to take shape. This implied wanting to outlaw private schools and make attendance at public schools mandatory. *The Compulsory Education Act* of 1922 mandated that guardians or parents enrolled children between the ages of 8 and 16 in public schools in the areas where they lived. Eventually this law was challenged and unanimously struck down by the U.S. *Supreme Court in Pierce v. Society of Sisters*. The Society of Sisters was an Oregon corporation that supported child welfare, youth education, and the establishment and preservation of academies or schools³⁵. On March 16-17, 1925, the case was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court. The court ruled that:

‘The Oregon Compulsory Education Act which, with certain exemptions, requires every parent, guardian or other person having control of a child between the ages of eight and sixteen years to send him to the public school in the district where he resides, for the period during which the school is held for the current year, is an unreasonable interference with the liberty of the parents and guardians

³³ “Digest of Education Statistics, 2006,” nces.ed.gov (National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2007, accessed November 14, 2022, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d06/tables/dt06_153.asp?referrer=list).

³⁴ The Massachusetts Bay Colony issued the first New World law demanding that children learned to read and write in 1642. See Figure 2 in the Appendix. (Forest Chester Ensign, *Compulsory School Attendance and Child Labor* (Iowa: The Athens Press, 1921), chapter 4).

³⁵ “Pierce v. Society of Sisters,” Oyez. Accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1900-1940/268us510>.

to direct the upbringing of the children, and in that respect violates the Fourteenth Amendment³⁶.

This text goes on to underscore the complete unnecessary of this prohibition because private and religious schools were of comparable value to public schools, highlighting the fact that such educational systems had been there for a while and anyone who argued differently were ‘no competent educator’³⁷.

1.2.1 Pre-school and elementary (or primary) education

Pre-school refers to non-compulsory early-childhood education from three to five years old. It is available in a different number of forms, including nursery school, preschool, day care centers, prekindergarten, and kindergarten³⁸. Among all these different programs, there is ‘The Head Start’ program, a child development program for low-income kids that is supported by the federal government. Programs like ‘The Head Start’ offer a learning environment that fosters children’s development in a variety of areas, including language, literacy, and social and emotional growth³⁹. Overall, 64 percent of three to five year-olds kids are enrolled in early childhood education and 52 percent of these children attend full-day programs⁴⁰. Usually, pupils attend primary school for six to eight years. Students can enroll in public or private elementary schools that are either four years, five years, six years, or seven years long. Sometimes, there may not even be a clear transition from primary to secondary education. In fact, students have the choice of enrolling in the so-called middle school. Because it was created as a period of adjustment and an opportunity for growth for students who would be transitioning from elementary to high school, this junior high school model gained popularity in the 1960s. Actually, the goal is to give pupils the best possible preparation for the next level, focusing on

³⁶ “Pierce v. Society of Sisters,” Pub. L. No. 583, 584 (1925), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/l1/usrep/usrep268/usrep268510/usrep268510.pdf>.

³⁷ “Pierce v. Society of Sisters”, 518.

³⁸ Forty-three of the fifty states (Alaska, Idaho, Minnesota, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania are the exceptions) mandate school districts to provide a kindergarten year. (“50-State Comparison: From Kindergarten through Third Grade Policies,” reports.ecs.org (Education commission of the states, August 2020), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/free-and-compulsory-school-age-requirements-all>)

³⁹ These programs support the fostering of relationships with families that advance family well-being and a number of other important areas (“Head Start and Early Head Start,” benefits.gov, 2019, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/616>.)

⁴⁰ Thomas D. Snyder, “Digest of Education Statistics 2003” (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.: U.S. Department of Education (NCES), December 2004), accessed November 15, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005025.pdf>.

hands-on learning and attempting to foster their independence. The middle school usually includes grades five or six through eight (between 10 and 14 years of age)⁴¹. Between 2018 and 2019, there were around 87,696 elementary schools operating in the United States, both public and private, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. In 2020, there were generally more students enrolled in public and private elementary schools than in other U.S. educational facilities, including high schools or colleges. In the United States, private primary schools had 3.45 million pupils enrolled as of 2020. This is significantly less than the 28.6 million students who were enrolled in public elementary schools in that year. In fact, Figure 4 demonstrates that the number of students attending public schools has decreased in comparison to that of private schools, continuing the trend from the 1980s when enrollment had sharply decreased and then rose in the early 1990s, reaching a peak of 29.4 million in 2001 (compared to 3.4 million in private schools in the same year)⁴².

1.2.2 Secondary and post-secondary (or tertiary) education

Depending on whether elementary education continues through grade VI or grade VIII in the system, secondary education starts in either grade VII or grade IX. It occurs in two phases. The first is the ISCED (International Standard Classification of Education)⁴³ lower secondary phase, a middle school or junior high school for students grade 6 (age 11-12) through grade 8 (age 13-14). The second is the ISCED upper secondary phase, a high school or senior high school for students grade 9 (age 14-15) through grade 12 (age 17-18)⁴⁴. At the beginning of the 20th century, school configuration in the United State began to move away from an eight-year primary and four-year secondary model, toward a definition of secondary education as beginning in the seventh grade. At that time and continuing through mid-century, middle

⁴¹ Thomas D. Snyder, "Digest of Education Statistics 2003".

⁴² In 2021, US Census Bureau published the survey 'Current Population Survey - School Enrollment' describing the enrollment in public and private elementary schools from 1960 to 2020. The survey registered 3.45 million students enrolled in private elementary schools in 2020, 28.6 million in public elementary schools and 3.11 million in public kindergarten. ("Enrollment in Public and Private Elementary Schools in the United States from 1960 to 2021," [statista.com](https://www.statista.com/statistics/184031/enrollment-in-public-and-private-elementary-schools/), December 2022, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/184031/enrollment-in-public-and-private-elementary-schools/>)

⁴³ Statistics on the educational systems of various nations are compared using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) framework. UNESCO created ISCED for the first time in 1976. In 1997, 2011 and 2013, the categories were upgraded. ("International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)," uis.unesco.org (UNESCO, November 29, 2016), accessed November 15, 2022, <http://uis.unesco.org/en/questions-and-answers-about-isced-2011>).

⁴⁴ Anindita Sen, Lisette A. Partelow, and David C. Miller, "Comparative Indicators of Education in the United States and Other G8 Countries: 2004" (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, February 2005).

schools known as ‘junior high’ (grades 7-9 or 7-8) were the norm ⁴⁵. This arrangement was intended to create a transitional period between the sheltered elementary school and the more demanding high school environment⁴⁶. In recent decades there has been a marked shift away from junior high school, toward the middle school configuration of grade 6-8, or occasionally 5-8. In the United States, higher education is frequently referred to as postsecondary education, but the latter term also covers all formal education provided after secondary school, whether it is higher education (defined as education leading to a degree) or not. The two main areas of postsecondary education are postsecondary vocational education and training, which are non-degree-granting but can result in some transferable credits and provide post-secondary technical instruction for a particular career. In addition to a variety of terminal-vocational programs, a two-year college typically offers the first two years of a typical four-year college curriculum. In most cases, academic courses from two-year colleges can be used for credit at four-year institutions. Some of these were established by state or municipal governments, while others were started by certain religious groups or were funded privately ⁴⁷.

1.2.3 Vocational education

The 1990 *Perkins Act* defined vocational education as

‘organized educational programs offering a sequence of courses which are directly related to the preparation of individuals in paid or unpaid employment in current or emerging occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree’ ⁴⁸.

While vocational education is provided at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, its focus differs somewhat at each level. It begins indeed at secondary level and continues

⁴⁵ Philip J. Cook, Robert MacCoun, and Clara Muschkin, “Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary or Middle School? An Analysis of Grade Configuration and Student Behavior,” February 9, 2007, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100612125047/http://www.sanford.duke.edu/research/papers/SAN07-01.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Philip J. Cook, “Should Sixth Grade Be in Elementary or Middle School?”.

⁴⁷ “Structure of U.S. Education,” Ed.gov.

⁴⁸ The Act goes on to say: ‘such programs shall include competency-based applied learning which contributes to an individual’s academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning, and problem-solving skills, work attitudes, general employability skills, and the occupational-specific skills necessary for economic independence as a productive and contributing member of society. Such term also includes applied technology education’. (U.S. Congress, *Perkins Act*. 101st Cong., 1990. Public Law 101-392, Sec. 521 (41). Accessed November 14, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs/web/95024-3.asp#ft2>).

through the second year of post-secondary level. Both secondary and post-secondary vocational education focuses on providing occupationally specific preparation and training students to improve their (future job) skills. Both types stress the importance of some occupational programs such as agriculture, business and office, marketing and distribution, health, home economics trade and technical education. Although the two can be regarded as very similar, the secondary vocational education brags three types of different courses with three main different focal points. The first type can be categorized as consumer and homemaking education, the second offers a general labor market preparation, while the third provides students a more specific labor market training⁴⁹.

1.2.4 Main difference between college and university

Generally speaking, there are three main types of degree-granting higher-education institutions in the United States: the **two-year community or junior college**; the **four-year undergraduate college**; and the **university**. The university normally includes undergraduate as well as graduate and professional education. Two-year institutions offer terminal degrees (associate degrees) for two years of study or preparation for moving into the last two years of undergraduate study at four-year college. Four-year colleges usually award undergraduate degrees for four years of study. Undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees are often awarded after two to four years of graduate study in universities. In the United States, universities are places where students can earn bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degrees; colleges frequently only grant bachelor's degrees. Since undergraduate refers to the initial level of college or university study (the level at which a bachelor's degree can be earned⁵⁰), it differs significantly from graduate. Graduate refers to a level of advanced education beyond the undergraduate level, particularly a master's degree or doctorate, and is used interchangeably with terms like graduate student and graduate degree. A person who has finished a degree of school is simply referred to by the broader word graduate (someone who has graduated). The total number of degrees awarded by higher education institutions as well as the fields in which those degrees were granted can be used to classify these schools.

⁴⁹ "Principles and General Objectives of Education" (UNESCO-IBE, September 2006), accessed November 14, 2022, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/sites/default/files/United_States_of_America.pdf.

⁵⁰ The two most common bachelor's degrees are the bachelor of arts (B.A.) and the bachelor of science (B.S.). Other common bachelor degrees include the B.Ed. (bachelor of education), the B.F.A. (Bachelor of fine arts), the B. Mus. (bachelor of music) and the B.B.A. (bachelor of business administration). The B. Arch (bachelor of architecture) is often a five-year program. The B.D. (bachelor of divinity) and LL. B. (bachelor of law) are professional degrees, usually requiring three years of study beyond a B.A. or B.S.

According to this classification, these institutions might be classified as doctorate, comprehensive, general baccalaureate, or specialized institutions. Doctoral programs receive a high level of dedication from doctoral schools, and these programs see a lot of activity. Comprehensive institutions do not conduct a considerable amount of doctoral-level instruction, but they have a robust post-baccalaureate program. Undergraduate baccalaureate education is the main focus of general baccalaureate institutions. Professional and other extremely specialized institutions fall under the heading of specialized.

The doctorate is considered the highest academic degree conferred in the United State. It attests to the ability of its holder to conduct original research of a high order. The most frequently awarded doctorate is the doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.). Others include doctor of education (D.Ed.) and the doctor of divinity (D.D.). Generally, the degree requires a minimum of two years of course work beyond the master's degree level, success on the qualifying examination, proficiency in one or two languages, and/or in an equivalent research tool (like statistics) considered appropriate to a specific field of specialization, as well as completion of a doctoral dissertation that is typically intended to represent an original contribution to knowledge in the candidate's chosen field.

1.3 Types of schools: private, public, and special education

In the Unites State there are different ways children can receive education. They are offered the possibility to attend public schools, private schools or they can study at home, when usually some of their parents substitute the figure of the schoolteacher, this is called homeschooling.

Taxes support and fund public education, which is free. Most of the textbooks are available for free and students can borrow them from the school, where wearing a school uniform is not mandatory. Despite a few public schools offering single-sex classes, boys and girls attend mixed-gender classrooms. Public schools are run locally by school districts and publicly elected or appointed school boards, as well as at the state level by departments of education. Students often attend the public school in their district, but now that charter and magnet schools have grown in popularity, they have more options. Public schools known as **charters** offer greater parental control and are exempt from many legal and administrative constraints. The term 'charter' is thought to have originated from Ray Budde, a teacher from New England, who proposed to local school boards in the 1970s that they offer instructors 'charters' to experiment with various teaching methods. The city of Philadelphia started

experimenting with a charter school model inside its current public schools in the late 1980s⁵¹. The first charter school was introduced in 1988, whereas the 45th state was West Virginia, where they were officially introduced in 2019⁵². Charter schools are required to raise academic standards for their students in return for more freedom. The goal is to switch over to performance-based accountability from rule-based governance. In addition to being independent from regular public schools, charter schools also have greater operational and managerial independence. Despite being publicly supported and tuition-free, charter schools differ significantly from regular public schools in that they are able to modify their curricula, academic focus, disciplinary procedures, and other issues that are typically decided at the school district or state board level. Charter schools are expected to be more accountable to parents and the state or local governments who approve them in exchange for that flexibility⁵³. For this reason, the popularity of charter schools in recent decades has spread to religiously based private schools, particularly catholic ones. They are chosen by a rising number of middle-class and elite people precisely because of the distinctive status they enjoy, as they are also financed by private donations and are regarded as being of high quality.

Public elementary or secondary schools that offer a unique curriculum and are able to draw a sizable number of pupils from various socioeconomic and racial backgrounds are known as **magnet schools**. Children in magnet schools still learn the fundamental subjects covered in standard school curricula, but the unique teaching methods and more individualized environments offered enrich these fundamentals (Magnet Schools of America). Magnet schools frequently concentrate on a specific subject or skill set, such as gifted and talented students, math, or sciences. Magnet schools have the potential to be more selective, admitting or excluding students based on their academic performance and/or behavior. Local school boards, corporate donations, federal, state, and occasionally local tuition are some of the sources of funding for magnet schools.

On the other hand, private schools are financed, owned, and operated by private groups, such as religious institutions⁵⁴, as opposed to public schools, which are supported and managed

⁵¹ Stephanie Watson, "How Public Schools Work," HowStuffWorks.com, February 13, 2008, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://people.howstuffworks.com/public-schools6.htm>.

⁵² As it can be seen in Figure 5 in the Appendix.

⁵³ Jacob Fischler, "Understanding Charter Schools vs. Public Schools," U.S. News & World Report L.P., October 19, 2021, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://www.usnews.com/education/k12/articles/understanding-charter-schools-vs-public-schools>.

⁵⁴ 'In fall 2015, of the 34,600 private elementary and secondary schools in the United States, 20% were Catholic schools, 12% were conservative Christian schools, 9% were affiliated religious schools (schools that are affiliated with denominations other than Catholic or conservative Christian), 26% were unaffiliated religious schools (schools that have a religious orientation or purpose but are not affiliated with any specific denomination), and

by local governments. Tuition fees and other private sources, such foundations, religious organizations, alumni, or other private donors, make up the majority of the revenue for private schools. Additionally, a rising percentage (about 2%) of American students between the ages of 5 and 17 are being educated at home (homeschooling). White kids (3.8%) and Hispanic students (3.5%) were more likely to be homeschooled in 2016 than black students (1.9%) and Asian students (1.4%)⁵⁵. However, recently homeschooling has become a more popular and common choice due to the COVID19 pandemic. The first data source to provide both a national and state-level look at the impact of COVID19 on homeschooling rates is the U.S. Census Bureau's experimental Household Pulse Survey, which reveals a significant rise from last spring - when the pandemic took hold - to the beginning of the 2020–2021 school year. For instance, Massachusetts increased from 1.5% to 12.1%, even though many other states did not experience a major rise⁵⁶.

1.3.1. How are students graded?

Even though a nationwide standard for grading systems does not exist, the Roman Alphabet letters A, B, C, D, and occasionally E and F are used in most secondary schools as a method of grading, with the letter I denoting a "incomplete". The highest on scale is the letter A (Excellent), the student passes or fails the exams when he/she takes a D, which mean 'marginal'. The lowest is denoted by the letter F, there is to say the student has completely failed the assignment.

It is crucial to note that each institution's grading policy is unique, and some only disclose grades upon request or do not follow the major grading system used by higher education institutions⁵⁷. Many higher education institutions either utilize a numerical system based on points earned or a letter grading system akin to that used in secondary school. Typically, the latter approach uses a five-, four, or three-point scale. Grade point averages

33% were nonsectarian schools (schools that are not religiously affiliated)'. ("School Choice in the United States: 2019," National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), accessed November 15, 2022, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/schoolchoice/ind_03.asp).

⁵⁵ "School Choice in the United States (Homeschooling)," U.S. Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), accessed November 15, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=91>.

⁵⁶ Casey Eggleston and Jason Fields, "Homeschooling on the Rise during COVID-19 Pandemic," The United States Census Bureau, March 22, 2021, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/03/homeschooling-on-the-rise-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>.

⁵⁷"Education System in the USA," The European Education Directory, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.euroeducation.net/prof/usa.htm>.

(GPAs) are frequently reported by high schools on a 4.0 scale. An A is the highest grade and equals 4.0. Here it is explained how to convert the GPA to a 4.0 scale⁵⁸:

Letter Grade	Percent Grade	4.0 Scale
A+	97-100	4.0
A	93-96	4.0
A-	90-92	3.7
B+	87-89	3.3
B	83-86	3.0
B-	80-82	2.7
C+	77-79	2.3
C	73-76	2.0
C-	70-72	1.7
D+	67-69	1.3
D	65-66	1.0
E/F	Below 65	0.0

⁵⁸ “How Is Grade Point Average Calculated?,” National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (nces.ed.gov, April 2017), accessed November 15, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/hsts/howgpa.aspx>.

1.4 American school controversies: money and guns

1.4.1 Student loan debt

‘The amount of money that is borrowed, often from a bank, and has to be paid back, usually together with an extra amount of money that you have to pay as a charge for borrowing’ is defined as loan⁵⁹. In the United States, student loans are a type of financial aid designed to make higher education more affordable for students. Loans can be used by students to meet a number of expenses, including tuition that is not covered by their own assets, grants, parent or guardian loans, or scholarships. For many students and their families, taking out student loans is the only way to pay for college due to the rapidly rising cost of tuition. To repay their student loans, however, is a challenge for many students.

According to the ‘Student Loan Debt Statistic’ updated in October 2022, the student federal loan balance is 1.617 trillion dollars, and 37,787 dollars are on average owed on federal student loans⁶⁰. The ‘New York Times’ reported that:

‘Recent black graduates of four-year colleges owe, on average, \$7,400 more than their white peers. Four years after graduation, they still owe an average of \$53,000, almost twice as much as whites’⁶¹.

This claim explains the disparity in student loan debt between white and black students; the latter do, in fact, have a tendency to have a harder time repaying their debt than the former.

1.4.2 School safety and security

‘Violence is a part of America’s culture. It is as American as cherry pie’⁶². When H. Rap Brown, Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), uttered this

⁵⁹ Cambridge Dictionary, “Loan: Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary,” Cambridge.org, November 20, 2019, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/loan>.

⁶⁰ See Figure 6 in Appendix. See Melanie Hanson, “Student Loan Debt Statistics,” EducationData, October 26, 2022, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics>.

⁶¹ Dana Goldstein, “The Morehouse Gift, in Context: An Average Black Graduate Has \$7,400 More in Debt than White Peers,” *The New York Times*, May 20, 2019, sec. U.S., accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/20/us/student-debt-america.html>.

⁶² ‘We say to these leaders, how can you tell black people to be nonviolent, and at the same time condone the sending of white killers into the black communities? It's something wrong. We are going to control our

phrase at a press conference on July 27, 1967, in Washington, D.C., he did so in a context of protest. At that the African American community was in great turmoil to fight for the rights that had been denied and trampled upon for too long⁶³. However, this phrase rose to prominence in the American social and cultural environment due to criticism that was frequently leveled at American citizens for being violent and gun-prone, especially in the wake of shootings and the deaths of innocent people.

Adam Lankford, who has recently examined the connections between mass murders and gun ownership trends in 171 nations, identified the United States as the country with the highest number of mass killings between 1966 and 2012 (followed by the Philippines, Russia, Yemen, and France)⁶⁴. Furthermore, Americans who are at work or school have a higher risk of dying in mass shootings⁶⁵. Moreover, the American analytics and advisory company ‘Gallup’ stated that 32% of U.S. adults say they personally own a gun, while a larger percentage, 44%, report living in a gun household⁶⁶. The results show that:

‘Republicans (50%), rural residents (48%), men (45%), self-identified conservatives (45%) and southerners (40%) are the most likely subgroups to say they personally own a gun. Liberals (15%), Democrats (18%), non-White Americans (18%), women (19%) and Eastern residents (21%) are the least likely to report personal gun ownership’⁶⁷.

The prevalence of gun ownership and the ease with which they can be acquired date back to the founding of this nation and the principles and beliefs that make it unique. It is what is best summed up by the term ‘gun-culture’, predicated on the presence of firearms from the

communities by any means necessary. We built the country up, we'll burn it down. You can quote that. I say violence is necessary. Violence is a part of America's culture. It is as American as cherry pie’. Cfr. “Comm; CBS Library of Contemporary Quotations; H. Rap Brown,” WNYC, American Archive of Public Broadcasting (GBH and the Library of Congress), Boston, MA and Washington, DC, accessed November 15, 2022, <http://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip-80-74qjqrq>.

⁶³ Gordon A Crews and Stephen C. Stanko, “Violence Is as American as Cherry Pie: Mass Incarceration and Juvenile Violence,” in *Handbook of Research on School Violence in American K-12 Education* (Hershey Pa: Igi Global, 2019), 305-17.

⁶⁴ Adam Lankford, “Public Mass Shooters and Firearms: A Cross-National Study of 171 Countries,” *Violence and Victims* 31, no. 2 (2016): 6-7, <https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.vv-d-15-00093>.

⁶⁵ Jen Christensen, “Why the US Has the Most Mass Shootings,” CNN, August 27, 2015, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/08/27/health/u-s-most-mass-shootings/index.html>.

⁶⁶ See Figure 4 in Appendix

⁶⁷ Lydia Saad, “What Percentage of Americans Own Guns?,” Gallup.com (Gallup, November 13, 2020), accessed November 15, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/264932/percentage-americans-own-guns.aspx>.

country's beginnings, but also on the fact that individual firearm ownership is connected to the early struggle for independence and survival of the country, followed by its frontier traditions. Nowadays, people own guns for a variety of reasons, including hunting, sports, self-defense, and illegal activities, although in the past they were mostly used for survival-related objectives (such as for hunting) or for military purposes. The so-called *New York State's Sullivan legislation* became the first modern gun regulation in 1911⁶⁸. This was in response to a failed attempt to assassinate New York City Mayor William Gaynor. Since then, there has been ongoing discussion regarding tightening or loosening gun control laws and reducing the National Rifle Association's (NRA) influence, particularly in light of recent school shootings and mass shootings that have resulted in the deaths of innocent children.

The Pontiac's Rebellion school massacre, which took place on July 26, 1764, was the first shooting known to have occurred in the United States on school grounds. Four Lenape American Indians entered the building near modern-day Greencastle, Pennsylvania, where they shot and killed the schoolmaster and nine or ten students⁶⁹. In the United States it exists a database called CHDS K-12 that traces 'every instance a gun is brandished, is fired, or a bullet hits K-12 school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims, time, day of the week'. This database registered 2069 shootings, 684 fatalities and 1937 injuries starting from January 1970 until June 2022. And it is evident that there has been an increase in gun incidents in American K-12 schools in 2022 compared to earlier years⁷⁰. The most notorious and graphic school shootings in American history took place at the Columbine School (Columbine, Colorado) in 1999⁷¹, Sandy Hook Elementary (Newton, Connecticut) in 2012, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School (Parkland, Florida) in 2018 and Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24, 2022.

The Columbine high school shooting was perpetrated by two boys aged 18 and 17, who committed on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Colorado was one of the worst

⁶⁸ It is described in Chapter 1 of the book, 'The Politics of Gun Control', under the heading 'Policy Definition and Gun Control'. Robert J. Spitzer, *The Politics of Gun Control*, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 8, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003049371>.

⁶⁹ Chris Glavin, "History of School Shootings in the United States," K12academics.com, July 26, 2018, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://www.k12academics.com/school-shootings/history-school-shootings-united-states>.

⁷⁰ See Figure 5 in Appendix.

⁷¹ In addition to being one of the first mass shootings with such a high death toll, the Columbine massacre is noteworthy for the way it affected the public's awareness. Additionally, it rose to fame following the 2002 release of Michael Moore's acclaimed documentary 'Bowling for Columbine'. In fact, the documentary deals with the issue of gun use and ownership in the United States. (Allan Hunter, "Review: Bowling for Columbine," screendaily.com, May 17, 2002, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.screendaily.com/review-bowling-for-columbine/409284.article>.)

school shootings in American history. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold massacred indeed 12 students, a teacher, and later killed themselves in less than 20 minutes. Moreover, 21 additional victims of the incident suffered from traumatic injuries and bodily harm⁷².

On the morning of December 14, 2012, after killing his mother, 20-year-old Adam Lanza went to Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut, where he killed 20 first-graders and six school staff members before turning the gun on himself and taking his own life. In the aftermath, President Barack Obama urged for tighter gun safety regulations in the wake of the tragedy, but the Congress has not passed any new gun rules since the Sandy Hook shooting, despite the commitment and proposal for firearm limitations⁷³.

Nikolas Cruz arrived at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018, carrying a weapon, ammunition, and smoke grenades. He repeatedly opened fire on students and teachers, killing three people outside the school before going inside and killing 12 more. Two further victims died from their wounds at nearby hospitals. After a jury refused to recommend the death penalty, the shooter was officially sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of release⁷⁴.

Nineteen students and two teachers were killed (and seventeen wounded) on May 24, 2022, by the eighteen-year-old former student at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Salvador Ramos before fatally murdering 21 people, he shot his grandmother in the face (who he was living with), and he illegally drove towards the school armed with an AR-15 style rifle. He remained in the school for more than an hour before the police entered the school and shot him⁷⁵. In addition to being the most recent, the shooting also ranks as the deadliest incident to occur in an American elementary, middle, or high school, outpacing even the Columbine massacre⁷⁶.

⁷² CNN Library, “Columbine High School Shootings Fast Facts,” CNN, April 2013, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2013/09/18/us/columbine-high-school-shootings-fast-facts/index.html>.

⁷³ Robin Levinson-King, “Sandy Hook 10 Years On: How Many Have Died in School Shootings?,” *BBC News*, December 13, 2022, sec. US & Canada, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-63911172>.

⁷⁴ Oliver Laughland, Richard Luscombe, and Alan Yuhas, “At Least 17 People Dead in Florida School Shooting: ‘It’s a Horrific, Horrific Day,’” *The Guardian* (web.archive.org, February 15, 2018), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180215075616/https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/feb/14/florida-shooting-school-latest-news-stoneman-douglas>.

⁷⁵ Ray Sanchez CNN, “‘We’re in Trouble.’ 80 Minutes of Horror at Robb Elementary School,” CNN, May 29, 2022, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/29/us/uvalde-texas-elementary-school-shooting-week/index.html>.

⁷⁶ When comparing shootings at elementary and high schools, the Robb school incident ranks among the worst. However, the incident that took the most lives overall occurred on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, Virginia), where 33 people were killed, including the shooter (Seung-Hui Cho), who afterwards committed himself on April 16, 2007. (Patrick Shaw, “Multiple Murders: The Virginia Tech

1.5 Comparison to other educational systems: Italy

There are a wide variety of conceivable educational systems in the world, including the American education system. Comparing different systems is frequently challenging, but the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has collaborated with various nations to improve the comparability of education indicators. The organization's aim is to develop an accurate and universal method for describing various levels of education. This is called the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). As it can be read in the National Centre for Education Statistic Document ⁷⁷, there are six ISCED levels and they start from level zero that is classified as preprimary education, and it goes on with level 1 (primary education), level 2 (lower secondary education), level 3 (upper secondary education), level 4 (postsecondary nontertiary programs), level 5 (academic higher education) and it ends with ISCED level 6 (classified as the second, or doctoral, stage of academic higher education).

As a result, the American education is just one of the numerous educational systems across the world, each with distinct qualities and peculiarities that can be examined. Similar to any other nation, the United States experienced a variety of historical developments that have an impact on a number of social systems, including the educational system. The history of the country actually began with Pilgrim Fathers' colonization because of different (economic-religious) reasons and that resulted in a peculiar development of the society and all systems that affect it. This holds true both for the United States and for other countries (Italy for example), and contrasting the various realities is useful and fascinating in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding in how religious, economic, and social values are never separated from one another but rather entwine and have had an impact on one another.

1.5.1 The education system in Italy

The Italian education was shaped up until 1923 by the *Casati Law*. Issued in 1859 during the process of unifying the country, the law organized the educational system throughout the French method of the centralized control. *Law 407*, which was passed in 1904, made attendance

Massacre, Multiculturalism, and the Death of Tragic Drama," *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 42, no. 2 (2009): 159-80.

⁷⁷ Anindita Sen, Lisette A. Partelow, and David C. Miller, "Comparative Indicators of Education in the United States and Other G8 Countries: 2004" (U.S. Department of Education: National Center for Education Statistics, February 2005), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005021.pdf>.

at school mandatory for all children up to age twelve. The Italian governments implemented vocational training at the same time as they realized the demands of an increasingly industrialized society⁷⁸.

Italy's education system has come under increasing criticism in the 20th century, and the country has been searching for a suitable replacement. With the emergence of the fascist movement in the 1920s, there has been a revolution in Italy, in the education system too. In terms of education, the pinnacle of the cultural revolution is represented by the Giovanni Gentile's educational reform in 1923⁷⁹. The reform, which is regarded as the second-most significant Italian educational reform of the 20th century after the *Casati Law*, was decided upon during the twenty months (from October 1922 to July 1924) that the philosopher served as a minister of public instruction under the first Mussolini administration. Gentile attempted to give a theoretical and philosophical foundation to the educational system that the *Casati Law* had established in an effort to make it more organic. The reform's guiding concepts included the idea that freedom of teaching was something that should be pursued through public education as both a right and a responsibility. Pedagogical goals were also set through precise examination programs instead of direct control of individual professors. Gentile also expanded funding for basic education, albeit his method of allocating resources caused him to favor urban schools over rural ones, where the problem of illiteracy was most severe⁸⁰.

The Italian educational system has recorded significant modifications since the ending of the fascist era, particularly since 1950s. Administration has become more decentralized, the curriculum and syllabi have been updated, and teaching techniques have been strengthened. The end of fascism and the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1948 led to radical changes in schooling. The fundamental tenets of education were established by the Italian Constitution, which emphasizes in Article 33 the freedom of education, the nation's obligation to provide educational institutions at various levels, parental responsibility for raising children, and financial aid for deserving students to pursue higher education. The Article 33 indeed states:

⁷⁸ Rebecca Marlow-Ferguson, ed., *World Education Encyclopedia. A Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (I-R) (United States of America: Gale group, 1967), 656-71, accessed November 15, 2022, [http://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/19-%20World%20Education%20Encyclopedia_%20Volume%202_%20I-R%20\(2nd%20edition\).pdf](http://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/19-%20World%20Education%20Encyclopedia_%20Volume%202_%20I-R%20(2nd%20edition).pdf).

⁷⁹ Matthew C. Ciavarella, "Giovanni Gentile's Reform of Education in Italy. An Evaluation," *Www.proquest.com* (Thesis, 1932), accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.proquest.com/openview/8a07c1729aac3ed96edd9f9dd933d086/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>.

⁸⁰ Valmai Burwood Evans, "Education in the Philosophy of Giovanni Gentile," *International Journal of Ethics* 43, no. 2 (1933): 210-17, accessed November 14, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2378334>.

‘The Republic guarantees the freedom of the arts and sciences, which may be freely taught. The Republic lays down general rules for education and establishes state schools of all branches and grades. Entities and private persons have the right to establish schools and institutions of education, at no cost to the state. The law, when setting out the rights and obligations for the non-state schools which request parity, shall ensure that these schools enjoy full liberty and offer their pupils an education and qualifications of the same standards as those afforded to pupils in state schools. State examinations are prescribed for admission to and graduation from the various branches and grades of schools and for qualification to exercise a profession. Higher education institutions, universities and academies, have the right to establish their own regulations within the limits laid down by the law’⁸¹.

The Italian school can be both public and private, it is compulsory between the age of 6 and 16 years old, public school is free (Article 34 of the Italian Constitution)⁸² and it is organized in three main stages: the pre-primary school, also called nurse school (*scuola dell’infanzia*), begins at the age of three and it lasts for three years. When children are six, they start the first cycle of education that lasts eight years in total. From six years old they attend the primary education or elementary school (*scuola primaria*) until they reach the eleventh year of age, when they are required to study at the lower secondary or middle school for three years (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*). The second cycle of education follows this first one and it can offer two main different options, there is to say the state upper secondary school (*scuola secondaria di secondo grado*) or vocational training course (*istruzione e formazione professionale*). The former lasts for five years (between 14 and 19 years of age) and it can be issued by high schools (*licei*), technical institutes or vocational institutes. Whereas the latter are enacted by regions. At the end of the path, when students graduate, they can decide to continue or stop studying. If they decide to keep up one their studies and higher education, they will be required to choose between universities, polytechnics, Institutes of the higher education in art

⁸¹ Article 33, Parliament Information, Archives and Publications Office of the Senate Service for Official Reports and Communication, accessed November 15, 2022, https://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf

⁸² ‘Schools are open to everyone. Primary education, given for at least eight years, is compulsory and free of tuition. Capable and deserving pupils, including those lacking financial resources, have the right to attain the highest levels of education. The Republic renders this right effective through scholarships, allowances to families and other benefits, which shall be assigned through competitive examinations’. Article 34 of the Constitution of the Italian Constitution.

and music system (*alta formazione artistica e musicale, AFAM*) or higher technical institutes (*istituti tecnici superiori, ITS*)⁸³.

By examining the key phases of the Italian educational system, it is possible to understand how the social environment has influenced its growth and the adoption of new laws or reforms that, for a variety of reasons, have altered school organization and structure. Similar to Italy, politics, economics, and socio-cultural values have always been connected and influenced by one another in the United States, although the two systems' objectives are different. Due to the country's extreme fragmentation from its founding, the majority of reforms in Italy aimed to promote cohesion; however, in the United States, the focus was on educational independence and freedom. And the root of this distinction can be traced back to the very beginnings of the two countries: Italy, which had long been divided, attempted to establish unity and cohesiveness via education, whereas the United States was founded on the idea of the Pilgrim Fathers' search for independence (religious and economic-social freedom quest). The values are different. The United States grants states more autonomy in decisions on education, in part because of their style of government; whereas in Italy, decisions are made by a single ministry, and schools throughout the nation must comply with those decisions. The fact that each state has a great deal of autonomy over its own policies has an impact on the selection of subjects to be taught. Because each American state has its own unique set of values, each state's curricula differ from one another. This, along with the pervasive influence of politics, resulted in significant differences between states' educational systems and educational standard. One of the most noticeable effects is found in textbooks, to the point that two copies of the same schoolbook were created for two separate states, despite the author and book being the identical⁸⁴. Thus, it may be concluded that public support from the state for schools, including public schools, is more permissible in Italy than it is in the states of the United States, which, nonetheless, enjoy greater independence because of their lower dependency on the federal government.

⁸³ See Figure 9 in the Appendix. "Stages of the Education System (Italy)," Eurydice, 2023, accessed November 15, 2022, <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/italy/overview>.

⁸⁴ It will be examined in the next chapter.

1.6 Conclusion

The American school system is a complex system that lays its first foundations during the 16th century with the migrations of the Pilgrim Fathers. They moved from England to the western shores of the United States for a variety of reasons: some for economic reasons, some for religious reasons, some by choice, some were forced. The 13 colonies were thus established. Their roots lie in the search for the freedom which was taken away and found again in the new territories (freedom that was, however, stolen from someone else, namely American Indians), and this idea of liberty will then continue to serve as the cornerstone of the society to come. The settlers had socio-cultural values and traditions that they brought with them, and this was fundamental to the development of values and traditions of the new colonial societies. The school therefore is the reflection of the socio-political baggage of the time, and this is then rebounded on its internal organization, and the regulations that characterized it.

In light of the fact that the school has always been a mirror of its historical setting, it is crucial to examine it in order to comprehend future developments.

2 Origins and development of the American education system

2.1 Function of governmental agencies

The United States is constituted of fifty States (the last one admitted was Hawaii on the 21st of August 1959), a federal district known as District of Columbia and five territories. Territories do not get the complete recognition as the states because they are not legally states. Despite not having this full recognition, each territory has a representative who can be sent to the House of Representatives⁸⁵. These whole systems are directly in charge of their own education policies. The American educational system is indeed highly decentralized. Aside from the 10th Amendment, which stipulates that state governments are granted any authority not expressly granted to the federal government or particularly assigned to it, the Constitution does not specifically mention education⁸⁶. Consequently, this has resulted in diversity in schooling across the nation. In the American educational system, there are three main agencies who hold three distinct roles and functions: the states, the local governments, and the federal government.

The **state** constitutions of the majority of states include provisions on education and these give them the power to adopt laws pertaining to education and appropriate money from the public budget for educational purposes. According to the U.S. Department of Education⁸⁷, state governments are generally responsible for:

- Developing curriculum guidelines and performance standards;
- Providing technical assistance to school districts and schools;
- Licensing private elementary and secondary schools to operate within their jurisdictions;
- Licensing or certifying school teachers and administrators;
- Administering statewide student achievement tests;

⁸⁵ “How Are U.S. States, Territories, and Commonwealths Designated in the Geographic Names Information System?, U.S. Geological Survey”.

⁸⁶ The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people (U.S. Const. amend. X).

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Education, International Affairs Staff, “Education in the United States: A Brief Overview”, Washington, D.C., 2005.

- Developing accountability plans and reporting on student performance to the U.S. Department of Education;
- Defining minimum requirements for high school graduation;
- Distributing state and federal funding to school districts; and
- Establishing the minimum number of school days per year.

As for the **local** governments every state in the United States is divided into smaller administrative units known as counties, except for Louisiana, where they are known as parishes. Municipal governments (those of individual cities and towns) are the other kind of local governance. Numerous municipalities and more rural areas are typically included in counties, and the county is responsible for all local services. Local school districts are in charge of managing the public schools within their purview, and they provide elementary and secondary (K-12) education⁸⁸. Locally there are two main institutions that have the responsibility of education: the local school districts and the local school boards. The formers are over 14,000 and they are governed by school boards, as stated by the International Affairs Office⁸⁹. Implementing state education policy at the local level is often the responsibility of local school districts. They oversee the hiring and managing instructors, as well as raising money, typically through local property taxes, and they frequently receive a lot of autonomy in terms of budgeting and curriculum delivery. As stated earlier, the local school boards have responsibility over each school districts and their members are normally elected. The person who is chosen and hired by the school board is called district superintendent, whose main role is to carry out policies and overseeing day-to-day operations. According to the U.S. Department of Education⁹⁰, local governments functions are:

- Determining the budget;
- Allocating money to individual schools and programs;
- Hiring teachers and other staff;
- Preparing and disseminating annual reports on student performance;
- Setting teacher and administrator salaries;

⁸⁸ Bryce Loo, "Education in the United States of America," World Education News & Reviews (WENR), June 12, 2018, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://wenr.wes.org/2018/06/education-in-the-united-states-of-america>.

⁸⁹ "Organization of U.S. Education," U.S. Network for Education Information (USNEI) (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-org-us.html>

⁹⁰ "Education in the United States: A Brief Overview", USNEI.

- Implementing the curriculum;
- Planning and administering teacher in-service training;
- Coordinating the transportation of students on school buses;
- Constructing and maintaining school buildings; and
- Purchasing equipment and supplies.

Although the states are given primary responsibility for education, the **federal government** plays a significant role. First and foremost, Congress, which comprises of the House of Representatives⁹¹ and the Senate⁹², is the highest authority involved in the creation of laws. Congress has the authority to enact laws pertaining to education, such as the well-known *No Child Left Behind Act*. It was one of the most recent significant reforms in terms of education promoted by President George Bush in 2001. The Department of Education is the major federal agency responsible for carrying out the laws that Congress passes. Its secretary, also known as the Secretary of Education, is chosen by the President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate⁹³.

The U.S. Department of Education, which oversees the vast Federal Student Aid program (that offers low-interest loans), describes its roles in the following ways:

- Establishing policies on federal financial aid for education and distributing as well as monitoring those funds.
- Collecting data on America’s schools and disseminating research.
- Focusing national attention on key educational issues.
- Prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to education.

Thus far there has been examined the various features of the American educational system nowadays, but the causes for its development must be sought out and looked at in the early years of this wide, intricate, and contentious nation. In fact, conflicts involving culture and religion have played a significant role in the history of American education.

⁹¹ Federal legislations are created and approved by the US House of Representatives. The number of voting representatives in the House is limited by law to 435, proportionally representing the population of the 50 states. “The House Explained,” U.S. House of Representatives, 2017, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.house.gov/the-house-explained>.

⁹² The Senate is composed of 100 Senators, two for each state. Senators were chosen by state legislatures rather than by popular vote prior to the 1913 ratification of the 17th Amendment. Since then, the citizens of each state have chosen them to serve six-year terms. “The Legislative Branch,” The White House, 2021, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/our-government/the-legislative-branch/>.

⁹³ Bryce Loo, “Education in the United States of America,” World Education News & Reviews (WENR).

2.2 Pre-revolutionary era

‘Many causes were at work in settlement of the American colonies. Adventure, money, love of God and desire to convert the Indians gave rise to the colonies’⁹⁴. The American colonies were an essential component of the wide English colonial empire. The English were indeed one of the first non-Native Americans who settled in the territory that would subsequently become the United States of America. Beginning with the first permanent settlements founded at Jamestown, Virginia (in 1607), and at Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay (between 1620 and 1622), to James Oglethorpe’s colonies in Savannah, Georgia (in 1732), English joint-stock companies, company owners, and Crown officials aimed to establish a modified version of their native society in the new American territories⁹⁵. The British migrated to these areas for several reasons. For instance, a lot of people yearned to leave Europe’s repressive regimes and difficult times, such the English depression of 1595⁹⁶. Thousands of people left their native lands because they were dissatisfied with the circumstances and did not intend to be bounded to the institutions that had oppressed and caused them misery. Furthermore, this strengthened particularly in regard to faith, which has led to massive migrations of various religious groups. Although there were other denominations, the majority of European immigrants who moved to America were Protestants. German and Scandinavian Lutherans established themselves in the middle colonies, particularly Pennsylvania. John Calvin’s followers included Puritans, Presbyterians, Huguenots, as well as a number of smaller groups. Anabaptists sought independence in the New World because they were persecuted by both Catholic and Protestant authorities⁹⁷. Along with this, the economic upturn that had a significant impact on these transfers had not been missing. All of this led to significant changes

⁹⁴ John D Pulliam and James J. Van, *History of Education in America* (Upper Saddle River (N.J.) and Columbus (OH.): Prentice-Hall, 2007), accessed December 27, 2022, <https://archive.org/details/historyofeducati0000pull/page/110/mode/2up>.

⁹⁵ Sheldon Hanft, “English Americans - History, Contemporary England, Immigration, Settlement, and Employment, Acculturation and Assimilation,” Everyculture.com, 2011, accessed December 27, 2022, <https://www.everyculture.com/multi/Du-Ha/English-Americans.html>.

⁹⁶ The reign of Elizabeth (1558-1603) is regarded with admiration and appreciation. However, the lengthy period did not always include moments of calm and tranquility. The fact that the subjects were poor, a situation exacerbated by disastrous harvests, was one of the biggest issues the queen had to deal with. According to M.J. Power, the years 1594 to 1597 saw the most severe and prolonged inflation of prices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which culminated in 1597 with the lowest real wages in English history. See M.J. Power, “London and the Control of the ‘Crisis’ of the 1590s,” *History* 70, no. 230 (1985): 371-85.

⁹⁷ “1525 the Anabaptist Movement Begins,” Christianity Today, 1990, accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/issues/issue-28/1525-anabaptist-movement-begins.html>.

on the new continent, with repercussions that are still ongoing. Protestant religions and the English language continue to be prominent, despite the fact that American culture has undergone numerous changes and evolutions over time. This trait has caused significant problems in many systems across the nation, particularly in education, including the handling of children whose first language was not English or who came from religious backgrounds other than Protestant Christian's. The new communities adopted the religion as a fundamental component, which spread into the educational system as well. In fact, religion evolved into a tool for social control and this had an impact on both education and religious beliefs. Before the revolution, Europeans who established new educational systems modeled on those of their native countries (partly out of fear of losing their cultural traditions) made their primary objective the preparation of people to live according to the values of the faith. Education at that time focused on teaching students how to read the Bible, understanding the fundamentals of religion, and developing the virtues necessary to be respectable members of society. But more essentially and significantly, it established and validated people's social position⁹⁸. These objectives were made explicit in the *Massachusetts Law*⁹⁹, one of the earliest laws governing education. As the children's literacy levels were frequently ignored or rejected by parents, the 1642 enacted law focused on the implementation of the education system. It highlighted indeed the value of 'reading and understanding the principles of religion and the capital laws of this country'¹⁰⁰. This was then strengthened by a second legislation, known as the *Old Deluder Satan Law*, which was issued in 1647 in Massachusetts and obliged communities to promote education by constructing schools¹⁰¹. The law mandated the establishment of a grammar school in any community with hundred or more households and the appointment of a teacher to teach reading and writing in any village with at least fifty families¹⁰². Both statutes made a distinction between schooling in grammar schools and reading-and-writing schools. Indeed, the defined curricula of the two institutions were rather dissimilar. Reading-and-writing schools (often known as petty schools) concentrated on reading and writing exercises using a special instrument called 'the hornbook'. It was indeed a piece of board with a handle in the form of a battledore and teachers were used to attach the written lesson on a sheet of vellum or paper and

⁹⁸ Confirming social status is the process of using education to uphold an individual's current standing. Education raises an individual's social position, which is referred to as conferring social status. Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, 45.

⁹⁹ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Ellwood Patterson Cubberley, *Readings in Public Education in the United States* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1934), 16.

¹⁰¹ David Carleton, "Old Deluder Satan Act of 1647," Mtsu.edu, 2009, Accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1032/old-deluder-satan-act-of-1647>.

¹⁰² As can be seen in the Figure 10 in the Appendix.

attach it to its cover¹⁰³. The dame school for nearby children was a common variation of the petty school in the colonies.

Instead, the education provided by grammar schools and colleges was a form of classical education, which had the purpose of elevating students to a specific social status. The knowledge and instruction were provided with the intention of preparing the next generation's great leaders. In order to learn the values of the classics and ancients -such as the Greeks and Romans- students typically attended grammar schools for seven years and focused primarily on Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. This was achieved with the idea that these values, particularly those related to religion, could help students become leaders or important members of society. For instance, the typical goal of the grammar school was stated by the Hopkins Grammar School at New Haven in 1684 as

‘[an education] of hopeful youth in the Latin tongue, and other learned languages so far as to prepare such youths for the college and public service of the country in church and commonwealth’¹⁰⁴.

As an illustration, is worth considering the Boston Latin School, which was founded on April 23, 1635, and regarded as the first and the oldest publicly founded school in America established during the colonial era. It was modeled after the Free Grammar School of Boston in England and the school's curriculum emphasized the academic discipline of humanities¹⁰⁵. Despite the importance of the faith and the values of equality and fraternity being at its center and serving as its foundation in theory, this was not frequently put into reality in practice. The school has been plagued by scenes of violence such as: urban riots between Protestants and Catholics in the 19th century, or the punishment of enslaved Africans for learning to read¹⁰⁶, or

¹⁰³ George Plimpton, "The Hornbook and Its Use in America," October 1916. Accessed December 30, 2022, <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44806617.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education; the Colonial Experience, 1607-1783* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 186.

¹⁰⁵ "History of Boston Latin School - the Oldest Public School in America," web.archive.org, May 2, 2007. Accessed December 30, 2022, https://web.archive.org/web/20070502223937/http://www.bls.org/cfml/13templ_history.cfm.

¹⁰⁶ Numerous autobiographies written by slaves who attempted to discuss and write about their own difficult lives have direct details of these incidents. As an example, Frederick Douglass' autobiography, 'Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass an American Slave, Written by Himself', published in 1845, describes his life as a slave and how he eventually won his freedom after an eventful existence. A section of the book specifically addresses education (or rather, the lack of education) of the slaves. In fact, teaching them to read and write was prohibited. He unfortunately discovered it when his teacher was forbidden to instruct him in reading and writing. Douglass then recognized the importance of education as a tool for self-independence and as the most effective weapon in

the racial clashed over education of African Americans, Asians, native Americans and Mexican Americans¹⁰⁷.

2.2.1 Southern colonies

The English gentry who chose to immigrate to the southern colonies - Virginia, the Carolinas, Maryland, and subsequently Georgia - dedicated themselves primarily to the growth of their plantations and they remained devoted to the Anglican Church and all of its ideals. This explains why social equality did not develop in the southern states and why their educational system continued to be the most comparable to and rooted in English traditions. Class division served as the basis for the system which limited access to certain opportunities and services to a selected elite. Few people had access to education: mainly the affluent and white people, or the offspring of wealthy estate owners sent their children to England in order to return and be able to run the business to its fullest potential. Nevertheless, there were several different kinds of schools operating, including tutorial schools (those with Anglican ministers as teachers and a typically classical curriculum), old field schools (located in a tobacco field), dame schools, and charity education (for the working class and poor people)¹⁰⁸.

2.2.2 Middle colonies

Education lagged in the minor towns and villages of the middle colonies (New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey). The population was fairly diverse, yet there were still a number of organizations that supported education, each for a different reason. The Settlement of Pennsylvania was unique because the emerged problems persisted over time and came to be a central theme: the use of education to demonstrate the superiority of one culture over another and the use of language to support that. In fact, there was great turmoil in Pennsylvania due to the migration of Germans and thus the fear of being overtaken by the latter and the desire to have a marked class division resulted in a law being passed in 1727 requiring all male German immigrants to swear an oath of allegiance to the British Crown¹⁰⁹. Despite

the fight for the emancipation of all slaves. Frederick Douglass and Henry Louis, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845; repr., New York.: Laurel, 1997), chapter 6.

¹⁰⁷ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Middlekauff, "Before the Public School: Education in Colonial America," *Current History* 62, no. 370 (1972): 279-307.

¹⁰⁹ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, 50.

Benjamin Franklin's failed attempts to establish the 'poor German children of the province's' Anglicization through the so-called charity schools, in American education history, this brought to light a crucial issue. There is to say the importance of the language and religion to define a particular and strict set of values and cultures and traditions. This occurred not only with the populations that migrated over time to the United States, but also those who already lived there or were forced to stay there, such as Native Americans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans and African Americans.

2.2.3 Native Americans during the pre-revolutionary period

The colonizers persevered for a long time in their purpose of convert Native American and to give them and education. As they lacked interest in education, Europeans used the violence in order to fulfill their purpose. The British massacred and violently oppressed the indigenous population in an effort to accomplish their goal. They intended to persuade the Native Americans to embrace their beliefs, in particular the Protestant ethic, which emphasized sacrifice, hard work, avoidance of pleasure and rigid family organization. But the Native Americans had a completely different social organization. Their tribes were normally organized in extended clans, where women had significant roles too. With a nuclear and rigid family structure where the father was charge, Europeans sought to supplant the clan system¹¹⁰. Early educational endeavors were made in the 17th century, but almost all of them were unsuccessful. For instance, the Virginia Company intended to create Henrico College for Native American education, but the funds generated were frequently given to other organizations. Other attempts were made after that because of the spread belief of most educators and Protestant clergy who reckoned Indians as uncivilized and the only solution to change this trait was to convert to the Christianity (due to the connection between cultural and religious conversion).

2.2.4 African Americans during the pre-revolutionary period

Prior to the establishment of the plantation system in the 18th century, enslaved Africans arrived via trading hubs erected by Europeans along the West coast of Africa. However, the circumstances of these people differed drastically across the northern and southern colonies.

¹¹⁰The idea that a woman might command a clan, engage in combat, and wield political influence, as well as play a significant and active role in society, was unthinkable to Europeans. Cfr. Charlotte Neely, "Tradition and Change in the World of Cherokee Women," ed. Theda Perdue and Sarah H. Hill, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (1998): 848-55.

While the slaves in the northern states were assimilating the Anglo-American culture and had the option of purchasing their freedom and working¹¹¹, the situation was radically different in the southern states, especially from the 18th century onward. As a matter of fact, the plantation system started to extend from the tobacco- and rice-growing regions of the Carolinas to the deep south's cotton fields through the Chesapeake region where the use, exploitation, and cruel treatment of slaves first began. The plantation owners frequently used force against the slaves in order to maintain control over them. Deculturalization was regarded as another kind of enslavement in addition to the numerous injustices. The adoption of a new name, the inability to learn to read or write, and the inability to speak the same language, all contributed to the destruction of one's identity.

For instance, South Carolina strengthened its hold in 1740 following the slave insurrection at Stono (September 1739)¹¹², which resulted in the deaths of more than twenty white Carolinians, and denied slaves a wide range of freedoms, such as the ability to relocate, earn money, or pursue an education. Many other southern states did not permit the instruction of slaves, much like in South Carolina.

2.3 Revolutionary era

The revolutionary era had an impact on the education system besides affecting the political landscape and the nation's fortunes. The American Revolution is typically thought to have lasted from 1765 to 1783. The reasons why the colonists rebelled against their mother country, however, date back far further. Although the settlers were compelled to import goods from England, there was ample freedom and no intolerance or hostility on either side, which was a sign of the flexible nature of relations between the two. Everything changed, however, with the end of the Seven Years' War (known in the United States as the French and Indian War)¹¹³ in 1763, when England despite its victory over France was overwhelmed by war debts.

¹¹¹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, considerable populations of Africans who had been held as slaves congregated in New York City, Philadelphia, Newport, and Boston. Once they were able to purchase their freedom, they worked in a variety of jobs, from farming to shipping.

¹¹² On Sunday, September 9, 1739-typically a slaves' day off-the true uprising began, spearheaded by a man by the name of Jemmy. With two drummers and flying banners that attracted a sizable crowd of slaves, the rebel captured a cache of weapons and set out on a path of killing. John K. Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 4 (October 1991): 1101, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2164997>

¹¹³ Between 1756 and 1763, the major European nations of the time fought each other in the Seven Years' War. Britain was victorious, capturing Canada as well as other French colonies east of the Mississippi River, while Spain was compelled to give up Florida. "The American Revolution, 1763 - 1783," Congress.gov, (Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 20540 USA) accessed December 28, 2022, <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/american-revolution-1763-1783/overview/>.

George III, who became king in 1760, increased taxes and enforced new regulations in order to pay off the large war debts. *The Sugar Act* of 1764 imposed a sugar tax, and *the Stamp Act* of 1765 levied a tax on books and newspapers and required legal documents to be accompanied by a unique stamp. The situation started to strain ties between the two territories and put the English Parliament under pressure, from which the Americans lamented a lacking elected representation. The phrase ‘no taxation without representation’¹¹⁴ was first used by John Dickinson in 1768. With the Boston Massacre, which occurred in 1770 and resulted in the deaths of five colonists protesting England’s illegal presence, tensions reached a breaking point. When the East India Company was granted a monopoly over the tea trade in 1773, Americans sunk a ship full of tea in Boston Harbor in protest (an event known as the Boston Tea party). As a result, the war started: the colonies (which had various viewpoints of the British) banded together to oppose the British government for their own political and economic interests. The *Declaration of Independence* was approved by the colonies on July 4, 1776. The legal document mentioned for the first time the United States and natural rights¹¹⁵. This conflict concluded in 1783 with the signing of the Peace of Versailles, which also recognized American independence¹¹⁶. The thirteen colonies established a loose confederation where they controlled most of the government in order to safeguard their influence. As a result, the Articles of Confederation proposed, established a meager national government with just one legislative branch, namely the Congress. A Constitutional Convention to update the Articles of Confederation was authorized by Congress in February 1787. The delegates signed a new Constitution on September 17, 1787. In order to become official, the Constitution had to be approved by all the states. It was not an easy path, the debate was composed of the supporter of

¹¹⁴ Dickinson (1732-1808) was a major author of the Declaration of Rights and Grievances that the Congress delivered to King George III and Parliament in order to request their support in repealing the Stamp Act. “No Taxation without Representation - Magna Carta: Muse and Mentor.,” www.loc.gov (Library of Congress, November 6, 2014), Accessed December 31, 2022. <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/magna-carta-muse-and-mentor/no-taxation-without-representation.html#obj028>.

¹¹⁵ ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. [...] We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do’. (“Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” National Archives (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, July 4, 1776), accessed December 31, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>).

¹¹⁶ “Treaty of Paris (1783),” National Archives, April 16, 2021, accessed December 31, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-paris>.

the Constitution (Federalists, later called Republicans) and the Antifederalist (Democrats) who opposed the overpower given to the central government. As a result, the Congress added to the Constitution the ten Amendments known as Bill of Rights in order to settle rivalries¹¹⁷.

During the revolutionary era several of the colonial colleges were founded and the academy movement provided an alternative to the classical education of the grammar schools and colleges. The academies were transplanted to the American colonies from England in the wake of the quest for the freedom (the First Amendment¹¹⁸ is an example of the pursuit of both physical and freedom of speech). Indeed, academies proliferated (the heyday of the academy movement can be regarded as lasting from 1790 until the Civil War), signaling the beginning of a new period in education that was more in line with the ideas of the Enlightenment championed by republican figures like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin¹¹⁹. Scholars have viewed academies as representing a break with the traditional classic education. Indeed, the academy's curriculum, with its dissenting tradition and emphasis on practical skills, elevated the learning environment beyond that of a place for instilling civic and religious allegiance or for developing future leaders¹²⁰. Academies served as an early example for the growth of high schools. The first high school was in fact established in Boston in 1821. Originally known as English Classical School, it later changed its name to English High School. It was created to provide working-class schoolboys an education in order to prepare them for careers in commerce, mechanics, and engineering. The number of academies increased more quickly in states that offered legislative or financial support than in those with little or no such assistance. For instance, by 1817, New York had incorporated forty academies; this number augmented over the ensuing two decades. After the Revolutionary War, changes in education paved the way for the creation of the common school, or public school as it is currently known.

¹¹⁷ "The Bill of Rights: How Did It Happen?," National Archives (archives.gov, December 14, 2018) accessed December 31, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/how-did-it-happen>.

¹¹⁸ 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances' (U.S. Const. amend. I)

¹¹⁹ Kim Tolley, "The Rise of the Academies: Continuity or Change?," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2001): 225-39.

¹²⁰ English, Latin, Greek, declamation, writing, arithmetic, and some of the more recent topics like French, geography, logic, geometry, and natural philosophy or astronomy were all provided in nineteenth-century academies as opposed to the narrow classical focus of the Latin grammar schools. Kim Tolley, "The Rise of the Academies: Continuity or Change?"

2.4 After the Revolution era

The American Revolution ushers in a new era of transformation, particularly in the field of education. The idea of a new, transformed society as well as new nationalist ideas were transmitted into classrooms. The urge to establish public schools was influenced by the new objectives that schools established for themselves as well as by the evolving ideas and social contexts of infancy. The proliferation of specific facilities for youngsters who have engaged in delinquent behavior characterized the first half of the 19th century. These institutions were the so-called charity schools and they were created to foster the growth of a civil society and the formation of good citizens. The Lancasterian method of organizing schools and imparting instruction, which transformed the idea of education, was originally used in charity schools. This method was very influential and transformed the idea and the concept of education. The author was Joseph Lancaster who firstly introduced his system in England (in 1798)¹²¹ and he eventually brought it to U.S. schools. The cornerstone of Lancaster's system was mass public schooling with older or more affluent pupils, or 'monitors', serving as instructors. The headmaster, who chose and instructed the student monitors, had complete authority. They in turn instructed less educated, younger students. Reading, writing, math, morals or religion, and memory improvement were the only subjects covered in the curriculum. The system gained significant prominence in the United States because of the egalitarian idea of education for all people and the fact that working class stoked an irrational fear that landless wage laborers would rebel if they were not given an education.

This conviction in education's ability to improve lives became a cornerstone of the common school movement in the 1830s and 1840s. The American common school movement was a crucial and significant step towards the development of what would ultimately become the public school system. By integrating all students into one classroom, the common school hoped to address the issues of social class¹²². Along with other disciplines including history, geography, grammar, and rhetoric, the 'three R's' (reading, writing, and arithmetic) were taught at common schools. Given the importance of morality and the acquisition of civic ideals, moral instruction was the main focus of the curriculum¹²³. Horace Mann (1796-1859), who was appointed the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837, was one of the

¹²¹ Ronald Rayman, "Joseph Lancaster's Monitorial System of Instruction and American Indian Education, 1815-1838," *History of Education Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1981): 395, <https://doi.org/10.2307/367922>.

¹²² Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, chapter 3.

¹²³ Nancy Kober, "Before Public Schools History and Evolution of Public Education in the US" (The George Washington University: Center on Education Policy, 2020), accessed January 2, 2023, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606970.pdf>.

major forces behind this movement¹²⁴. Mann established his incredibly important, though at the time contentious, guiding principles regarding public education and its issues. According to Mann, education must have been: nonsectarian; funded, controlled, and maintained by the public; taught using the principles of a free society; delivered by qualified, professional teachers; and it was not possible for citizens to maintain ignorance and freedom at the same time¹²⁵.

The common schools were embedded in a particular social context. In fact, from the end of the 19th century, the United States experienced a strong period of immigration that had significant social consequences. During the age of economic growth and industrialization (1850-1914), there was a significant influx of people from southern and eastern Europe. This period is known as the ‘Age of Mass Migration’. For instance, common schools were suggested as a substitute to encourage integration and the absorption of American principles¹²⁶. As a result, at this time the school was viewed as a vehicle for nation-building that unified the civic values of the numerous and various migrants. Laws requiring mandatory attendance were also implemented during this time (the first state to introduce it was Massachusetts in 1852, followed first by the northern and then the southern states, until 1918 when Mississippi was the last state to comply). In particular, in areas with high migration rates, mandatory education was regarded as crucial. Because of the belief that exposure to American public schools would instill the necessary civic ideals among immigrants and the realization that such values could be passed down from children to their parents, compulsory schooling was the main policy tool employed to nation-build¹²⁷. However, the large surge of migration was not well received by the entire population, leading to the creation of regulations to control it. For instance, members of Congress attempted to limit new immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe from the 1890s until the 1924 *Immigration Act*'s¹²⁸ enactment. It imposed quotas on the number of

¹²⁴ “Horace Mann Biography,” biography.com, April 2, 2014, accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.biography.com/scholar/horace-mann#citation>.

¹²⁵ Oriana Bandiera et al., “Nation-Building through Compulsory Schooling during the Age of Mass Migration,” *The Economic Journal* 129, no. 617 (December 20, 2018): 62-109, <https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12624>.

¹²⁶ Parochial and private schools were also a potential substitute for common schools as a source of education.

¹²⁷ Bandiera analyzed the phenomenon and provided three justifications: the educational system could help to mold civic values, people who migrate usually carried their values with them and at the end, parents passed on to their kids their own personal preferences as well as civic beliefs. Oriana Bandiera et al., “Nation-Building through Compulsory Schooling during the Age of Mass Migration”.

¹²⁸ *History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives*, “The Immigration Act of 1924,” <https://history.house.gov/Historical-Highlights/1901-1950/The-Immigration-Act-of-1924/>.

immigrants and placed a limit on the number of people who might be admitted to the United States¹²⁹.

In conclusion, the majority of the basic ideas of the contemporary American school had emerged by the middle of the nineteenth century. Political dissent would persist in some areas and there would be ongoing political divisions over education. Additionally, there would be continued optimism that public education will create a good society by enhancing economic conditions, promoting equality of opportunity, eradicating crime, upholding political and social stability, and preserving the dominance of Protestant Anglo-American culture.

2.5 State vs. Religion

Beginning in the 1920s, people started to avoid exposing kids to values and principles that were deemed immoral and went against the concepts of loyalty and obedience. Politicians, parents, and organizations all sought to promote exposure to moral and non-subversive beliefs. As a result, the significance of morality and religion grew, along with the debate over what to teach in the schools, including evolution. The 1920s experienced a strong growth of Christian fundamentalists who were the protagonists of the social debate since they firmly rejected the theory of evolution. The Bible played a crucial and vital role, and any kind of scientific information that conflicted with religion was regarded as untrue and implausible.

An illustration of the situation that testifies the conflict between the state and the religion can be found in the establishment of the *Butler Act* and eventually the John Scopes trial. The *Butler Act* was approved by the Tennessee state legislature in 1925 and forbade the instruction of evolution in state-run public schools. John W. Butler, a farmer and World Christian Fundamentals Association leader, led a religious campaign that resulted in the *Butler Act*. In the same year, John Scopes, a high school science teacher, was involved in the infamous Scopes Monkey case for allegedly teaching evolution (he was then found guilty and condemned to pay a fine as well). Tennessee's *Butler Act* remained valid until 1967, when it was then abolished. In *Epperson v. Arkansas*, the Supreme Court decided in 1968 that anti-evolution laws were unconstitutional¹³⁰. Although the *Butler Act* is no longer in effect, the argument between

¹²⁹ The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 set quota restrictions per nation at 3% of the country's foreign-born population living in the United States in 1910; this was later decreased to 2% of the foreign-born population counted in the 1890 census. See Middleton Beaman, "Current Legislation: The Immigration Act of 1924," *American Bar Association Journal* 10, no. 7 (1924): 490-92, accessed January 3, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25709038>.

¹³⁰ ' Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee, That it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of the State which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as

supporters of creationism and evolution is still going strong. The trial ignited a fight that certain Christian organizations have continued into the twenty-first century to stop or restrict the teaching of Darwinian theory.

In the 1930s, the issue of youth unemployment (mainly caused by the 1929 Wall Street stock exchange crisis and the crashed of its shares) prompted governmental action through public work projects to keep young people out of the labor market¹³¹. Concerns over unemployment kept on affect the government for the whole twentieth century and urged the implementation of legislations in order to financially help the troubled and people who were in financial straits. For example, veteran unemployment following the end of World War II contributed to the *GI Bill*'s approval¹³². New economic principles started to be introduced into society around 1950, and the economy started to become so significant that the average citizen changed into a consumer. The free market reflects the new values and Campaigns for school choice, charters, and alternate means of paying for them, like vouchers and tuition tax credits, were influenced by free market views. The work of economist Milton Friedman, who first popularized the word vouchers for funding school choice in a 1955 essay and later in his now-famous 1962 book, 'Capitalism and Freedom', is where the idea of choice or free market thinking was first applied to American schools¹³³. Education began to be discussed using economic vocabulary. Public, private, and for-profit schools can all be chosen for their educational options, according to Friedman. In 'Capitalism and Freedom', he made the case that vouchers would let families with limited means select private schools that were of higher caliber than the neighboring public schools. The economy and the school system became so intertwined that entered a political discussion as well. The National Commission on Excellence in Education formed by then-U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel H. Bell issued indeed the 'Nation at Risk' report in April 198. It was highlighted the (weak) relationship between the global markets and the American schools. Education was deemed crucial to ensuring the ability of the United States to compete in a global economy. The opening sentence of the report stated:

'Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors

taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals', Butler Act, section 1, 1925.

¹³¹ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, 534.

¹³² The law gave veterans access to low-interest financing for small businesses and mortgages, job training, hiring advantages, and unemployment benefits. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "GI Bill," Va.gov, 2018, accessed January 4, 2023. <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/>.

¹³³ Joel H Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, chapter 15.

throughout the world [...] We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. ('A Nation at Risk', 1983)¹³⁴.

The report then, demanded educational system change, making the dramatic allegation that the inferior quality of American schools threatened the future of the country.

This issue achieved some resolution with *No Child Left Behind*. Proposed and signed by President George W. Bush, the 2001 federal legislation acted like a reauthorization of Title I of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA)¹³⁵. *No Child Left Behind* significantly expanded the 1965 law's coverage from a specific set of pupils in need of assistance to all students in all public schools. Federal requirements had to be met by all pupils in public schools. In other words, a statute that was once only meant to benefit a specific group of students now applies to all students. The statute mandated states to set uniform standards and exams for all public schools in order to ensure equal educational opportunities (Spring, 2018)¹³⁶. *No Child Left Behind* specifically mandates that public school children be tested annually in reading and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 (and at least once in years 10-12) and that states score schools in relation to whether they are achieving 'adequate yearly progress' (AYP) towards their state's proficiency targets¹³⁷. However, the complicated legal requirements have not succeeded in achieving these objectives and have instead led to a number of unanticipated negative effects. According to the Darling-Hammond article¹³⁸, the consequences include a school curriculum that is too narrowly focused on the low-level skills that are typically evaluated on high stakes tests, improper evaluation of English language learners and students with special needs, and strong incentives to expel low-scoring students from school in order to meet test score goals. Additionally, the legislation does not address the urgent issues of unequal educational resources between schools, as well as the dearth of qualified teachers in high-need schools.

¹³⁴ "A Nation at Risk," web.archive.org (1983), accessed January 4, 2023. <https://web.archive.org/web/20201030104244/https://www2.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>.

¹³⁵ Aiming to narrow achievement inequalities amongst students by giving federal financing to support schools with pupils from low-income families, the act promotes equal access to primary and secondary education.

¹³⁶ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, chapter 15.

¹³⁷ Thomas Dee and Brian Jacob, "The Impact of No Child Left behind on Student Achievement," National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper Series, November 19, 2009, accessed January 4, 2023, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w15531>.

¹³⁸ Linda Darling-Hammond, "Race, Inequality and Educational Accountability: The Irony of 'No Child Left Behind,'" *Race Ethnicity and Education* 10, no. 3 (September 2007): 245-60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320701503207>.

No Child Left Behind's egalitarian and cultural tenets were endorsed by the Obama administration. When President Obama's economic stimulus package mandated a national data system to record student test results and to track students' progress through the educational system in 2009, the administration added another component to nationalizing the school system.

2.6 Black and Native Americans: Controversies Related to the Minorities

The development of the American educational system over time has been marked by various changes, in part as a result of the historical events that have influenced the nation and compelled it to adapt to the changing requirements of society. However, education has not always been welcoming, frequently favoring white men and excluding or discriminating other minorities.

2.6.1 Black Americans

Prior to the Civil War, most African Americans had little or no formal schooling. Some free black people in the north managed to become literate and they started increasingly to seek out formal education because they understood how closely it related to their freedom. Despite the official abolition of slavery after the Civil War (1861-1865), conditions for black people did not significantly improve in many states, particularly in the south. Black people were denied numerous freedoms and opportunities because of the *Jim Crow Law*, which was in place until the start of the civil rights movement. *Jim Crow* regulations kept blacks and whites apart in places like schools, public transit, hospitals, and cemeteries¹³⁹. From the late 18th century until 1954, when the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional, racial segregated schools remained legal¹⁴⁰. After the *Plessy v. Ferguson decision* in 1896, when the Supreme Court determined that racial segregation laws did not violate the U.S. Constitution as long as the facilities for each race were equal in quality, segregated schools were in fact legally recognized. This principle became the basis for the 'separate but equal' principle.

The first period for a black education recognition was called 'first crusade' and it characterized the period of the Civil war (mainly in the southern states). Whereas the period that started with the first World War and ended in the 1930s is commonly known as 'second

¹³⁹ David K. Fremon, *Jim Crow Laws and Racism in American History*, Berkeley Heights (N.J.): Enslow Publishers, 2000, chapter 3.

¹⁴⁰ The court in *Brown v. Board of Education* unanimously rejected legal segregation in public schools and viewed it as a breach of African American children's rights under the 14th Amendment's promise of 'equal protection of the laws' for all residents of the United States.

crusade'. The expansion of segregated schools for African American children was the focus of the second crusade, which was funded by a combination of government funding, private foundation donations, and individual time and monetary contributions from black residents. Additionally, private philanthropists established foundations to aid in financing black schools. Through these initiatives, common schools for black students were eventually established by the 1930s.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was a key source of African Americans' opposition to school segregation (NAACP). *Brown v. Board of Education*, a momentous Supreme Court decision that forbade racial segregation in all public places across the country, marked a watershed in American history¹⁴¹. The decision went on to become the most significant one in 20th-century law. The *Brown* judgment amplified the relevance of education in progressing society as a whole. The Supreme Court's decision also emphasized the importance of providing all American citizens with equal access to education¹⁴².

There is little doubt that improvements have been made since the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown*; but, much more work has to be done to strengthen the whole American educational system. Concerns continue to exist over access to high-quality education. African American students are extensively segregated in housing and schools across the country¹⁴³. They frequently live in extremely poor neighborhoods where it is extremely difficult for them to take advantage of worthwhile possibilities. Awareness of racial/ethnic disparities and their link to residential segregation has even increased as a result of the health and financial crises brought on by the coronavirus illness 2019 (COVID-19)¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴¹ James L. Moore III and Chance W. Lewis, "60 Years after Brown v. Board of Education: Educational Advancement or Decline?," *The Journal of Negro Education* 83, no. 3 (2014): 191-93, <https://doi.org/10.7709/jnegroeducation.83.3.0191>.

¹⁴² David L. Chappell, *Stone of Hope: A Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University Of North Carolina, 2005).

¹⁴³ They used the Child Opportunity Index 2.0 to investigate the racial/ethnic injustices related to the places children are raised. They found out that 'nationally, the Child Opportunity Score for white children (73) is much higher than for black (24) and Hispanic (33) children and [...] inequities in child opportunity are larger within metropolitan areas than across the country'. (Dolores Acevedo-Garcia et al., "Racial and Ethnic Inequities in Children's Neighborhoods: Evidence from the New Child Opportunity Index 2.0," *Health Affairs* 39, no. 10 (October 1, 2020): 1693-1701, <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00735>).

¹⁴⁴ Dolores Acevedo-Garcia et al., "Racial and Ethnic Inequities in Children's Neighborhoods: Evidence from the New Child Opportunity Index 2.0".

2.6.2 Native Americans

The United States went through a period of religious revivalism in the 19th century, which coincided with an increase in the number of evangelical Christians who went on to become missionaries. Among their various responsibilities, these missionaries prioritized converting Native Americans and spreading Christian ideas to help them become civilized people. The missionaries made repeated attempts but encountered strong adult resistance; as a result, they focused on the youngsters, who were frequently taken away from their families to attend special schools. In the early 1800s, they established boarding schools with the intention of ‘converting and civilizing them’¹⁴⁵.

Boarding schools, which were founded with the intention of assimilating native people into society and eradicating native cultures, ended up playing a significant role in the formation of American Indian identities and ultimately fueled the movement for political and cultural self-determination in the late 20th century¹⁴⁶. These schools embraced the American culture, so children’s hair was trimmed, they were required to wear American-style uniforms, they were prohibited from speaking their native tongues, and their tribal names were substituted with English names. Because of the belief that assimilation would go happen more quickly if Indian kids were enrolled among non-Indian students, education reform initiatives throughout the early 1900s led to a switch from boarding schools to day schools near Indian settlements, and finally to public schools. But this approach presented problems as well, since the situation of this minority has always been controversial. The failure of these programs can be acknowledged in the 1969 U.S. Senate report that highlights the major issues in the Native American education. The ‘Indian Education: A National Tragedy, - A National Challenge’¹⁴⁷ report noted indeed:

- a destruction and disorganization of Indian communities and individuals;
- a nation that is massively uninformed and misinformed about the American Indian, and his past and present;
- the classroom and the school becoming a kind of battleground where the Indian child attempts to protect his integrity and identity as individual by defeating the purposes of the schools;

¹⁴⁵ This approach was supported by the Civilization Fund Act of 1819, which gave financing to organizations (mainly religious missionaries) that tried to educate Native Americans.

¹⁴⁶ Julie Davis, “American Indian Boarding School Experiences: Recent Studies from Native Perspectives,” *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 2 (2001): 20-22.

¹⁴⁷ “Indian Education: A National Tragedy - a National Challenge (Kennedy Report),” narf.org (National Indian Law Library, 1969), accessed January 2, 2023, <https://narf.org/nill/resources/education/reports/kennedy/toc.html>.

- a self-righteous intolerance of tribal communities and cultural differences;
- a perpetuation of the cycle of poverty which undermines the success of all other Federal programs.

According to this analysis, this failure is directly tied to the unfavorable views some Americans hold about Native Americans and Native communities. The relationship between Native Americans and the school system has only gotten worse as a result of this. In contrast to other ethnic groups in the U.S., Native American children drop out of school at the highest rate because of the antagonistic connection that has existed for decades and been passed down to the next generation¹⁴⁸.

These findings have also been supported by research conducted in 2007 by the Education Committee of the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators (NCNASL), which looked at the academic achievement of American Indian, Alaska Native (AI/AN), and Native Hawaiian children. According to this research, Native children had a 237 percent higher dropout rate and a 207 percent higher expulsion rate than white pupils. Only seven out of every 100 American Indian/Alaska Native kindergarten students received a bachelor's degree, as opposed to 34 out of every 100 white kindergarten students. The difficulties faced by families and schools are further exacerbated by the consequences of the low economic situation in many Indian villages. The achievement gap is widened by problems caused by low-income housing, inadequate healthcare, and other factors¹⁴⁹.

2.7 Conclusion

The large nation of the United States has a violent past filled with uprisings intended to rid itself of oppression and violence. The country, which today consists of 50 states, is a federal government and both federal and states administration have predetermined functions and obligations that are outlined in the Constitution. Despite the fact that the first educational systems were established in the latter half of the 18th century, the Constitution does not specifically mention who is in charge of them. Although the federal government is not entirely excluded, historically speaking, the states have overseen the educational system. It was

¹⁴⁸ Julie Davis, "American Indian Boarding School Experiences: Recent Studies from Native Perspectives".

¹⁴⁹ Christopher Lohse, "Striving to Achieve Helping Native American Students Succeed," *National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)* (National Caucus of Native American State Legislators, 2008), accessed January 2, 2023. <https://documents.ncsl.org/wwwncsl/LegislativeStaff/Quad-Caucus/strivingtoachieve.pdf>.

common practice for each community to create and sustain its own school(s) and to teach its children in accordance with its own priorities, values, and requirements. Due to this, distinctions between geographical areas have emerged that are influenced by the culture, customs, and values of each respective region.

Differences that subsequently inspired the development of various curricula and, in turn, various teaching philosophies. This led to the adoption of various school texts depending on the states in which they were to be sold or the adoption of the same text with modifications on specific subjects (religious themes or those of social differences for example).

3 Textbooks

3.1 Introducing textbooks

Textbooks and other educational media can be regarded as meaningful ‘agents of socialization’¹⁵⁰, indeed, they do function as tools or means for passing on information and ideals to forthcoming generations. The society and its values in which they are plunged is extremely important. Since school textbooks content and main keynotes tend to depict the predominate concepts, opinion, values, and conventions of the community, they could be defined as ‘thematically and ideologically structured, self-referring progression of communicators and receivers over a specified period of time’¹⁵¹. Textbooks in the United States have been particularly important. In addition to being the main teaching tool in schools, they also functioned as a compensatory measure for teachers’ occasionally subpar preparation. Furthermore, they had a significant impact on how students’ personalities, professional aspirations, and curricula were all shaped¹⁵². This trait has been passed down over time, both in the past and still in the present the American schools’ choice of schoolbooks has a significant impact on the structure of the adopted curriculum, as well as on how knowledge is transmitted. This also affects the motivation and success of the students, whose preparation is based on schoolbooks¹⁵³. These qualities, which are considered fundamental in the education of American students, are the result of a journey that spanned more than 200 years, during which crucial decisions- like how to adopt schoolbooks -had to be made while contending with matters that still dominate the vast field of education. Key social political and religious issues are mirrored in textbooks: the subjects of slavery, relations between white people and people of color, and more recent the LGBTQIA+ movements in American schools continue to be hotly debated in society as well as in schools and in regard to the selection (or lack thereof) of particular textbooks for students.

¹⁵⁰ Veronika Kalmus, “School Textbooks in the Field of Socialization” (Dissertation, 2003), accessed January 15, 2023, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/127609272.pdf>.

¹⁵¹ Frank Biocca, “The Analysis of Discourses within the Political Ad.,” *Television and Political Advertising, Vol. 2: Signs, Codes, and Images* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 45-59.

¹⁵² Beryle C. Santon, “The Value of State Level Textbook Adoption Systems as Perceived by Selected Textbook Publishing Personnel” (Dissertation, 1988), accessed January 22, 2023, https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/77830/LD5655.V856_1988.S267.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹⁵³ Raymond English, “The Politics of Textbook Adoption,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 62, no. 4 (1980): 275-78.

3.2 Adoption of textbooks: the process

Since education is deeply entwined with the governments and because is highly decentralized, states have a lot of power over educational decisions, particularly when it comes to curriculum and textbook selections. It has been determined that the adoption process for textbooks is the key factor in influencing textbook content, organization, and the timing of renewal¹⁵⁴.

After the Civil War (1861-1865), the textbook adoption process started to develop. As early as 1883, according to the first documented tabulation of adoption rules from 1891, ten states had already instituted state control of textbook selection¹⁵⁵. The post-Civil War era was critical in terms of the acceptance of textbooks and in the distinction between local and state adoption. Southern states started establishing procedures for adopting textbooks to prevent schools and those who attended them from being ‘attacked’ by anti-Confederate ideologies. This then had an impact on the publication of school textbooks across the United States. Books started to be published differently according to state (mostly due to variations between those in the North and those in the South), and even today, the majority of adoption states are still in the South and West¹⁵⁶.

There are two procedures in existence in the United States when it comes to schoolbook adoption: on one hand, the states are in charge of prescribing textbooks at the state agency level. The usage of textbooks is decided at the state level by a total of twenty states and three territories¹⁵⁷, which are referred to as textbook adoption states¹⁵⁸. On the other hand, the remaining 28 states, often called ‘open territory’ states, have delegated authority to local school districts¹⁵⁹. The difference between states that used a local-level adoption (North-Eastern and Mid-Western states) and those that adopted a state policy (Southern and Western states) became

¹⁵⁴ Roger Farr and Michael Tulley, “State Level Adoption of Basal Readers: Goals, Processes, and Recommendations.” *Theory into Practice* 28, no. 4 (1989): 248-53.

¹⁵⁵ Roger Farr and Michael Tulley, “State Level Adoption of Basal Readers: Goals, Processes, and Recommendations”.

¹⁵⁶ Chester Finn, “The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption,” *www.edexcellence.net* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, September 2004), accessed January 15, 2023, https://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/Mad%20World_Test2_8.pdf.

¹⁵⁷ Alabama, California (at the elementary level but not at the secondary one), Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Guam, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands.

¹⁵⁸ Vincent Scudella, “State Textbook Adoption” (Education Commission of the States, September 2013), accessed January 6, 2023, <https://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/09/23/10923.pdf>.

¹⁵⁹ Figure 1 illustrates the different approach of each States in reference to textbook adoption. Beryle Crockett Santon, “The Value of State Level Textbook Adoption Systems as Perceived by Selected Textbook Publishing Personnel”.

evident from the early 20th century onwards¹⁶⁰. Between 1890 and 1950, there was a shift in favor of state-choice policies. There are three basic explanations that are frequently given for this decision: firstly, the attainment of a unified state-wide curriculum, the adoption of high-quality textbooks, and then the decreased costs of textbooks by purchasing them in bulk¹⁶¹. Farr and Tulley¹⁶² have reported on the distinctions between state-wide and local adoption states. In state-wide systems, textbooks are typically examined by two committees, one at the state level and the other at the district level, whereas local systems only use the committees at the district level. Therefore, the methods of selection are important because they are varied but also because they serve different purposes. The process of textbooks adoption has, in fact, played a significant role in influencing the books' content, structure, and revision date.

3.2.1 Local-level adoption

The textbooks and instructional materials that are being considered for adoption must be reviewed by committees that local boards of education must appoint and then adopted based on their recommendations. These committees, which are made up of teachers, supervisors, and parents whose children were enrolled in the Local Education Agency (LEA) at the time of their appointment, are organized by grade and subject area. The local board may also nominate subject-matter specialists in the grade level or area in which textbooks and instructional materials are to be evaluated. Following the committees' submission of recommendations to the local board of education, the director of schools keeps track of all textbooks and instructional materials that the board of education has approved, sends the commissioner of education a copy of the adoption's record, and posts the list on the LEA's website¹⁶³.

¹⁶⁰ Michael Watt, "Research on the Textbook Selection Process in the United States of America: A Historical Review of Developments." *IARTEM E-Journal* 2, no. 1 (2009): 1-24, accessed January 6, 2023. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506523.pdf>.

¹⁶¹ Michael G. Watt, "Selecting Instructional Materials: A Survey of Decision-Making Processes" (Master's Thesis, 1990), accessed January 14, 2023, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED325113.pdf>.

¹⁶² Roger Farr and Michael Tulley, "State Level Adoption of Basal Readers: Goals, Processes, and Recommendations," *Theory into Practice* 28, no. 4 (1989): 248-53.

¹⁶³ "Textbook Review, Approval, and Adoption Process," [www.tn.gov](https://www.tn.gov/education/textbook-services/textbook-adoption-process.html) (TN Department of Education), accessed January 15, 2023, <https://www.tn.gov/education/textbook-services/textbook-adoption-process.html>.

3.2.2 State-level adoption

The requirements posed by the evolving U.S. public education system and the needs of professional educators led to the emergence of state-level textbook adoption rules and procedures. Uniformed textbooks started to be needed in the 1850s for teaching classes that started to be divided in grades and groups¹⁶⁴. The State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission is composed of ten people, whose job it is to recommend a list of textbooks and instructional materials to the State Board of Education for approval. A county superintendent, a city superintendent, a principal, one teacher or supervisor from each of the grades K-3, 4-8, and 9-12, as well as one person from each of the state's three grand divisions who is not employed in the state's educational system, are required to make up the commission¹⁶⁵. According to the State Board of Education's adopted educational standards for the subject area or grade level in question, all textbooks and instructional materials recommended by the commission for approval must: not contain any glaring, significant, untrue, or grammatical errors; and fulfill any physical requirements set forth by the commission in order to ensure the longevity of the textbooks and teaching materials. In general, nevertheless, an adoption entitles the chosen texts to the use of state funds for purchasing; if a nonadopted text is used, it must be purchased with local funds. (California and a few other states allow exclusions with very good justification.) The books that should be adopted are often recommended by a committee that has been established. Each state has a different level of control that the department of education has over adoption¹⁶⁶. It has been identified nine current primary objectives for state adoption: the uniformity of the curriculum must be achieved statewide, the textbooks selected must be of the best quality, the costs should not be very high, local and school district should not be loaded with too much work, the adoption process should involve the public participation, it must be provided structure and order to the adoption process, a period review and updating must be ensured, and the marketing practices of the textbook publishing industry controlled and finally the school districts must be protected from textbook controversy¹⁶⁷.

¹⁶⁴ Roger Farr and Michael Tulley, "State Level Adoption of Basal Readers: Goals, Processes, and Recommendations".

¹⁶⁵ "Textbook Review, Approval, and Adoption Process".

¹⁶⁶ Raymond English, "The Politics of Textbook Adoption".

¹⁶⁷ Roger Farr and Michael Tulley, "State Level Adoption of Basal Readers: Goals, Processes, and Recommendations".

The matter of which of the two different adoption strategies is the best to embrace, or at least more effective, has been brought up frequently during the times. One of the most influential studies was the Tulley and Rayfrod's, who researched the field in order to find out which option was the most appropriate. They compared the two types of adoption and tried to discover if there were any discrepancies in:

‘The prices paid for basal readers, the frequency with which new reading textbooks were selected, the copyright dates of the reading textbooks in current use, the specific basal readers selected and the state textbook legislation’¹⁶⁸.

The studies discovered very few differences between school districts in adoption states and school districts in non-adoption states in the outcomes of the selection processes or the procedures themselves. The one distinction that stands out as being constant is that school districts in adoption states have fewer options for basic textbooks than school districts in non-adoption states. Despite the findings of the two researchers, many experts are confident that the decision should be made locally. Extending local adoption would imply giving publishers more leeway to create texts that can vary, that are not destined to be condensed into a list, and that do not already have predetermined content. This would also aid teachers in avoiding the misconception that the curriculum is reflected in the schoolbook. In fact, publishers tend to create textbooks that specifically match the requirements of the state curriculum for the significant adoption states. However, a state's size can vary greatly, and the various environments in which children are located can fluctuate considerably. As a result, adopting books at the state level runs the danger of not accurately reflecting the diverse backgrounds of students and instructors. As it was already mentioned, the twenty-one states that currently have statewide adoption policies are primarily in the south and west. The three states that have the monopoly in the textbook business are California, Texas, and Florida, which together account for up to a third of the \$4.3 billion K-12 textbook market in the country¹⁶⁹. For this reason, it became expensive to produce textbook series that were not in the adoption list of these big and influential states. This has led to publishers coordinating textbook production and release to these states' adoption periods, enhancing sales and reducing competition. This phenomenon has been affecting the

¹⁶⁸ Roger Farr and Michael Tulley, “State Level Adoption of Basal Readers: Goals, Processes, and Recommendations”.

¹⁶⁹ Chester Finn, “The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption,” *www.edexcellence.net* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, September 2004), https://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/Mad%20World_Test2_8.pdf.

supply of textbooks in other states and it is commonly called ‘Texas effect’ or ‘California effect’¹⁷⁰. Basically, publishers combine the California¹⁷¹ and Texas¹⁷² charts to create textbooks that adhere to the various standards, requirements, and educational objectives of both states. Since textbooks are required to include an increasing number of topics, key terms, and the like, they frequently hop from one topic to another, covering very little ground thoroughly. Joan Delfattore, cited in Chester Finn writing, stated:

‘Publishers aiming for the approved lists in both states have responded by producing books designed, as far as possible, not to offend anyone. In order to increase minority representation in textbooks, for example, publishers include Martin Luther King’s ‘I Have a Dream’ speech in high school literature anthologies- but only after removing references to racism in various Southern states, making the speech sound bland’¹⁷³.

This raises the question of how issues, particularly those that are social, economic, and politically charged, interact with the educational system and influence how specific subjects are covered in textbooks. There were moments when it has been attempted to influence or alter the public use of history, all in the name of inclusion of minorities (and not only in textbooks). For primarily political reasons, fundamental historical texts- like, in this instance, Martin Luther King Jr.’s ‘I have a dream’ speech- are sometimes either deleted or repurposed, which distorts the original texts. This then explains why issues related to racism (especially in the southern states) or slavery of African Americans during the country’s colonial eras are only mentioned briefly or superficially in some school textbooks; this is because the textbooks also function as a political tool and as such has the power to affect and shape public opinion. All of that could be also referred to as the public use of history. This term started to be commonly and widely used from 1986 when the German philosopher Habermas intervened in an argument about

¹⁷⁰ Michael G. Watt, “Selecting Instructional Materials: A Survey of Decision-Making Processes” (Master’s Thesis, 1990), accessed January 14, 2023, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED325113.pdf>.

¹⁷¹ California has strict ‘social content’ standards. While the State Board of Education (SBE) authorizes textbooks and other educational resources for grades K-8, suggestions for years 9-12 are left to the discretion of the school districts. Chester Finn, “The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption”.

¹⁷² Texas has developed and maintained books that were socially and politically conservative. Texas has a traditional state adoption policy similar to Florida and is second in terms of K-12 population. Contrary to California, the Texas Education Agency includes all educational materials, including textbooks, in their adoption statistics. Chester Finn, “The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption”.

¹⁷³ Chester Finn, “The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption,” *www.edexcellence.net* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, September 2004), https://edex.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/publication/pdfs/Mad%20World_Test2_8.pdf.

Germany's history and the country's identity problem following the Shoah (Historikerstreit)¹⁷⁴. The issue became central and developed (mainly in Italy) with the intervention of Nicola Gallerano. He made a distinction between the more advanced, scientific level of usage and the less advanced level that spreads the popular knowledge of history¹⁷⁵. Gallerano indeed defined the public use of history as all that 'is developed outside the domain of scientific research in its stricter sense, outside the history of historians [...] and it does not only include various means of communication, but also art and literature, public places and institutions'¹⁷⁶. And this has happened and is still happening today in American society and education system through the textbooks as well: politicization of historical research and of historical narratives.

3.3 Historical development of textbooks: from the colonial times until nowadays

The adoption of textbooks in the United States can be traced back to the early colonial period¹⁷⁷, when the first colonizers, the so-called Pilgrim Fathers, moved from England coasts and settled down in the American territories. Religion was the central pillar of their values and resulted applied not only to the religious sphere but to the whole society's. Religion was not just a matter of personal preference: early American society was completely affected by its teachings. Indeed, the principles and ideals of the Christian faith allowed for the preservation of social and economic structures that were based on European customs, traditions, and social roles. This was also reflected in education, where teaching reading and writing (mainly Bible passages) was carried out with the intention of upholding a clear social order and following and preserving religious ideals become the principles that governed children's and future adults' lives¹⁷⁸. Because of this, it is not unexpected that the first and most widely reading school literature mirrored all these ideals. The 'New England Primer', initially published between 1687 and 1690 by Benjamin Harris was one of the first textbooks published in the colonies and it was

¹⁷⁴ Claudio Pavone, "The Two Levels of Public Use of the Past," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (June 2001): 74-86, <https://doi.org/10.1080/714004565>.

¹⁷⁵ Claudio Pavone, "The Two Levels of Public Use of the Past".

¹⁷⁶ Nicola Gallerano, "History and the Public Use of History," *Diogenes* 42, no. 168 (December 1994): 85-102, <https://doi.org/10.1177/039219219404216807>.

¹⁷⁷ Crockett Santon, "The Value of State Level Textbook Adoption Systems as Perceived by Selected Textbook Publishing Personnel", 33

¹⁷⁸ Especially in the beginnings and despite the felt desire to instill Christian ideals in children, the only people in the colonies who were given an education were the noble sons (who were taught in public schools) and a few middle-class progeny, they were educated at the local grammar schools. See Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*.

so influential that it had been maintained in use for the following 150 years. The book reflected the strict and authoritarian Puritan religious ethos of colonial education¹⁷⁹. In fact, the emphasis in colonial education was placed on a particular approach to teaching as well as respect to authority. Students were required to memorize the entire book; they were taught to accept official readings as accurate rather than being challenged to critically evaluate and express their thoughts on religious literature. The textbook begins with letters, syllables, and words that the students had to learn by heart. To promote rote memorization of Calvinist ideology and to teach reading skills, Harris combined religious content with poor woodcut pictures. Gradually more complicated sentences meant for rote memorizing were introduced after the alphabet, simple letter combinations, and syllables. Through alphabetic rhymed couplets, poetry, prayers, and scriptures, themes of sin, death, punishment, salvation, and deference to authority were presented. The rhyming couplet for the letter F, for example, featured the theme of punishment: ‘The idle fool / Is whipt at school’¹⁸⁰.

‘The Lord’s Prayer’, ‘the Creed’, ‘the Ten Commandments’, a section titled ‘Duty of Children Toward Their Parents’, a list of the Old and New Testament books, and a list of numbers are listed in the book. After these sections, the numbers are introduced employing the phrase ‘the numeral letters and figures, which serve for the ready finding of any Chapter, Psalm, and Verse in the Bible’. The children would eventually read about the story of John Rogers speaking to his nine children about the tragic story of his family¹⁸¹ and finally a ‘Shorter Catechism’. The ending section was composed of a set of questions and the correct answers that children needed to learn. It starts with the question: ‘What is the chief end of Man?’ and the students must then answer: ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever’¹⁸².

A reference book for later works, ‘The New English Primer’ was utilized for a considerable amount of time. Many elements of the textbook were included in Noah Webster’s ‘Spelling book’, that became the most important textbook during the 19th century and a massive contribution to the establishment of the common school system in the United States. He wrote the first spelling book in 1783, two other volumes followed in the next year, and it was all included in a series named ‘A Grammatical Institute of the English Language’¹⁸³. He was an

¹⁷⁹ “A Famous Book - the ‘England Primer,’” *The New York Times*, November 14 November 1897, accessed January 15, 2023, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1897/11/14/105957671.pdf>.

¹⁸⁰ See Figure 12 in the Appendix. “New England Primer,” Indiana University (The Lily Library, August 17, 2009), accessed January 15, 2023, https://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/lilly/exhibitions_legacy/NewEnglandPrimerWeb/page8.html.

¹⁸¹ In 1554 the entire family was burned at the stake.

¹⁸² See Figure 13 in the Appendix.

¹⁸³ Joel H Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, chapter 3.

important contributor to the development and upkeep of the English language and American culture. His spelling manuals contributed to the establishment of an English-speaking, Protestant, Anglo-American society that was dominant. The main characteristic of his books was indeed the strong presence of the American element and the American patriotism. In addition to teaching reading and writing, Webster believed that his texts should generate virtuous and patriotic Americans, build an American language, and foster a sense of unity among all Americans. The focus placed on Latin and Greek, as well as the conventional uses of the Bible as a textbook were attacked. Webster thought that whereas the old-world nations had a lengthy history of national identity, America had been formed and needed to build its own true identity through education and language¹⁸⁴. The federal catechism, which was included in earlier editions of Webster's spelling book, was one technique intended to impart right political principles. The idea of including a part concerning the catechism and the religious beliefs was taken from the famous textbook 'The New English Primer', it was not something totally new¹⁸⁵. What constitute the element of novelty was the juxtaposition of political ideas with the religious ones and this was considered a new and important element. In addition to being widely accepted and adopted textbook - 'The New English Primer' - impacted other authors and the production of other books, such as 'William McGuffey's Readers' in the second half of the 19th century¹⁸⁶. The series was so popular that it has been estimated that between 1836 and 1870 some 47 million copies were sold¹⁸⁷: they emerged as textbooks of the country, and they evolved as important creation that promoted the graded schools and a more common curriculum. The main characteristic was the moral and religious lessons. The books were thought in order to teach appropriate behavior in a specific setting, there is to say the industrial society and the upcoming issues risen by the creation of wealth and the development of social disparities. The McGuffey Readers' coverage of economic issues was based on the Calvinist idea that prosperity was an outward symbol of internal redemption. This economic justification made it possible to tolerate a society in which wealth was being concentrated and the gap between the rich and the poor

¹⁸⁴ Daniel Tanner, "Textbooks - School Textbooks in the United States," education.stateuniversity.com, accessed January 5, 2023, <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2506/Textbooks-SCHOOL-TEXTBOOKS-IN-UNITED-STATES.html>.

¹⁸⁵ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, chapter 3.

¹⁸⁶ McGuffey (1800-1873) was born and educated in Ohio. He then became a professor of philosophy at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He had long been unsatisfied with children's textbooks as a former country schoolmaster and had already begun to create two readers. The 'First' and 'Second Readers' were published in 1836; the 'Third' and 'Fourth Readers' followed in 1837. Gerry Bohning, "The McGuffey Eclectic Readers: 1836-1986," *The Reading Teacher* 40, no. 3 (1986): 263-69.

¹⁸⁷ Moreover between 1836 and 1920, almost 122 million copies of the McGuffey texts were purchased. Daniel Tanner, "Textbooks-School Textbooks in the United States".

was widening. The poor were educated to be without envy, thrifty, diligent, and moral, whereas the rich were explained to help the poor and to treat them with kindness¹⁸⁸. In this way, the series of books educated both the two parties of the society in order to not create social tensions. The ‘McGuffey Readers’ series were a perfect example for the development of the common school and the industrial society because of their concerns with morality and the formation of virtuous character.

It is not a coincidence that Christian principles were so pervasive in many facets of American culture and society to then encroach into spheres like politics, economics, society, education, etc. This period was indeed defined as an ‘historical epoch filled with trying moral tests for the American people’¹⁸⁹. Indeed, the 19th century was marked by several socio-economic changes including strong population growth (also due to large migratory movements), industrialization, improvements in technology, but most importantly the flourishing of moral and religious values. The period following the Civil War experienced a flourishing within the evangelical denominations such as Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists, which manifested the power to establish churches but also colleges and universities that had their religious and cultural traditions at the center¹⁹⁰. The American Protestant beliefs mutated because of the Second Great Awakening, a period that started around 1800 and reached the maximum development in the 1830s, it paved the way for enthusiastic social reform movements, including abolitionism and temperance. The Second Great Awakening placed a strong emphasis on the necessity of converting people to protestant Christianity (much like the First Great Awakening did in the 1730s and 1740s)¹⁹¹ and on personal commitment. The evangelicals (from the ancient Greek ‘good news’)¹⁹² were being

¹⁸⁸ Daniel Tanner, “Textbooks - School Textbooks in the United States”.

¹⁸⁹ Leonard Bacon who wrote in 1897 and described the nineteenth century as a very intense period, characterized by a lot of social changes, such as immigrations, population growth, industrialization but mostly morality and religion. Cited in Christopher Hodge Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2013), 107.

¹⁹⁰ Christopher Hodge Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction*, 108.

¹⁹¹ What distinguished the development of the First from the Second Great Awakening was their social function. The primary objective of the former was to reconsider church authority rather than to change and enlarge churches; in contrast, the latter, represented by the Methodist and Baptist sects, were not so much restructuring church life as they were enlarging it by bringing in large numbers of new Christians. Donald G. Mathews, “The Second Great Awakening as an Organizing Process, 1780-1830: An Hypothesis,” *American Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1969): 23, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2710771>.

¹⁹² The word's Greek etymology is found in the New Testament and it gained popularity in the first centuries AD as a means of separating the violent Roman Empire from the loving movement of Jesus' followers. The violent Roman Empire frequently announced its own "good news" to commemorate military victories. Jonathan Merritt, “What Is an ‘Evangelical’?,” *The Atlantic*, December 7, 2015, accessed February 11, 2023, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/12/evangelical-christian/418236/>.

acknowledged as the Christianity of the revivals. The core was the direct involvement of Jesus in everyone's life and as a consequence they rejected the ideology of rationalism and the tenet of the Enlightenment. Protestant evangelical organizations consistently advocated for individual moral improvement, which included abstaining from alcohol use. The first 'Temperance societies' were thus established, preaching against excessive alcohol consumption. As they gained popularity after the Civil War, they eventually took on a national profile and they became known as the 'National Prohibition Party'. The 18th Amendment, which was passed in 1919 and forbade the manufacturing, transportation, and sale of alcohol in the United States, officially established the Prohibition era (and remained in effect until 1933). Following the repeal of Prohibition, Christian temperance organizations started using moral persuasion again.

This trait of considering Christian values as a pillar in society and education in particular continued to be constant in the early 1900s. Indeed, the early 1900s, up to World War I, were characterized by a strong religious presence, specifically related to Christian fundamentalisms. As far as Christian fundamentalists are concerned, they were pivotal figures in the 20th century since they firmly rejected the theory of evolution: this was crucial for the education in 1920s and then again in the 1980s (when the issue regained significance, as we will see further on). Starting from their origins, the roots of Christian fundamentalism were deeply ingrained in the philosophical underpinnings of American Protestantism of the 19th century. It was not until the early 1920s that the word fundamentalism became widely used. The word first appeared after the publication of a series of pamphlets written by prominent evangelicals between 1910 and 1915 called 'The Fundamentalist: A Testimony to the Truth'¹⁹³. Fundamentalists advocated the elements of their faith that they believed to be essential and basic such as the biblical inerrancy (there is to say the leading importance of the Bible, considered as the book originated from the divine and encapsulated by humans), the virgin birth of Christ, the substitutionary atonement (there is to say the sacrifice of Christ in order to save humans from their sins), the resurrection of Christ and the existence of miracles. Furthermore, their pessimistic visions stressed the idea of the necessity of personal conversion in order to reach the salvation. Although each of these tenets carried the weight of Christian tradition on their side, the 19th century's new scientific discoveries and the development of biblical higher criticism models had a significant impact on American Christianity. The common-sense realism, originated during the Scottish

¹⁹³ Christopher Hodge Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction*, 245-69.

Enlightenment¹⁹⁴, prevailed at the time between religious and scientific teaching. The Scriptures had a central and key role and any type of scientific knowledge that opposed to the Christian essentials was considered as false and non-plausible. Indeed, during the 19th century, more than twenty states adopted the anti-evolution teaching. Schools and teachers were forbidden to teach Darwin's theory of evolution but the Bible creationist version, and many anti-evolution laws were mandated (such as the *Butler Act* issued in Tennessee in 1925)¹⁹⁵. The teaching of evolution was of the highest concern for a large numbers of Christians churches and institutions so much that there has been set up a trial against a teacher who bucked the trend. Formally known ad as *The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes* and generally referred as the Scopes Monkey Trial it was a legal case instituted in 1925 against the high school teacher John Scopes who was allegedly accused of teaching Darwin's theory. At the end he was found guilty, and he was condemned to pay a fee of 100 dollars, but he raised awareness on the issue that started to be debated and gained relevance even in the 80s. Fundamentalists were indeed challenged, and they were given a negative spot and new modernist interpretations started to reach consensus¹⁹⁶. Although they won the trial, their popularity did not increase. Indeed, the debate turned the fundamentalists nearly into ludicrous, conservative and bigots in the eyes of the nation and as a consequence their support and their following started to decline. On the other hand, modernists gained consensus and their importance began to grow more and more. Sixty years later from the Scopes Trial, Christian fundamentalists redoubled their efforts to stop the teaching of evolution and other 'secular humanism' ideas and issues. In the end, they were successful in having a significant impact on Texas' acceptance of textbooks¹⁹⁷.

Later on, at the beginning of the 1920s indeed a group of parents, and politicians made an effort to limit the exposition of kids to what were viewed as immoral and subversive beliefs. This was a very delicate period, there was a fine line between what was accepted and what was considered anti-American. Schools in particular were the target of several attacks from different sides, which emerged after the immigration boom following World War I¹⁹⁸. Immigrants and

¹⁹⁴ Thomas Reid (1710-1796) is believed to be the founder of the Scottish common sense. The first tenet of common-sense realism is that perception tends to provide humans access to the outside world as it truly is, and the second is that perceptions of middle-sized things have characteristics that are distinct from the microphysical characteristics that make them up. This, applied to the Bible, meant that any believer was granted the possibility understand it because they had God-given common sense and the Holy Spirit. (Mario De Caro, "Realism, Common Sense, and Science," *The Monist* 98, no. 2 (2015): 197-214.

¹⁹⁵ Kevin Jeffereys, "R.A. Butler, the Board of Education and the 1944 Education Act," *History* 69, no. 227 (1984): 415-31.

¹⁹⁶ Historic Films Footage Archive, "The Monkey Trial - 1925," *YouTube*, January 31, 2013, accessed February 8, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofM99LFZhxo>.

¹⁹⁷ Chester Finn, "The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption," 7.

¹⁹⁸ Chester Finn, "The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption".

advocacy organizations criticized the time's textbooks for excluding their stories from the American history. This then ignited a debate between those who promoted a multicultural debate characterized by a plurality of different histories and values and those who argued for the priority of bringing out American values as fundamental and important values in the formation of citizens. While there were immigrants who criticized their exclusion from schoolbooks, in the same way nationalists lamented the lack of the centrality of American values in the same books. Indeed, it was in those years that the newborn patriotic veterans' 'American Legion' organization (legally approved by the Congress after the World War I in 1919)¹⁹⁹ lamented that textbooks lacked a sense of patriotism. For instance, public schools were the focus of the veteran patriotic organization 'American Legion'²⁰⁰. The veterans put a lot of effort to remove what was considered as communist and anti-patriotic threat from public schools to the extent that the National Americanism Commission directed local posts to implement the Legion's Americanism campaign. The campaign encouraged indeed the '100% Americanism' ideal and 'combat all anti-American tendencies, activities and propaganda'. As a consequence, one of the main objectives concerning education was the fostering of the teaching of Americanism and promoting the patriotic values²⁰¹. It is therefore not surprising that there have been several episodes of censorship in this period. Glaring example is that of Harold Rugg textbooks who came under strong criticism and censored because defined as not promoting the American values. After teaching for five years at the University of Illinois (when he started to develop his first educational ideas), Harold Rugg started working at the Lincoln School and he began to plan educational and curriculum theories, since he considered the curriculum as the backbone of the education. Collective activity and planning were stressed in Harold Rugg's social studies series²⁰². The series called 'Man and His Changing Society', got its start in the 1920s as a collection of booklets that combined the teaching of history, economics, and sociology to junior high school students. The series grew and peaked to very

¹⁹⁹ "The American Legion. History," www.legion.org (American Legion), accessed January 22, 2023, <https://www.legion.org/history>.

²⁰⁰ As a group for patriotic veterans, Congress granted the American Legion its charter in 1919. The Legion, which began as a collection of World War I veterans who were tired of fighting, developed into one of the most powerful charitable organizations in the country by focusing on service to veterans, servicemembers, and communities. The Legion has gained hundreds of benefits for veterans over the years, contributed to significant social change in America, and created numerous significant children's and youth-focused initiatives. "The American Legion, History," www.legion.org (American Legion), accessed January 16, 2023, <https://www.legion.org/history>

²⁰¹ "Americanism," mylegion.org (American Legion Department of Texas, October 12, 2011), accessed January 16, 2023, <https://txlegion.org/programs/americanism/>.

²⁰² Murry R. Nelson, "Rugg on Rugg: His Theories and His Curriculum," *Curriculum Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (1978): 119, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1179674>.

high levels of popularity²⁰³. Despite widespread support, by the late 1930s, right-wing organizations and individuals such as the National Association of Manufacturers, the Advertising Federation of America, the Hearst press, the American Legion, and others launched a full-scale attack on Rugg's textbooks in an attempt to depict them as being against American institutions and ideals²⁰⁴. Rugg's series incited the wrath of nationalist groups and people by rejecting the idea that free capitalism and Americanism were mutually exclusive. The Rugg textbooks charted the development of contemporary American democracy in the face of prevalent social difficulties, but extremely patriotic organizations considered any examination of disquieting concepts and themes in American life as anti-American. The demise of the Rugg books showed the effectiveness of public relations tactics in making the general public identify anything critical of the American political and economic system with communist and anti-Americanism.

These were in fact the years when the United States was trying to recover from the terrible crisis of 1929. The Wall Street stock market crash in October was one of the darkest moments in the socio-economic history of the United States, which would later have worldwide repercussions. Unemployment levels rose exponentially, the poverty line was very high, people had lost everything, and the economy was on its knees²⁰⁵. If at the economic level the newly elected President Roosevelt (who succeeded Hoover in the 1932 election) was trying to restore stability to the country by introducing the 'New Deal' recovery plan, at the religious level the various churches had also entered a crisis. After the ideological disunity of the 1920s and 1930s, many American churches had a revitalized feeling of unified mission as a result of World War II. The Federal Council (FC) and numerous other ecumenical organizations joined to form the Federal Council of Churches (FCC) in the 1950s, marking the pinnacle of the Protestant ecumenical movement. Following World War II, the leaders of these organizations came together with other Americans in a shared aim to demonstrate how the Christian faith provided the most effective barrier to the rise of global communism²⁰⁶. At the sociocultural level, a sense

²⁰³ The series, which was published by Ginn & Company from 1933 to 1936, was expanded to encompass grades three through six. In 1938, when it was at its most successful, the series sold 289,000 copies. In 1938, when it was at its most successful, the series sold 289,000 copies. Rugg calculated that several million students utilized the materials in over 5,000 schools during the 1930s. See Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*, chapter 11.

²⁰⁴ Daniel Tanner, "The Textbook Controversies," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 100, no. 6 (November 1999): 122-47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819910000605>.

²⁰⁵ Joseph Locke and Ben Wright, eds., "The Great Depression," in *The American Yawp. A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook* (Stanford University Press) accessed February 11, 2023, <https://www.americanyawp.com/text/23-the-great-depression/>.

²⁰⁶ Christopher Hodge Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction*, 293-316.

of belonging and patriotism against enemies also sparked. The opposition against communists was born too, which would later reach its peak during the Cold War. After World War II, anticommunism became a benchmark for assessing school textbooks and curriculum, and this trend of public opinion persisted. The American Legion and the National Association of Manufacturers' activities paved the way for conflicts over the concepts that would be taught in public schools well into the twenty-first century.

The civil rights movement's full social impact was seen in the second half of the 1960s, along with protests against the intensifying Vietnam War, acts of civil disobedience in major cities, and student disturbances on college campuses that spread to high schools. The need for curriculum relevance was now present in universities and schools²⁰⁷. It was with the civil rights movement in the 60s that the racial images and depictions started to be put on trial. A prominent group of historians from the University of California led by Kenneth Stampp published the findings. The Berkeley, California, chapter of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) had convened the panel in 1963 to examine high school textbooks and the American history textbooks chosen for use in grades 5 and 8. African American history was almost completely ignored, according to the panel of expert historians from CORE. A 1964 California State Department of Education report on 'The Negro in American History Textbooks' declared that black people are very often not represented and recognized by white people. The report claimed on the other hand the necessity for black people to be witnessed, and more importantly, to be witnessed as Americans, because this is what they were, Americans²⁰⁸. Concerns about racial integration of textbooks were advanced by a group of publishers too: the American Textbook Publishers Institute (ATPI). ATPI's McCaffrey explained how publishers were under pressure from regional school districts to create multiracial textbooks. Publishing special editions specifically for the southern market was one of the dubious tactics alleged against several publishers. Textbook editions published by Harcourt, Brace & World lacked images of people of color. The company's elementary school grammar and composition textbooks received sight-unseen approval in southern states in 1965. Books with depictions of white and African American youngsters playing together in books were the subject of complaints from southern school systems²⁰⁹. Giving textbook figures a 'sunburn' was one way of referring to the addition of African Americans to images. This approach involved a number of techniques. Drawings were 'combined' by employing two colors or various mechanical color separations. Simple

²⁰⁷ Daniel Tanner, "Textbooks - School Textbooks in the United States".

²⁰⁸ Kenneth M. Stampp et al., "The Negro in American History Textbooks," *Negro History Bulletin* 31, no. 6 (1968): 13-16.

²⁰⁹ Joel H. Spring, *The American School: From the Puritans to the Trump Era*.

black and white line drawings displayed racially ambiguous traits that the reader's imagination may fill in²¹⁰. By the late 1960s, it was becoming more and more clear that the discipline-centered approach to curriculum reform had overlooked the needs of the learner and the necessity of an interdisciplinary curricular structure to fulfill the purpose of general education in a free society²¹¹. An enormous national effort was made to overhaul science and math curricula in the wake of the cold war (1947- 1991) and the space race (1955-1975), and this was made possible with federal funding provided by the National Science Foundation. The primary objective of this initiative from the 1950s to the early 1970s was to increase the number of scientists and mathematicians to counter the Soviet threat. The programs embraced a discipline-centered doctrine focused on specialized, puristic, theoretical, and abstract knowledge and were controlled, directed, and promoted by university scholar-specialists. The number of college science majors sharply decreased, and eminent scientists and mathematicians who had not been involved in the discipline-centered projects started to review the school textbooks and then published critical reports criticizing them for being too theoretical and abstract for kids and teenagers²¹².

Christians Fundamentalist reacted negatively to the 1970s' liberalization and inclusion of multiculturalism in textbooks in the 1980s. A number of local lawsuits were supported by Rev. Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority²¹³ and they addressed the morality of education and textbooks. Leaders and members of the Moral Majority (Falwell, Paul Weyrich and Howard Phillips)²¹⁴ indeed thought that the 1960s and 1970s, which saw significant deviations from traditional Christian ideals in politics and society, were crucial in setting off the nation's moral and social downfall. The Moral Majority and the Christian Voice (both founded in 1979) were part of the New Christian Right, that supported social and political conservatism. Among the other things, the group advocated against abortion, for the restoration of school prayer, for the reinstatement of traditional gender roles for men and women, for the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, for the suppression of LGBT rights, and for the return of the nation to 'its founding principles'. Regarding the education, they exerted pressure on school systems to remove

²¹⁰ Daniel Tanner, "The Textbook Controversies," *Teachers College Record: The Voice of Scholarship in Education* 100, no. 6 (November 1999): 122-47, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819910000605>

²¹¹ Daniel Tanner, "The Textbook Controversies".

²¹² Daniel Tanner, "The Textbook Controversies".

²¹³ Jerry Falwell was the founder of the Moral Majority, a religious group emerged in the late 1970s that became very influential in the American society. "Jerry Falwell," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, October 2022, accessed January 22, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jerry-Falwell>.

²¹⁴ Doug Banwart, "Jerry Falwell, the Rise of the Moral Majority, and the 1980 Election," *Western Illinois Historical Review* V (2013): 133-57, accessed January 22, 2023, <http://www.wiu.edu/cas/history/wihr/pdfs/Banwart-MoralMajorityVol5.pdf>.

'immoral' textbooks from the curriculum and this reflected in the teaching or not of certain tenets. As a result, the popular evolutionism-creationism subject reappeared during this time. This debate over accepted or unaccepted schoolbooks harkens back to the past debate of the 1920s, and in particular recalls the Scopes Trial when John Scopes was condemned for going against the socio-cultural values of the time. Those beliefs were indeed very much intertwined with religious values, so much so that teaching the theory of evolution was banned. A number of southern states passed laws demanding the 'balanced treatment' of evolution and creationism in the 1980s as a result of this discussion, which is resurrected and highlights the interconnectedness of religion, morality, society, and education.

The topic was so important and pertinent that it became interwoven with politics, to the point where it moved beyond simply debating which systems that upheld particular principles were preferable to adopt and actually laws have been passed. In the end there was a tentative of mediation with *Edwards v. Aguillard Act* enacted in 1987 that overturned the Louisiana legislation (the *Creationism Act*)²¹⁵ that prohibited the teaching of evolution in public schools unless the creationism was also covered²¹⁶.

The U.S. Supreme Court established that the *Creationism Act* violated the First Amendment of the Constitution since it forbade the teaching of Darwin's theory unless balanced with the creationist. The Court established indeed that 'the Act does not further its stated secular purpose of 'protecting academic freedom'. It does not enhance the freedom of teachers to teach what they choose and fails to further the goal of 'teaching all of the evidence'²¹⁷. *Edwards v. Aguillard* began a gradual secularization of education but the issue that it is not ended yet, since than many individuals and organizations still advocate strongly for creationism. The growing culture of both home-schooling and private schooling represents the fact that many parents are indeed dissatisfied with the current education model. This because science is one of the subjects that originates the most criticism and as such, is a large part of the shift to alternative forms of education.

The dualism between what was accepted and not morally accepted did not end but continued into the 1990s. The era was characterized by many changes both socially, culturally but also politically, all intertwined with religion (already demonstrated with the election of John

²¹⁵ The complete name is *Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science in Public School Instruction Act* but it is also called *Creationism Act*. "Edwards v. Aguillard," Global Freedom of Expression, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/edwards-v-aguillard/>.

²¹⁶ Edwards v. Aguillard, 482 U.S. 578 (1987), accessed February 12, 2023, <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/482/578/>.

²¹⁷ Edwards v. Aguillard (1987), 482 U.S. 579 (1987).

F. Kennedy in 1961 as the first Roman Catholic president). Religious Right, particularly in the political sphere, was at its peak during this period. In the 1980s and 1990s, Christian Right leaders opposed abortion, feminism, and homosexual rights, seeing the family as the foundation of American civilization. By combining these conflicts, the Republican Party changed the political landscape in the United States. Reagan defeated Carter with a landslide victory in 1980, and the religious right's support for him played a crucial role in that victory²¹⁸.

In terms of schooling, publishers indeed included religious right concerns in their bias and sensitivity rules by the beginning of the 1990s, self-censoring textbooks and readers to avoid controversies and criticism from fundamentalists. Textbooks would no longer suggest that religious belief has also been the cause of violence, turmoil, or war; instead, they would solely discuss the good contributions that religion has made to history. The religious right ultimately had a lasting impact in Texas, the second-largest adoption state in the nation, which indirectly influenced textbook content. Similar to California, Texas had statutory provisions that forbade the adoption of educational materials that displayed bias toward any specific group or portrayed genders and ethnicities in stereotypical positions.

The matter of textbook representation of specific groups of people was a very controversial issue in the American educational system, especially when it regarded black people, their story, and the relationship with white people through history. Because of this situation, unfortunately, self-censorship occasionally occurs among textbook authors, publishers, and teachers. For instance, the top center for curriculum development in life sciences for schools produced modular materials for one of its projects rather than a textbook to avoid criticism from creationists. This gave schools and districts the option of omitting any of the modules that might be divisive, like the evolution module²¹⁹. The problem of schoolbook censorship in American education is not only persistent, but also getting worse. Self-censorship is not exclusive to teachers. Curricular reductionism, which restricts the curriculum to primarily fundamental skills and factual subject matter devoid of difficult ideas, problems, and topics, as well as externally imposed or self-imposed censorship, all lead to the eventual 'watering down' of the curriculum²²⁰. It became more and more obvious by the middle of the 1980s that the minimum-competency requirements and back-to-basics retrenchment had led to a resurgence in the use of worksheets, workbooks, and textbooks that were simplified. The term 'dumping-

²¹⁸ Christopher Hodge Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction*, 319-338.

²¹⁹ Daniel Tanner, "Textbooks - School Textbooks in the United States," education.stateuniversity.com, accessed January 5, 2023, <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2506/Textbooks-SCHOOL-TEXTBOOKS-IN-UNITED-STATES.html>.

²²⁰ Daniel Tanner, "The Textbook Controversies".

down' started to be used to describe the current situation, where the educational standards were actually being lowered. This was strengthened by the 1983 report called 'A Nation at Risk' conducted by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The report offered some persuasive arguments against the minimum-competency examinations (mandated in most states), arguing that they actually reduced educational standards, and it suggested textbooks to be more difficult and demanding²²¹.

3.4 Controversies

The textbooks that students in public schools are exposed to are the result of a system of boundaries, many of which are unavoidable in a multicultural community²²². Politics and public education have always been intertwined, and lately, political influences on education have dominated it more than ever. The way minorities are portrayed and their interactions with one another is a startling illustration of how political, social, and even religious values have influenced the creation of textbook content. The way in which people of color are portrayed, their difficult and violent pasts, and their interactions with white people are among the most contentious topics. However, it is also important to place the historical era and geographic area into context in order to better comprehend the reasons behind particular choices and the prevalence of particular motifs (both in the political system but especially in the educational system). The topics that generated the greatest discussion and controversy were those pertaining to minorities, particularly black Americans and the LBGTQIA+ community. Because American culture is so politicized, there are repercussions even at the classroom level (with self-censorship for example).

3.4.1 Black Americans

Before the American Civil War (1861-1865), nearly every state in the south that still practiced slavery had made it illegal to teach slaves to read and write. The main goal of the ban was to quell slave insurrections. The first anti-literacy law, which made it unlawful to teach slaves to read or write, was enacted in South Carolina as a response of the Stono Rebellion of 1739, a revolt that claimed the lives of more than twenty white people. Although South Carolina changed its 1740 anti-literacy statute to forbid the education of black people, both slaves and

²²¹ Daniel Tanner, "Textbooks - School Textbooks in the United States".

²²² Raymond English, "The Politics of Textbook Adoption".

free, in 1800, public opinion remained against black education. Southern black schools were deliberately built by northern assistance and missionary organizations in an effort to lessen the perceived threat that southern blacks posed to American civilization. These schools taught the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic as well as religious and moral principles. They were based on the northern system of common schooling. There were three reasons why northern aid and missionary societies educated southern blacks: the first was to instill northern principles and values in the formerly enslaved. The second was transforming black people in the south into a trustworthy labor force. The third strategy was to teach the emancipated people to accept white supremacy²²³. All of these objectives aided in safeguarding and maintaining American society as a whole. Abolitionists launched a parallel enterprise to provide textbooks for the freed people after emancipation. Several northern white authors wrote works with the intention of teaching emancipated African Americans 'northern ideals' One of the published books was 'The Freedman's Spelling Book' in 1865-66 by the American Tract Society that besides containing lessons about how to read and write it provided useful knowledge that the freed people might use²²⁴. The underlying objective of the freedmen's textbooks, notwithstanding that each one had a specialized function, was to instill northern ideals in the former slaves, particularly piety, morality, industry, sobriety, cleanliness, frugality, and the sanctity of marriage. The majority of the time, textbooks for freedmen included lessons on temperance. Freedmen's writings prohibited the goal of upward mobility even while many southern blacks were living in extreme poverty. The racial subordination of blacks in the south was purposefully maintained through the use of freedmen's textbooks. Several of the texts written by the freedmen noticeably lacked a condemnation of slavery. When public school systems were established in the south in the late 1860s and early 1870s, black schools there continued to purchase their textbooks from northern publishers. The content of these textbooks, which were chosen and financially supported by state boards of education rather than northern aid and missionary societies, was largely unchanged from that of those written during the antebellum era. For instance, textbooks teaching geography in the north frequently depict race and racism, particularly when discussing Africa and its inhabitants. Despite the fact that the African continent was frequently praised for its abundance of natural

²²³ AnneMarie Brosnan, "Representations of Race and Racism in the Textbooks Used in Southern Black Schools during the American Civil War and Reconstruction Era, 1861-1876," *Paedagogica Historica* 52, no. 6 (August 30, 2016): 718-33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230.2016.1223703>.

²²⁴ Heather Andrea Williams, "The Oppressor's Bookshelf," *Slate Magazine*, December 8, 2017, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/12/education-during-reconstruction-and-how-formerly-enslaved-black-americans-learned-to-read.html>.

riches and fertile territory, the African people were generally characterized as primitive, violent, ignorant, and barbarous. For example, Samuel Mitchell classified people into five racial groups in the 1860 edition of ‘A System of Modern Geography’: European or Caucasian, Asiatic or Mongolian, American, Malay, and African or negro²²⁵. In contrast, whites were portrayed as being more intelligent and morally superior. As Mitchell wrote:

‘The European or Caucasian is the most noble of the five races. It excels all others in learning and the arts, and includes the most powerful nations of ancient and modern times. The most valuable institutions of society, and the most important and useful inventions have originated with the people of this race’²²⁶.

Mitchell wrote during a period in history when society, particularly in the southern states, was very racist, and as a consequence, his book is a result of the historical setting in which it was written. It was the pre-Civil War era, when slavery and segregation were still very much in force and were attempted to be lessened after the election of President Lincoln in 1860. The situation subsequently resulted in one of the bloodiest conflicts in American history of the nineteenth century. This demonstrates how the educational system, in especially the adopted books, is a product of the communities and historical eras in which they were produced²²⁷.

Controversy has always surrounded the subject of African Americans’ historical presence. Both their denied status and their inadequate portrayal are condemned. For instance, Kenneth M. Stampf addressed the topic of the representation- or lack - of African Americans in textbooks and bemoaned the inaccurate portrayals of the African American community²²⁸. In fact, Stampf asserted that the latter played a crucial role in American society, a role that had frequently been violently and unjustly rejected. Disguising the fact that people of color were integrated into American society as slaves, the brutality and violence of slavery, the racism of the Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction eras, and the ongoing issues with discrimination and racism were evidence of an important and even painful role in American history and should not have been forgotten or even obscured. Stampf asserted the existence of black people, a notion frequently refuted in textbooks. After reviewing several textbooks, the author lamented that there was no mention of slavery during the colonial era; he found out that there was no

²²⁵ Samuel Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*, revised ed. (Philadelphia: e. H. Butler & co., 1860), 41.

²²⁶ Samuel Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geography*.

²²⁷ John Anthony Scott, “Segregation: A Fundamental Aspect of Southern Race Relations, 1800-1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 4, no. 4 (1984): 421-41, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3123119>.

²²⁸ Kenneth M. Stampf et al., “The Negro in American History Textbooks”.

mention of black people after the Civil War, and that there was no mention of black people at all during the narrative in the textbooks he analyzed (which was made up of documents and substantial chapters). All texts downplay or omit the lengthy history of conflict between blacks and whites, implying in various ways that racial interactions have been marked by a growing harmony. With this observation as a starting point, the history of the African Americans, which has been marred by violence and the denial of rights from the 17th century to the present, is described, followed by a list of their main turning points. African Americans were forcibly taken from Africa to the English colonies at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Over the following fifty years, white colonists subjected them to hereditary and ongoing slavery. That was before the Revolution, when the majority of Americans started to address the subject of slavery and realized the various circumstances and the contradiction between the presence of slavery and what was outlined in the Declaration of Independence. Slavery was outlawed in the Old Northwest, all states north of Delaware put the practice on the verge of extinction, and after the 1808 Constitutional Convention, the slave trade was abolished. Despite the nominal abolishment of the slave trade and slavery in 1808 and 1865, respectively, racism and prejudice persisted in practice, especially in the southern states. The Reconstruction experiment collapsed after a short period of time due to a growing northern disinterest that allowed conservative southern whites to regain control violently through organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. Black people were soon reduced to an unofficial kind of slavery. By the turn of the century, they had been raised in segregated neighborhoods, had lived and died there, and were otherwise cut off from the majority of Americans. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, racial relations in the south were still marked by segregation and violence²²⁹.

3.4.2 The New York Times study

The ‘New York Times’ undertook a survey in 2020 to determine the different textbooks used in various states and whether there were any discrepancies between the same textbooks used in various states²³⁰. The article provides proof of how important politics are to the nation and how varied values influence all or the majority of the various facets of society. The texts under analysis, despite sharing the same publisher and author, are not identical; rather, their content has been altered depending on where they are marketed. The ‘New York Times’

²²⁹ Kenneth M. Stamp et al., “The Negro in American History Textbooks”.

²³⁰ Dana Goldstein, “Two States. Eight Textbooks. Two American Stories.,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2020, accessed January 21, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/12/us/texas-vs-california-history-textbooks.html>.

examined eight textbooks released in 2016 and designed for eighth- and eleventh- grade students. Each text has versions for Texas and California as well as other states that are tailored to meet the needs of legislators with various objectives. It has been noted that the content of the McGraw-Hill textbooks appears differently in the states of Texas and California. One of the parts examined covered the Second Amendment history and its relations to gun control. According to the California textbook's annotation of the Bill of Rights, decisions regarding the Second Amendment have permitted some gun control measures. That part states:

‘The Amendment is often debated. Originally it was intended to prevent the national government from repeating the actions of the British, who tried to take weapons away from the colonial militia, or armed forces of citizens. This Amendment seems to support the right of citizens to own firearms, but the supreme court has ruled that does not prevent congress from regulating the interstate sales of weapons’²³¹.

But the same section in the Texas edition of the textbook is empty and it does not mention guns or guns control²³². This demonstrates how, especially in some states, some concepts are either highlighted or decided to be avoided in school texts. This example demonstrates how this theme has permeated into everyday life extremely effectively. Due to the significant influence of political and cultural values, two books with distinct contents were published by the same author for the same schoolbook. Since politicization is so pervasive, it nearly acts as a propaganda tool in this situation by leaving out a significant portion of the nation's history, but this will have an impact on future generations' knowledge and beliefs. Indeed, there is a danger that values that are not universally true or at least imperfectly correct may be used to shape the minds of young people.

As far white opposition to black development following the Civil War matters are concerned, including those related to Reconstruction and housing discrimination in the 20th century, are commonly provided in California and Texas textbooks. Citing McGraw-Hill California version textbook, the Reconstruction was opposed by white people in South America because they ‘did not want African-Americans to have more rights’²³³. If the California book offers a particular narrative of a specific episodes in the past, the Texas' provides a totally different one. The added information related to the southern opposition was explained like a

²³¹ Dana Goldstein, “Two States. Eight Textbooks. Two American Stories”.

²³² The Texas edition of the pages, which does not highlight gun rights, is comparable to the national edition.

²³³ Dana Goldstein, “Two States. Eight Textbooks. Two American Stories”.

money issue: ‘reforms cost money, and that meant higher taxes’²³⁴. Only the California editions of textbooks include entire pages on redlining and restrictive deeds, in part due to varying state regulations. On the other hand, housing discrimination is not mentioned in the social studies curriculum in Texas.

As far as the gender and sexuality themes, California and Texas cover them very differently. Texas versions often miss parts that are present in California’s. California claims that in its early interactions with Native Americans, the federal government failed to recognize nonbinary gender identities and female leaders. However, when developing the controversial them regarding attempts to ‘Americanize’ Native Americans, Texas does not mention gender roles or gender identity²³⁵. The sexuality topic approach is indeed very dissimilar. If lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGTBQ) concerns are typically only mentioned in passing in Texas textbooks when they are discussing contemporary events like the Stonewall uprising, the AIDS pandemic, or discussions of marriage equality, the California textbooks diverge. Since the Governor Brown signed and approved the *FAIR Education Act* in 2011²³⁶, the publishers were encouraged to include and treat the subject in a wider and more comprehensive way.

3.4.2 Censorship

The problems involving the issue of the relationships between people of color and white people that have occurred throughout history and the ways in which these are represented in textbooks are emphasized in the diversity between northern and southern states. Censorship of particular texts in American classrooms is another important problem. In actuality, some books with specific social themes are prohibited. The results of a monitoring of the most censored and prohibited books in American schools have been published in the United States by Pen

²³⁴McGraw-Hill, “United States History & Geography: Growth & Conflict,” California, 586; McGraw-Hill, “United States History to 1877,” Texas, 555.

²³⁵ See Figure 14.

²³⁶ Senate Bill 48, also known as the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful (FAIR) Education Act, was signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown of California. By amending the California Education Code, the FAIR Education Act allowed for the inclusion of lessons on the contributions of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals. The State Board of Education was not allowed to adopt discriminatory instruction. (“NCLR Applauds Governor Brown for Signing the Historic FAIR Education Act” (National Center for Lesbian Rights, July 14, 2011), accessed January 23, 2023, <https://nclrights.wordpress.com/2011/07/14/nclr-applauds-governor-brown-for-signing-the-historic-fair-education-act/>)

America, a nonprofit group that promotes freedom of expression in the country²³⁷. The observations indicated an alarming rise in book censorship in school districts across the nation over the previous nine months, primarily targeting books that dealt with racism, sexual orientation, and gender identity, which has virtually eliminated them from classrooms and school libraries. In fact, only in the past nine months, 1,500 books have been removed from circulation in U.S. school districts²³⁸.

The findings are outlined in a list that explains that a significant percentage of the titles on the index (41 percent) feature black protagonists, 22 percent specifically address racial and anti-Semitic concerns, and 33 percent deal with LGBTQIA+ issues²³⁹. Conservatively inclined states are setting the standard for censorship. Texas has the most prohibited books, with about 1,000, followed by Florida and Tennessee, all with up to 750. States with no recorded bans include California, but conservative states such as Montana and North Dakota also appear. Banned authors such as Kurt Vonnegut, with ‘Slaughterhouse 5’, Paulo Coelho (‘The Alchemist’), George Orwell (‘1984’) and then Haruki Murakami, JD Salinger, Carmen Maria Machado²⁴⁰. The majority of the books being targeted are fictional works, but 28% of them are essays, including history books, analytical and/or personal writings, as well as books for children.

3.5 Conclusion

Many aspects in the school and in society have an impact on the task of adopting textbooks, thus the required selection procedure is often tied to social issues. The selection process needs to be regularly reviewed and adjusted to new elements and requirements because of how quickly the social and educational landscape is changing. It is a challenging task to

²³⁷ “Report: 1,586 School Book Bans and Restrictions in 86 School Districts across 26 States,” PEN America, April 7, 2022, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://pen.org/press-release/report-1586-school-book-bans-and-restrictions-in-86-school-districts-across-26-states/>.

²³⁸ Jonathan Friedman and Nadine Farid Johnson, “Banned in the USA: Rising School Book Bans Threaten Free Expression and Students’ First Amendment Rights,” PEN America, April 7, 2022, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://pen.org/banned-in-the-usa/>.

²³⁹ Due of the characters' resemblance to the rainbow community, many publications have been outlawed. The titles are occasionally deemed "obscene." Henry McMaster, the Republican governor of South Carolina, demanded the cancellation of Maia Kobabe’s book ‘Gender Queer: A Memoir’ due to its ‘sexually explicit’ and ‘pornographic’ themes. The book is the most outlawed of all because it has been prohibited in forty-one school districts. It is the author's debut graphic novel and centers on her experiences as an adolescent struggling with her fluid sexual identity. (Alexandra Alter, “How a Debut Graphic Memoir Became the Most Banned Book in the Country,” *The New York Times*, May 1, 2022, sec. Books, accessed January 23, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/01/books/maia-kobabe-gender-queer-book-ban.html>.)

²⁴⁰ Jonathan Friedman and Nadine Farid Johnson, “Banned in the USA”.

select high-quality textbooks that must be pertinent to student needs and the goals and procedures of the curricula. It is common practice to embrace classroom texts if they reflect the principles of the state (mostly those relating to religion or the treatment of certain topics like civil rights, abortion, etc.). Therefore, it is essential to comprehend the sociopolitical setting in which these books are set. Due to the pervasive influence of politics in American society, which influences all or almost all facets of society, some themes in a school text may be present in one state in one way and absent in another (or possibly not present at all).

In conclusion, an analysis of the importance of textbooks throughout American educational history and even political history has been attempted in this chapter. Textbooks have been a powerful tool for transmitting certain values since the colonial times. Their enormous cultural and social significance is emphasized by the fact that their content varies depending on the country in which they will be marketed. This underlines one of the most controversial issues in the American educational system, there is to say the grade of influence of the politics and how much a state's politics and traditions can influence children's education, what they learn, and how they learn it. In fact, sections that do not reflect the fixed values of the state are frequently edited out. Different schoolbooks are created in this fashion, and certain topics are censored (also for sales and marketing purposes). However, the very fact that schoolbooks have historically been the target of censorship speaks volumes about their influence and significance. It has been demonstrated that American society is extremely politicized, with political forces interfering in various facets of society in accordance with their individual views. This has had a significant impact, particularly on the educational system. Nowadays, it is still a really relevant topic, especially in the light of the trend toward increasing self-censorship and the increasing attention to avoid certain -delicate- topics because of the desire to prevent offending certain societal sensibilities. However, this progressive self-censorship (by publishers also due to economic reasons: better to produce a book with socially acceptable content and be adopted in states with pleasant resonance, than to be discarded or be poorly sold) causes an impoverishment of school content and harms the culture and knowledge of the younger generation.

Conclusion

The Constitution of the United States sets forth the duties and predetermined roles of the federal and state governments. Even if the first educational systems were established in the latter half of the eighteenth century, the Constitution does not specifically address the education system directly. Although the federal government is not entirely excluded, historically speaking, the states have been in charge of the educational system. It was common practice for each community to create and sustain its own school(s) and to teach its children in accordance with its own priorities, values, and requirements. As a consequence, distinctions between geographical areas have emerged. Differences that subsequently inspired the development of various curricula and, in turn, various teaching philosophies. This led to the adoption of various school texts depending on the states in which they were to be sold or the adoption of the same text with modifications on specific subjects (religious themes or those of social differences for example).

This work aimed to investigate the main characteristics of the American school system, its developments starting from its colonial origins to the present day, and how political, social economic developments have spilled over into educational choices, especially in the choice of schoolbooks and their content. Indeed, politics and public education have always been intertwined, and lately, political influences on education have dominated it more than ever. The textbooks that students in public schools are exposed to are the result of a system of boundaries, many of which are unavoidable in a multicultural community²⁴¹. The way minorities were and are portrayed and their interactions with one another is a startling illustration of how political, social, and even religious values have influenced the creation of textbook content.

It has been demonstrated that American society is extremely politicized, with political forces interfering in various aspects of society in accordance with their individual views. This has had a significant impact, particularly on the educational system. This happened in the past but it holds a lot of importance nowadays too, since the strong politicization has increasingly led to episodes of auto-censorship. This is also why many parents today choose alternatives other than public schooling. As a matter of fact, a significant percentage of parents choose to homeschool their children instead of sending them to a public school. In the United States, there

²⁴¹ Raymond English, "The Politics of Textbook Adoption".

were 3.135 million school-age (K–12) kids who were homeschooled in 2021-2022²⁴². The same is true for those who choose private schools. The reason lies in several factors. Certainly not perceiving the public school as a safe place does not help. In fact, according to the publicly available K-12 School Shooting Database, there have been 332 shooting occurrences on school premises in 2022, compared to 250 in 2021 and 114 in 2020. Ten years prior, the year 2010 saw 15 school shootings. In addition to the safety aspect, the cultural and value component also plays a significant role; in fact, parents do not see public schools as beneficial but rather as harmful.

It is therefore crucial to recognize the role of politics in history, which has been the common thread of the United States, but never forgetting the context in which this relationship, politics-society-religion, was embedded. Educational choices have been the result of a specific type of culture and an attentive balance between religious, political and societal urgencies. Therefore, textbooks are a manifestation of the society in which they are ingrained throughout its history, and which is exceedingly difficult to change due to inertia and economic concerns. Although is expensive (both financially and in terms of time), yet it is not impractical.

²⁴² Brian D. Ray, “How Many Homeschool Students Are There in the United States during the 2021-2022 School Year?,” *National Home Education Research Institute*, September 15, 2022, accessed February 12, 2023, <https://www.nheri.org/how-many-homeschool-students-are-there-in-the-united-states-during-the-2021-2022-school-year/>.

Appendix

Figure 1. The structure of education in the United States. “Structure of U.S. Education,” Ed.gov (U.S. Department of Education (USNEI), 2008), <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/us/edlite-structure-us.html>.

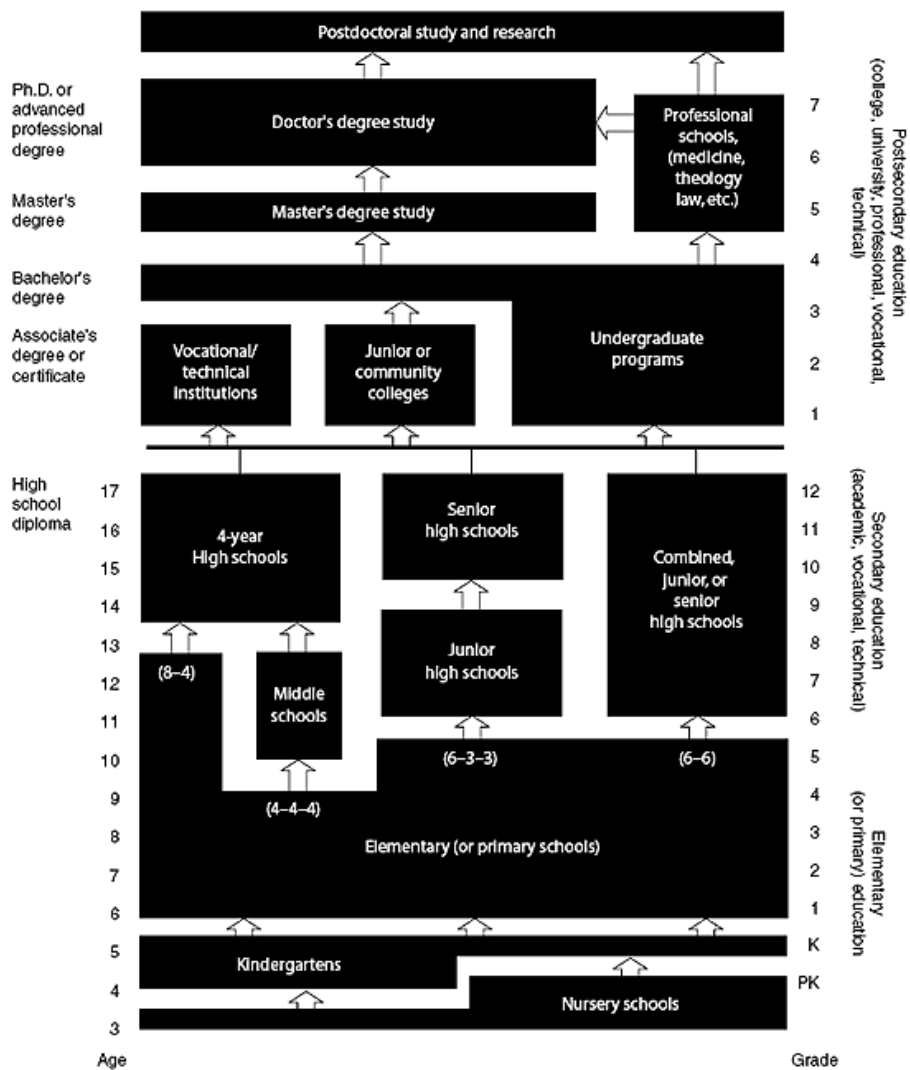
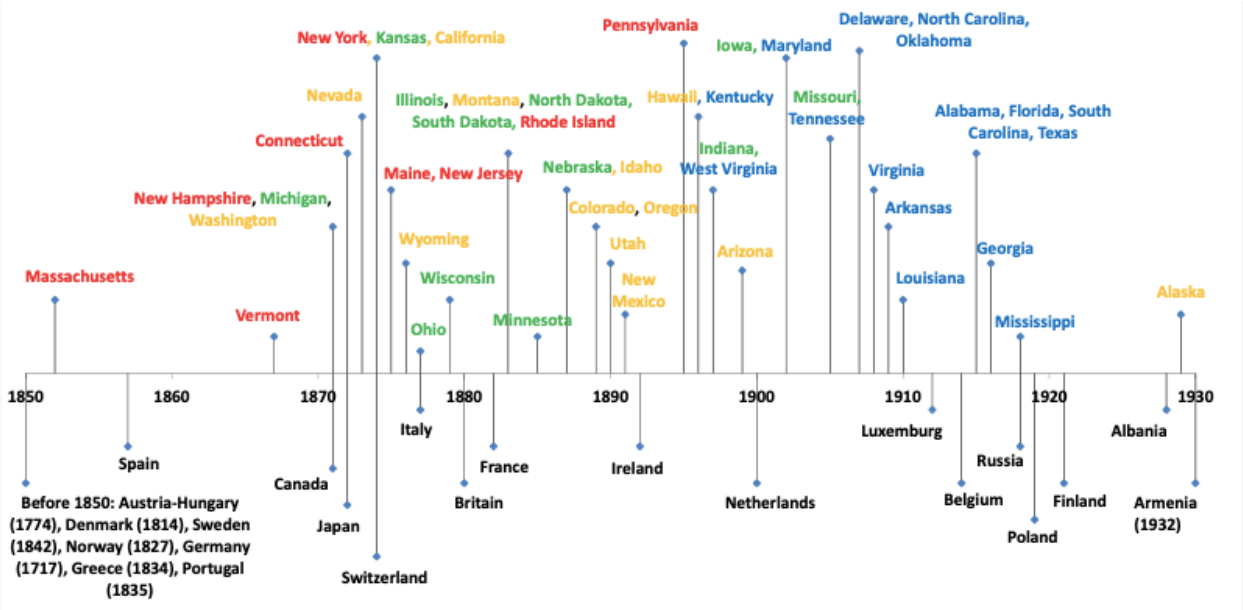


Figure 2. Timeline for Passage of Compulsory Schooling, by US State and European Country. Oriana Bandiera et al., “Nation-Building through Compulsory Schooling during the Age of Mass Migration,” *The Economic Journal* 129, no. 617 (December 20, 2018): 62-109, <https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12624>.



RED = Northeast, GREEN = Midwest, YELLOW = West, BLUE = South

Figure 3. Enrollment in public and private elementary schools in the United States from 1960 to 2020 (in millions). “Enrollment in Public and Private Elementary Schools in the United States from 1960 to 2021,” Statista, December 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/184031/enrollment-in-public-and-private-elementary-schools/>.

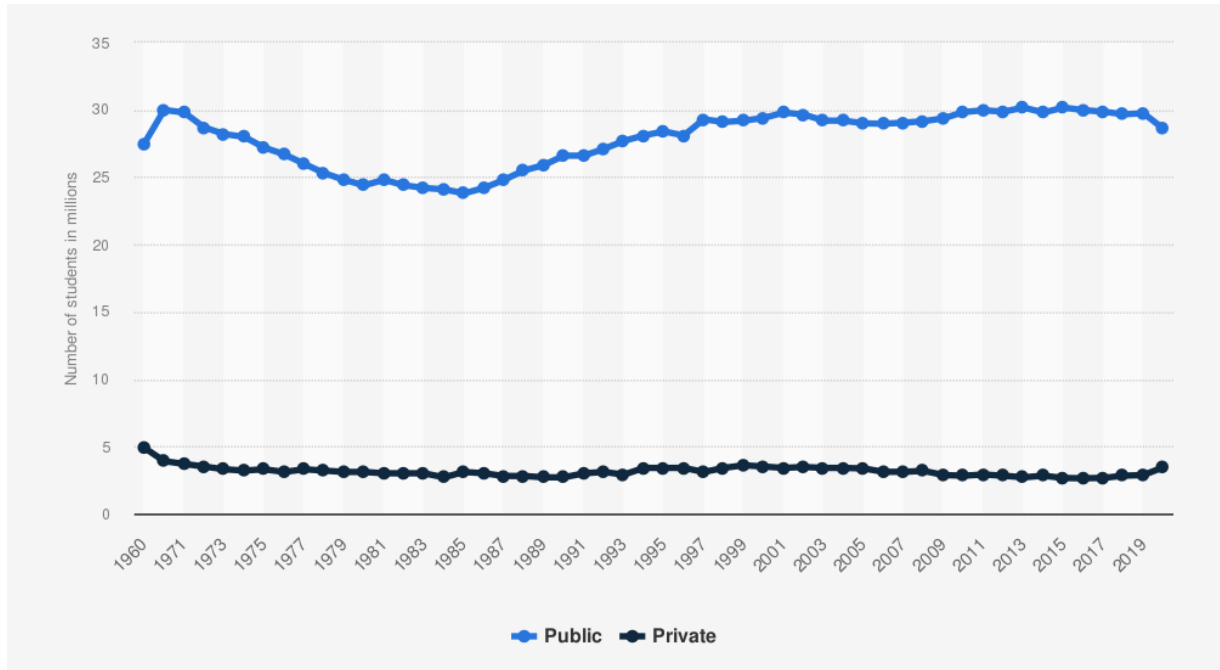


Figure 4. Recent Gallup Trend on U.S. Gun Ownership. Lydia Saad, “What Percentage of Americans Own Guns?” Gallup.com (Gallup, November 13, 2020), <https://news.gallup.com/poll/264932/percentage-americans-own-guns.aspx>.

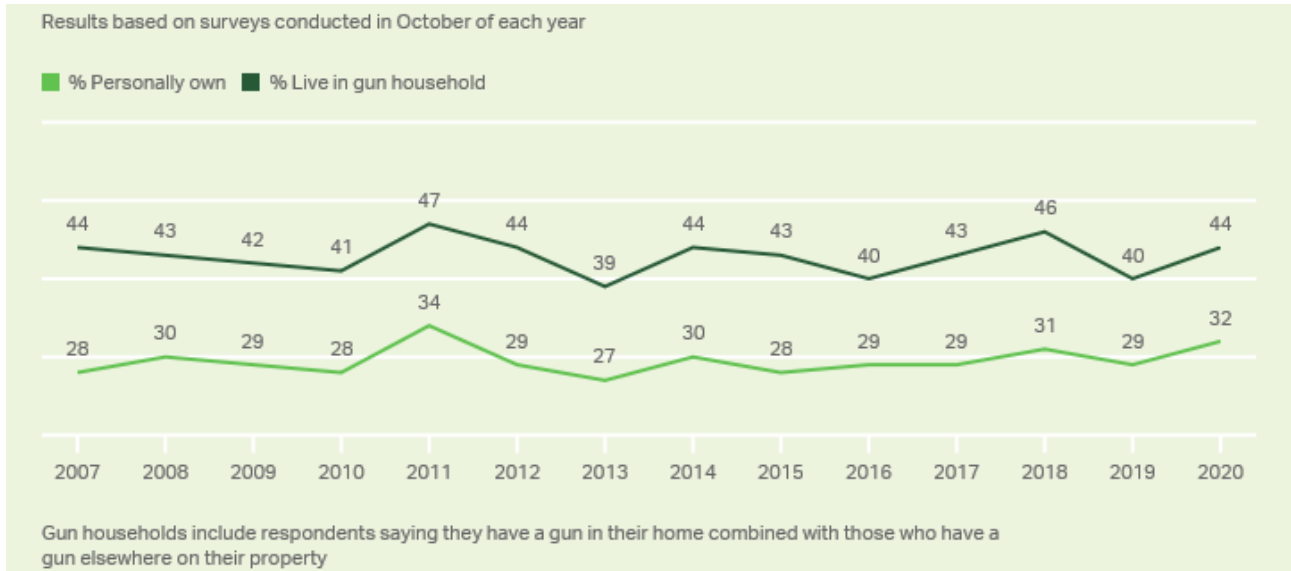


Figure 5. K-12 School Shooting Database: Incidents by Year 1970-2022. “All Shootings at Schools from 1970-Present,” K-12 School Shooting Database, 2023, <https://k12ssdb.org/all-shootings>.

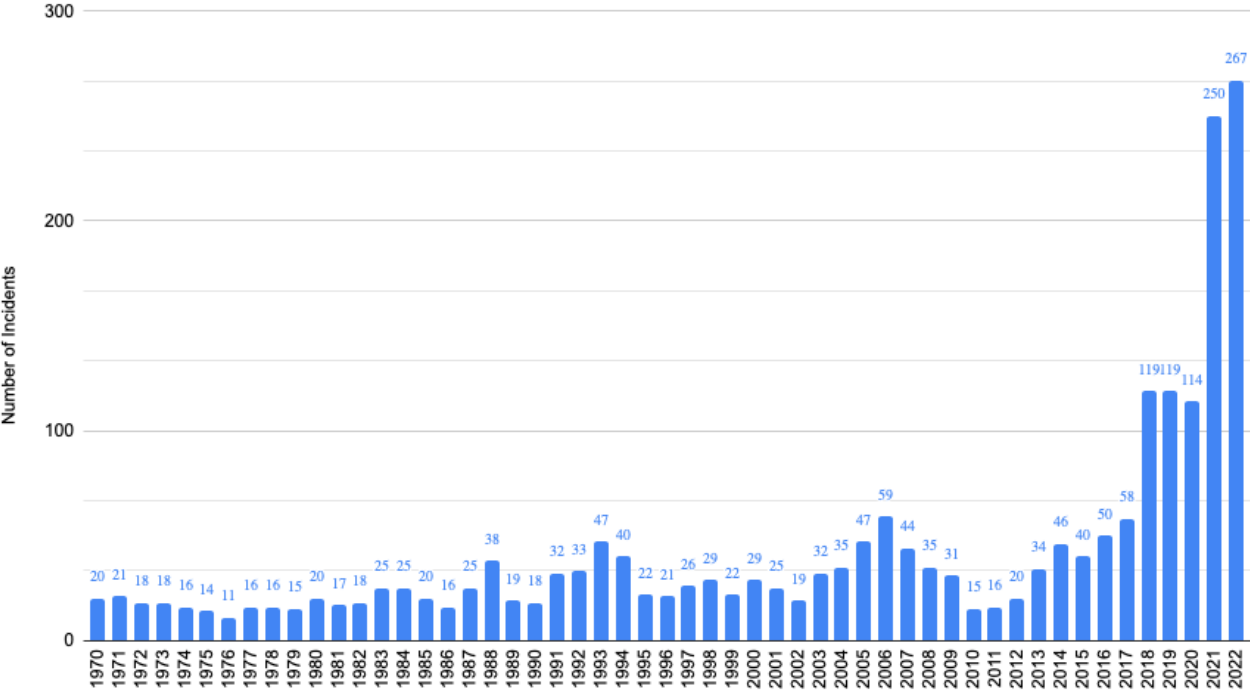


Figure 6. A Brief history of charter schools in America. “A Brief History of Charter Schools in America,” National Charter School Resource Center, 2013, <https://charterschoolcenter.ed.gov/what-charter-school>.

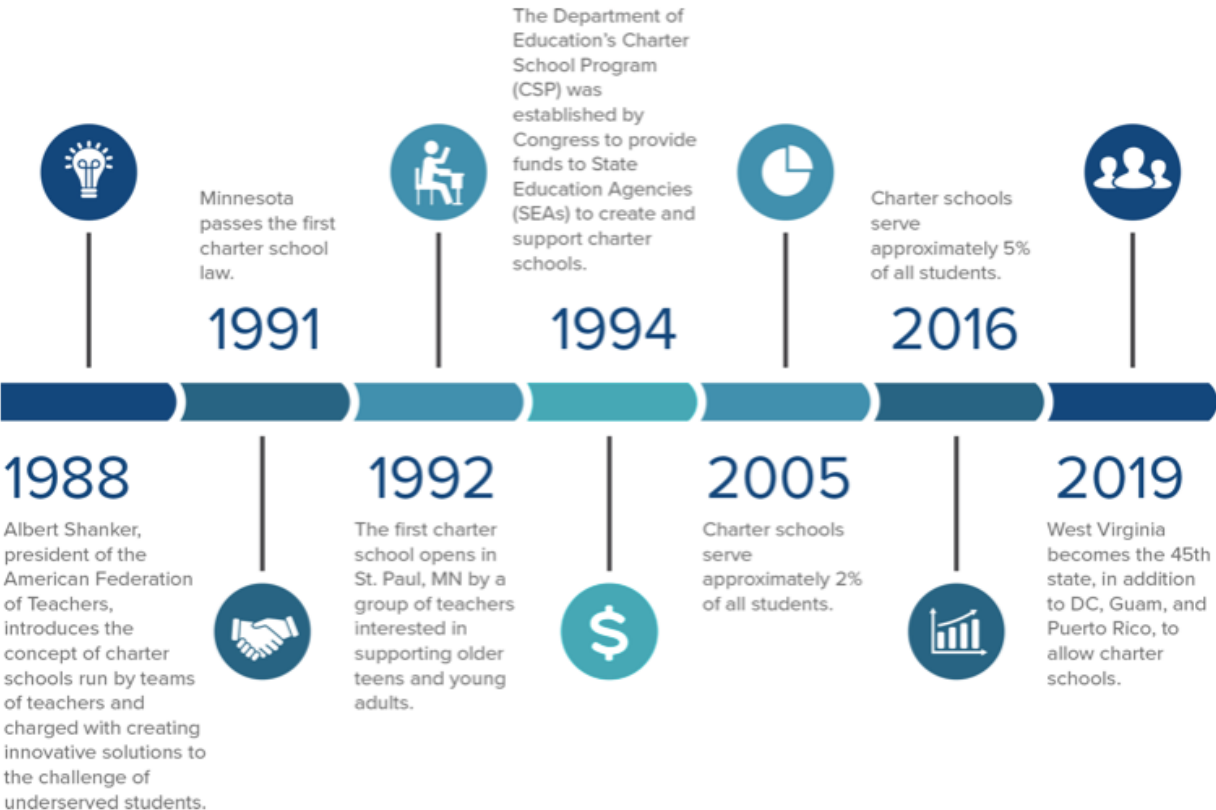


Figure 7. Percentage of homeschooled students ages. “Homeschooled Children and Reasons for Homeschooling,” National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), May 2022, <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/tgk>.

Percentage of homeschooled students ages 5 through 17 with a grade equivalent of kindergarten through grade 12, by student's race/ethnicity and grade equivalent: 2016

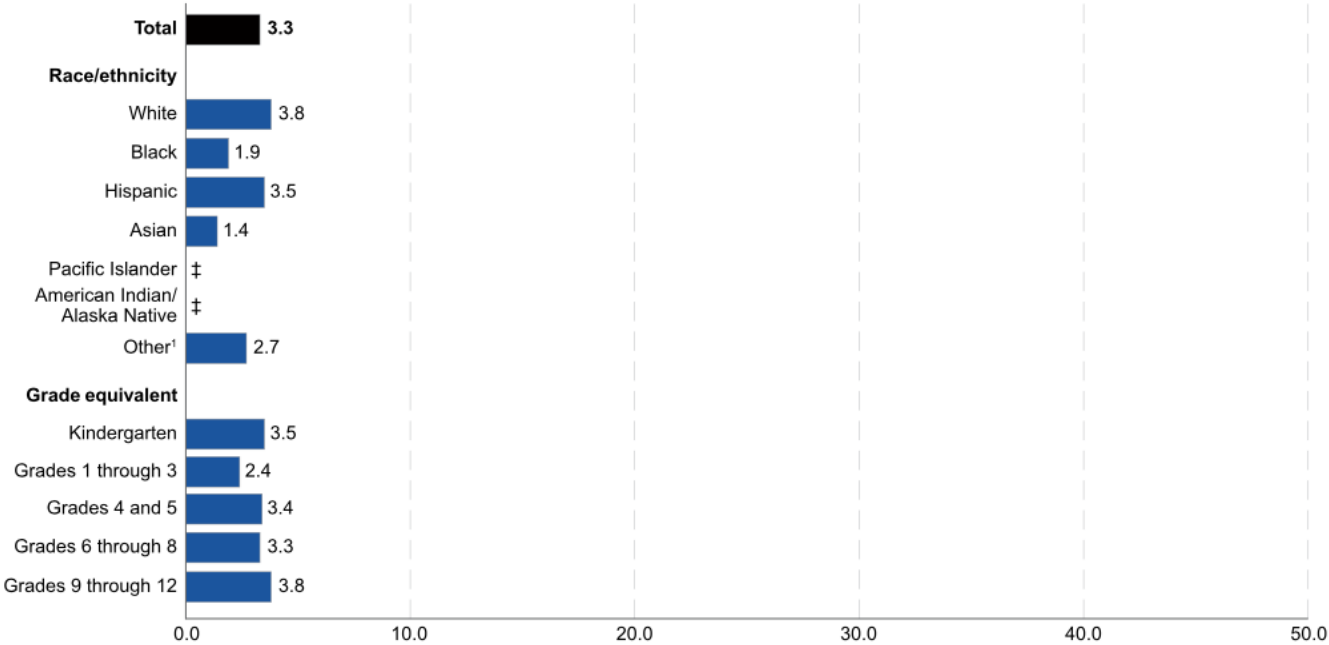


Figure 8. Federal Student Loan debt (Quarterly). Melanie Hanson, “Student Loan Debt Statistics,” EducationData.org, 2023, <https://educationdata.org/student-loan-debt-statistics>.

Year	Total (in billions)	Year-over-Year (YoY) Change
2022 Q2	\$1,619.7	1.75%
2022 Q1	\$1,606.4	2.63%
2021 Q4	\$1,610.7	2.83%
2021 Q3	\$1,591.1	3.00%
2021 Q2	\$1,591.8	3.18%
2021 Q1	\$1,565.2	3.31%
2020 Q4	\$1,556.3	3.71%
2020 Q3	\$1,544.8	4.30%
2020 Q2	\$1,542.7	4.48%
2020 Q1	\$1,515.0	4.69%

Figure 9. Levels of education in Italy, by age and year of schooling. Rebecca Marlow-Ferguson, ed., *World Education Encyclopedia. A Survey of Educational Systems Worldwide*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (I-R) (United States of America: Gale group, 1967), 656-71, [http://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/19%20World%20Education%20Encyclopedia%20Volume%202%20I-R%20\(2nd%20edition\).pdf](http://www.daneshnamehicsa.ir/userfiles/files/1/19%20World%20Education%20Encyclopedia%20Volume%202%20I-R%20(2nd%20edition).pdf)

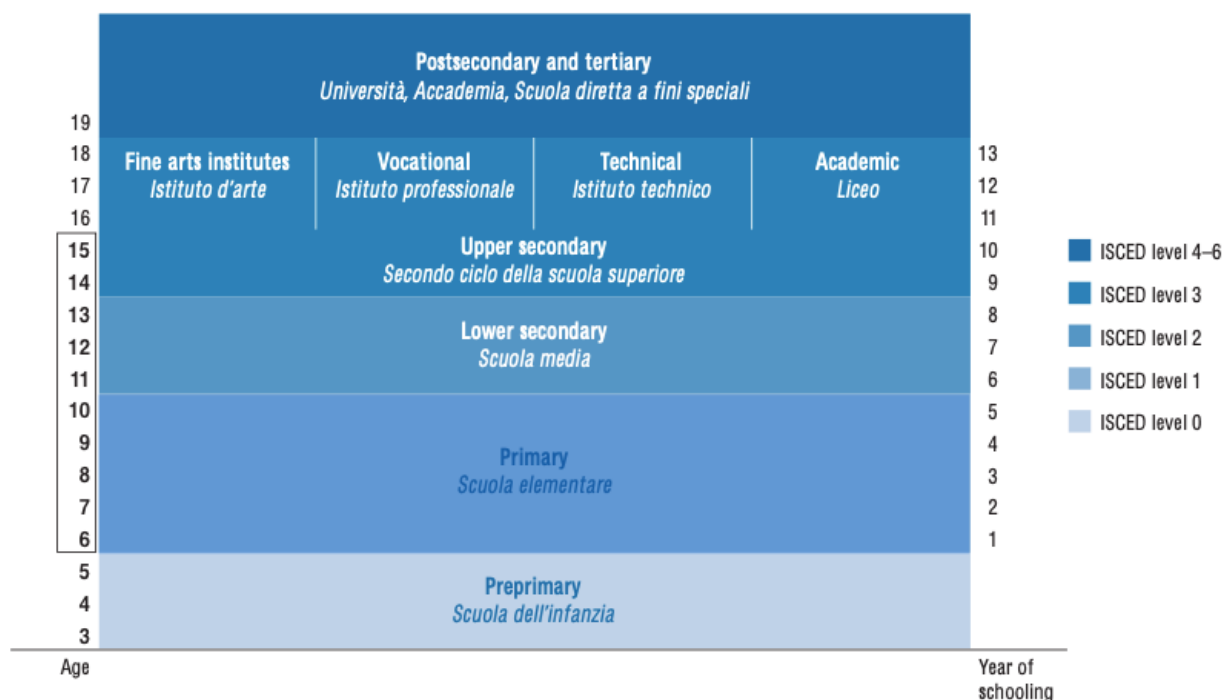


Figure 10. Old Deluder Satan Law of 1647. “Old Deluder Satan Law of 1647”

(mass.gov) <https://www.mass.gov/doc/old-deluder-satan-law/download>.

<i>Schools .</i>	
<p>I <i>T</i> being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these later times by perswading from the use of Tongues, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the Originall might be clouded with false glosses of Saint-seeming-deceivers; and that Learning may not be buried in the graves of our fore-fathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our indeavours: it is therefore ordered by this Court and Authority therof;</p> <p>That everie Township in this Jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty Housholders shall then forthwith appoint one within their Town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read, whose wages shall be paid either by the Parents or Masters of such children, or by the Inhabitants in general by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the <i>prudentials</i> of the Town shall appoint. Provided that those which send their children be not oppressed by paying much more then they can have them taught for in other Towns.</p> <p>2 And it is farther ordered, that where any Town shall increase to the number of one hundred Families or Housholders they shal set upon a Grammar-School, the Masters therof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the Univerfitie. And if any Town neglect the performance heerof above one year then everie such town shall pay five pounds <i>per annum</i> to the next such School, till they shall perform this Order. [1647]</p>	<p>In what town Schools shal be erected. how maintained</p> <p>Proviso.</p> <p>Gram: school</p> <p>town neglect: to pay 5 li. per annu to the next School</p>

Figure 11. Textbook Adoption Policy by State.

California has a statewide adoption policy at the elementary level. Secondary textbooks are chosen by local governing boards. The state of Hawaii comprises a single school district.

Map: Emily Schmidt, APM Research Lab Source: Education Commission of the States, https://www.ecs.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Information-Request_Textbook-Adoption-Policies.pdf

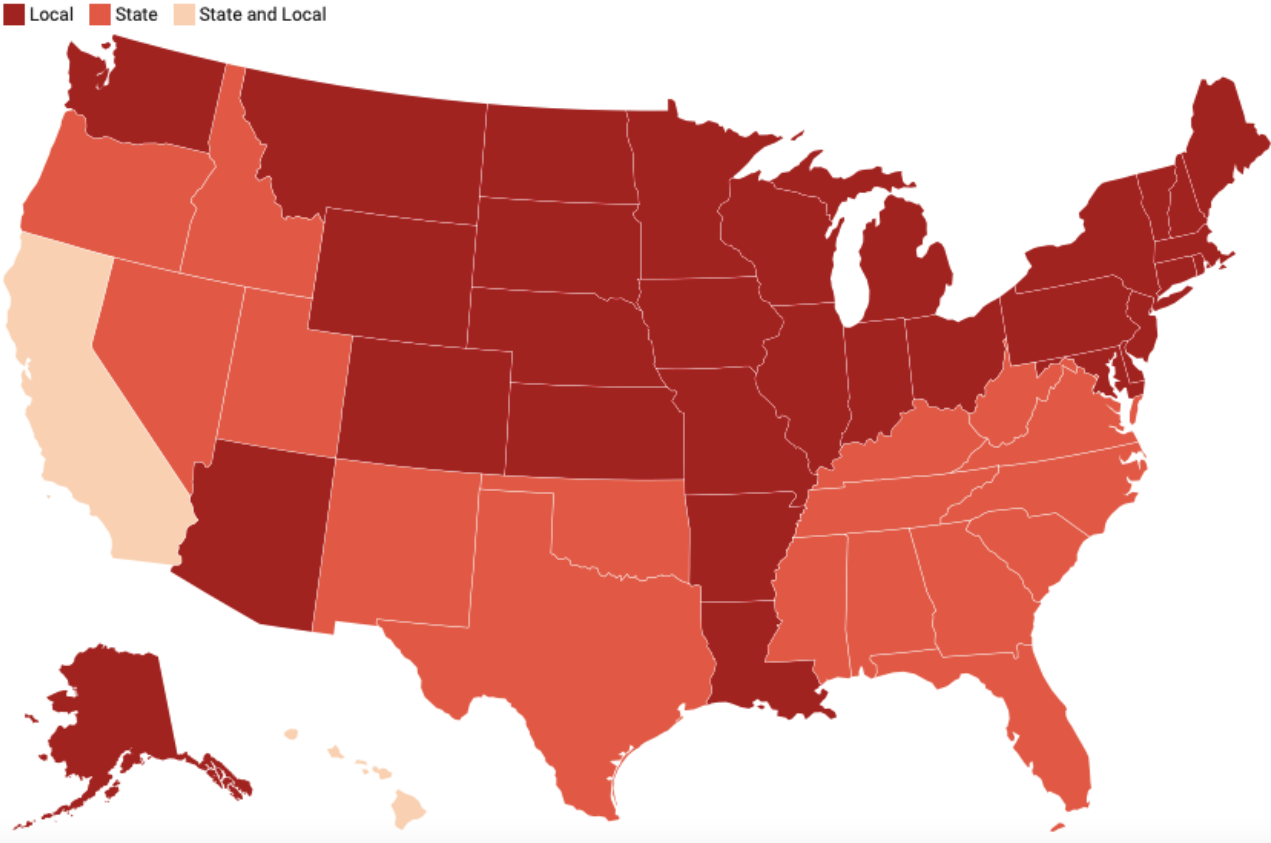


Figure 12. Alphabet. *The New England Primer*, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, 2023, https://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/lilly/exhibitions_legacy/NewEnglandPrimerWeb/page8.html.

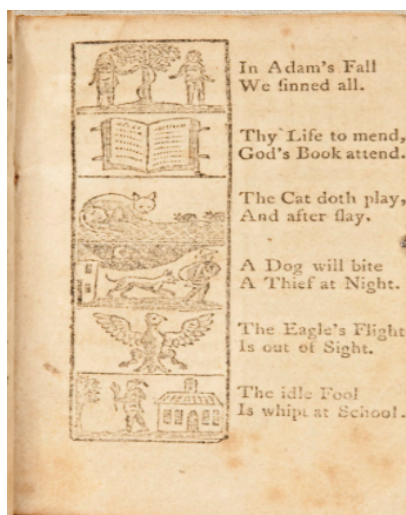


Figure 13. The Shorter Catechism. *The New England Primer*, The Lilly Library, Indiana University, https://collections.libraries.indiana.edu/lilly/exhibitions_legacy/NewEnglandPrimerWeb/page8.html.

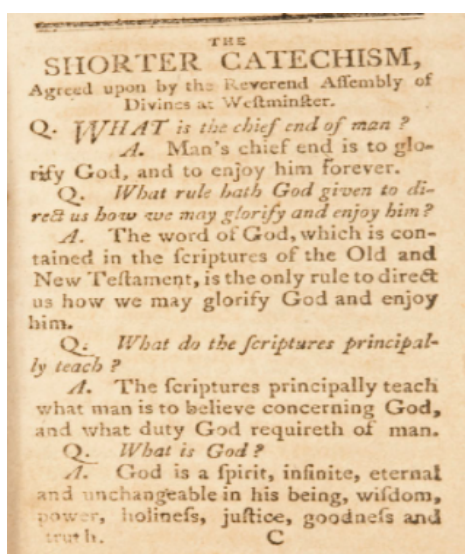


Figure 14. California and Texas textbooks on gender and sexuality. Dana Goldstein, “Two States. Eight Textbooks. Two American Stories.,” *The New York Times*, January 12, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/01/12/us/texas-vs-california-history-textbooks.html>.

A CHANGING CULTURE

In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Act. With this law, Congress hoped to change what white people saw as weaknesses in Native American cultures: the lack of private property and nomadic habits. The Dawes Act called for breaking up reservations and ending Native Americans' identification with a tribal group.

According to the plan, every Native American would receive a plot of reservation land. Reformers hoped that the native peoples would become farmers and, in time, adopt the way of life practiced by most American citizens. These policies only recognized male heads of families, disrupting some traditional societies in which females held leading roles. The policies also refused to recognize the authority of “two-spirit,” what today we might consider lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender Native Americans, who held special roles in some groups.

McGraw-Hill, “United States History & Geography: Growth & Conflict,” California, p. 624

controversial. They were often underfunded and poorly maintained, and discipline was strict. Some students found the schools repressive, and many cases of abuse were reported.

A second Americanization strategy was to encourage Native Americans to abandon the reservation system and become independent landowners. In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Act, which altered the reservation system by dividing reservation land into **allotments** for farming or ranching. Under the act, 160 acres were allotted to each head of household, 80 acres to each single adult, and 40 acres to each child. Any land remaining after allotments would be sold to American settlers, with the proceeds going into a trust for Native Americans. Citizenship would be granted to Native Americans who stayed on their allotments for 25 years.

While some Native Americans succeeded as farmers or ranchers, many had little training or enthusiasm for either pursuit. They often found their allotments too small to be profitable, so they leased them. In addition, some Native American groups had grown attached to their reservations and hated to see them divided into homesteads. Few stayed long enough to qualify for citizenship.

In the end, the assimilation policy proved a dismal failure. Native American culture on the Plains was doomed because it depended on buffalo for food, clothing, fuel, and shelter. When the herds were wiped

McGraw-Hill, “United States History Since 1877,” Texas, p. 111

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