

A Breath of Fresh History: A Reformation of History Education and What Students Should
Learn in the Modern American Classroom

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History is central to how people learn about the past. Without History, people would be lost in the present with no understanding of how human civilization got to where it is today. Advancements in American society have directly related to the ability of the present to reflect honestly about the past. When society is able to face injustices critically, they are more likely to approach it collectively and do what is right socially, morally, and legally.¹ Because of History's importance, the teaching of the subject belongs in school classrooms. It is, and History, under the pseudonym Social Studies, has been taught in classrooms throughout America for over a century. How the subject is taught has changed regularly to fit a myriad of conflicting philosophies. No other subject has changed so regularly as Social Studies, and that has led to the gradual weakening of the subject over the decades leading up to today. Social Studies has many different influences that has led to its weakening as a subject. Understanding the History of education in America provides a context of how the development of education in America influenced how education approached History education over the course of American History. Problems in History education begin with this process of examining the path of American education History, as the development of external factors influencing education has played a big role in creating current issues in American education. History education has many problems to face, as does education as a whole regardless of grade level or content area. Three problems loom the largest on History education and are the issues that if resolved, can provide the quickest route to reforming Social Studies as a subject in the classroom. These three problems are History education's emphasis of minute, disjointed details in high school classrooms, neglect at a national and state level of giving significance to Social Studies as a subject, and the current state of curriculum that is Eurocentric and Americanized to focus on only a fraction of the world and

¹ James W. Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened: How to Avoid the Tyranny of Textbooks & Get Students Excited About Doing History*. (New York: Teachers College Press), 2010. 15.

glorifying their achievements. High school students hate history, do not understand its relevance, and know that what many classes teach are too watered down and dishonest.² These issues in tandem cause students to be bored with Social Studies, unknowledgeable about History's importance, and misunderstood about cultures around the world.

The roots of education in the United States of America came from colonial theories and practices that reflected European education. Early education in North America came from Spanish monasteries that were both educational and religious in nature. The early schools in North America came from a 1643 royal order to teach Native Americans Spanish. Europeans used education to teach whatever they deemed fit very often, and throughout the History of education there is an ulterior motive to teach masses of people certain information while omitting others.³ Great Britain followed similar guidelines to education in their colonies, and colonial education were modifications of models in mainland Britain. This British model primarily came in the form of elementary reading and grammar schools. That was the entirety of colonial education for the majority of the centuries from early colonization to the years before the Revolutionary War, and the main reason was the power of religion. While the Protestant Reformation called for universal education, many other sects of the religious world blocked those ideas for secular purposes. The many different religious groups within the British colonies still dominated society, and they wanted to repress the idea of universal education in order to push each individual religion's own moral agenda. This conflict over who would provide advanced, universal schooling almost destroyed what little education system was already in place. Many of the elementary reading and grammar schools relied on their local religious

² James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. (New York: The New Press) 2007. 1.

³ James Van Patten, John D. Pulliam. *History of Education in America*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall), 1995. 15.

establishments for classrooms, but the idea of competing moral agendas almost pushed education out of the colonies entirely. Individuals were shaped for communal life with religious learning in a religion centered society.⁴ As the idea of unified education was falling apart because of religious differences, British charity schools began to form as an early iteration of private schools. British charity schools were simply schools funded via philanthropy by private, land-owning individuals. This approach to education still faced the same conflict as more public-centered institutions did, conflicting moral values. Charity schools were marred by special interests, primarily the church as local wealthy landowners were deeply religious individuals and wanted the schools they were funding to teach what those individuals wanted to be taught.⁵

In the early days of education public schools were uncommon. Most schools were private in nature and overseen by religious sects. Religion had a stronghold on society and wanted to maintain their control over the moral values of colonial settlers.⁶ Religious diversity impacted colonial schools as groups such as the Quakers and Puritans arrived with their own educational values that they wished to push. Puritans for example did not believe in tolerance, democratic values or leaving the church out of any aspect of life.⁷ Religious institutions resisted public schooling because they knew that public institutions would not be confined to teaching religious ideals. Colonial America had an increasing number of educated intellectuals that called for separation of church and education, but that was unachievable during the colonial period.

⁴ Carl L. Bankston III, Steven J. Caldas. *Public Education - America's Civil Religion: A Social History*. (New York: Teachers College Press), 2009. 25.

⁵ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 15.

⁶ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 16.

⁷ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 37.

Religion had to be the major participant in education at the time because of the government's inability to pay for public schools.⁸

The dominant educational ideology in the days of early North American settlement from the late 15th century to the early 18th century held that education was only for elite religious individuals. The mass of society would remain peasants working in agriculture or in fewer cases in family crafts and trades. Any established governments at the time were not involved in education because of the lack of public support. Education was ultimately left up to local establishments and elites. This localism led to education being class-centered and an opportunity primarily for the upper class. Since education was an upper class and religious affair, education did not progress toward popular or universal access in any way.⁹ Education was not ready for the rapid expansion that will be seen in the centuries that followed. Early educational aims in the colonies looked for stability, tradition, discipline, and preset values.¹⁰

Educational influences from Europe took some time to arrive to the colonial states. The European enlightenment would not reach the colonies until the mid-1700s. When it did, Benjamin Franklin used John Locke to endorse widespread education throughout the colonies. Franklin created the first lending library in 1731 along with the American Philosophical Society in 1769 to provide more forums to expand educational thought throughout the colonies. John Locke's 1689 essay *Concerning Human Experience* challenged the dominant religious thought by arguing that God gave humans the ability to improve themselves and that more learning could be done at a societal level instead of within the religious sect.¹¹ While religion still dominated

⁸ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 21.

⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 22.

¹⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 16.

¹¹ Donald H. Parkerson, Jo Ann Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education: A Social History of Teaching*. (New York: Routledge-Falmer), 2001. 4.

education, there were voices that would come to influence early American thought on education as a social agent and something that is entitled to everyone.

While the colonies had similar educational aims, the practices were vastly different between the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies. The New England colonies had the greatest impact on United States education.¹² New Englanders believed that it was their Christian duty to educate every child. Puritan philosophy held that education was the best route to combat sin, since education would be moral as well as used to teach biblical literacy. The government was also involved in education during the colonial period in the New England colonies. Many local governments required education by law, so education was increasing its value in colonial society as early the 1700s.¹³ New England education was centered around the four R's; reading, writing, religion, and arithmetic.¹⁴ The New England model still has tremendous influence in the 21st century. Religion stayed in many schools until the Supreme Court cases of the 1960s and still remains in many regions' schools still. The other three R's of reading, writing, and arithmetic continue strong. Education in the colonies and what would later become the United States has always placed an importance on basic reading and Math skills. This importance will only become more prominent as the years of American History go by. Legislatively, many modern practices also came out of the New England area of the colonies. Concepts such as school districts, mandated education, taxation for schooling and rigid educational levels or grades all began in colonial New England.¹⁵

¹² Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 30.

¹³ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 31.

¹⁴ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 33.

¹⁵ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 35.

The Middle colonies faced diversity and parochialism when approaching education. The Middle colonies were the most religiously diverse and each sect had their own separate educational goals. These religious-educational sects were locally funded by their own parishes. Within the Middle colonies, the majority of low income schools were funded by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts or the SPG. SPG provided financial support for schools for low income families was an aspect that was primarily within the Middle colonies, but there was still a distinct divide in educational opportunity and quality between social classes.¹⁶ Schools in the Middle colonies faced similar problems to those of the New England colonies where the majority of education was in the hands of the church. The Middle colonies were aware of this religious control and reacted by making vocational schools the most prominent form of schooling in the region.¹⁷ Vocational schools taught specific skills for the jobs that were needed by the area, so the focus again was fulfilling local needs of villages and settlements. The Middle colonies also had very modern education laws that mandated a school for every certain area of land as well as the same laws that were in place in the New England colonies such as mandated schooling and taxation. Similar to the New England colonies, the Middle colonies had some social understanding of universal education, but it was primarily local in scope and were not yet economically or socially ready for widespread education.

The New England and Middle colonies would be heavily influenced by the intellectual life that began to rise in the areas. With mass publications like the Boston News and Richard's Almanac, simple reading skills became more widespread as colonialists no longer had to go to a church-controlled school in order to learn how to read. Common reading options became

¹⁶ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 28.

¹⁷ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 29.

available as thirty-seven newspapers were in circulation by 1775. Along with newspapers being utilized throughout communities, college, private, and city libraries also became prevalent throughout the New England and Middle colonies. These libraries were primarily stocked with European writings.¹⁸ So those who would become American intellectuals were influenced by the educational thoughts of European thinkers. The intellectuals of the time, mainly John Locke and Benjamin Franklin, did believe that education was something that should be accessible for everyone. Not only that, intellectuals believed that education should not be influenced by religion. Before the American Revolution even began, there was a foundation within the New England and Middle colonies that supported free, universal, and public education for the masses.¹⁹

Southern colonies however did not have the same educational thought that was in the other regions of the British colonies. Southern colonies had a lack of public interest in schooling because of the abundant agrarian lifestyle that was common for the South. Southern thought dictated that it was the man's responsibility to school their children and not place that burden on society. A lack of public education complied with the South's desire to keep taxes low, and the general impossibility of widespread collaboration on education prevented education from growing in the South. The remote location of different villages and households made collective education impossible at the time without a deep commitment to universal education.²⁰ That was not going to happen in the South as they preferred the individual family lifestyle to the local communities of the Middle and New England colonies.

¹⁸ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 42.

¹⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 43.

²⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 27.

The era of the Revolutionary War distracted from any advances in education. Many circumstances led to the progression of American education to come to a halt during the war. Governments lacked funds to pay any teachers and many of the colonial intellectuals were loyalists and committed to British rule, so education had to stop in order to keep the sentiment of freedom strong in the rebelling colonies.²¹ After the American Revolution, education was now a national issue that could not be left up to individual colonial regions any longer.

Public education was key for the young nation as education supported individual liberty and equality, enforced civic virtues, and held strong education as being a foundation for a republic.²² The new nation looked to the region with the most successful educational foundations for leadership. They turned to the New England area and specifically Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut for how to create a successful, nationwide educational system. The rising democracy in the United States was going to threaten the stronghold that the elite class and religion had on education.²³ Early founders of the United States had a general understanding that education needed to improve to prepare the expanding economy. Education would be the main establishment that would provide an adequate workforce for a national economy. Unfortunately, education at the time was still poor and rarely left an elementary level. If it was not a religious school or a place of higher education for wealthy elites, other forms of education received no regular funding and no regular forms of support.²⁴ Federal support for education was abstract and mainly symbolic. Little federal support left responsibility at a state level and no state was able to provide enough funding to support it. Free primary education would rise again, but only after

²¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 48.

²² Parkerson & Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education*. 7.

²³ Van Patten & Pulliam, *History of Education*. 41.

²⁴ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 47.

rights expanded to all white males in the early 1800s.²⁵ Education in America was as undeveloped as the new nation itself, and the new democracy knew it had to make a concerted effort to improve regular education in order to grow significantly as a nation.

The main takeaway of the American Revolution was the idea that man could find knowledge without divine intervention. Ideas from the European Enlightenment held that man can determine truth for themselves and to be free from control of the upper class. American education continued in the Enlightenment tradition and diminished the power religion and the wealthy elite had over education.²⁶

When trying to synthesize a national approach to education, the topic was as up for debate as much as any other social topic during the creation of American Democracy. An early agreement between the founders of the federal government that education should be up to the states and not the federal government.²⁷ The Northwest Ordinance of 1785 that required a portion of land to be saved only for schools per a certain square mileage. States used The Northwest Ordinance to implement initial public financial support for schools and teacher pay. States were given almost full control over their approach to schools by the federal government in the early days of America, as long as states met the mandates to provide education with more abundance.²⁸ The founding members of the United States did not want education in the hands of private families, churches, communities, or philanthropic organizations as well, as the conflict of private education and differing sects of moral values defeated the goals of creating a unified nation. Because of the differentiated education system, early American education was never able

²⁵ Parkerson & Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education*. 8.

²⁶ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 45.

²⁷ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 51.

²⁸ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 52.

to promote any unified education system because the power of education was left up to the individual state legislatures.²⁹

Educational power was left to the states and many states struggled to maintain quality education for the majority of their population. Public schooling was still weakly funded as states tried to implement taxation on people deeply against taxes. Many teachers were poorly prepared to teach in a classroom setting with barely any formal education themselves. With poor teaching and poor resources, memorization exercises were central to many early educational systems.³⁰ State education struggled initially, which brought the idea of a national education system to Congress in 1795. People who supported federal support for education believed that a strong public education system was essential to a truly free and self-governing republic. While the support of quality public education was growing, Congress still rejected all advances toward the federal government being more involved in education and the power stayed with the states.³¹ Post-Revolutionary education was slowly becoming more advanced and central to the new democratic-republic nation, but the fear of an overly involved federal government kept the majority of educational power up to the states. The seeds of a better education system were in society, but the financial and political support had yet to catch up to the idea that education should be public and accessible.

Due to the disjointed nature of the early days of American government under the Articles of Confederation, education was still under mostly religious control during the years up until the War of 1812. Much like the American Revolution however, the War of 1812 again placed educational progress on hold. After the wartime years, the educational progress that had been

²⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 55.

³⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 54.

³¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 49.

about two centuries in the making during pre-colonial and post-colonial America began to make an impact. Individuals like Horace Mann, James Carter and Henry Barnard became the faces of the free and public school movement. These figures and the voice for public education became more prevalent when America vastly expanded and came into its own as an independent nation. The era between 1812 and 1865 included the rise of American nationalism with the Jacksonian era, the Industrial Revolution and the beginning of Westward Expansion. These changes in American life created the need for universal education.³² The beginning of the Industrial Revolution in America created the demand for schools to be a center for job preparation along with the increasing population densities across the country. American values now included competition, achievement, and discipline that transcended industry and agriculture in the American way of life. The job market also demanded hard work and punctuality that were also taught via the school system.³³ The urbanization of America created an ever-growing lower and Middle class that was beginning to demand universal education because of the inability to afford the private education that was dominant before Industrialization.³⁴

With the rapid change taking place in Jacksonian America, the need for free and public education finally arose. The need for free and equal education caught up with the separate schools and the social class structure that gave the upper class the advantage in education. American society finally saw education and specifically reading skills mandatory for effectively participation in society along with the potential for social mobility.³⁵ The growing desire for more accessible education provided the birth of modern day elementary, common and high schools during Industrial America. Secular education also arose during Urbanization, with many

³² Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 59.

³³ Parkerson & Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education*. 11-12.

³⁴ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 61.

³⁵ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 60.

educational reformers supported the education format that separated learning into subjects such as Math, reading and writing. Educational leaders began to value teacher education and institutions (primarily in the Northeast) began to offer teacher preparation programs.³⁶ While these programs were still underdeveloped by modern standards, it was a step in the right direction towards a societal effort to make education a foundational element of American society.

More progress was made at the political level as well in Antebellum America. America had an overall increase in tax-supported school support, especially at the state level where politics had more evident societal effort to support education. Society found an increasing connection between education and success in American society within the working class.³⁷ The same class that used to reject education in favor of local education in the home now wanted education on a much larger scale. School budgets began to be created in certain states, albeit education was still relatively underfunded, but the desire to give financial support to education was there.³⁸ In 1852, the New York City Board of Education President E.C. Benedict also laid out steps that would continue to support public education. His sentiments included schools not being mere extensions of the church and their religious values, equal taxation for all schools and giving schools the voice as civic temples.³⁹ He was one of just many voices during the time that looked to improve public education.

The more significant improvement in education was within the curriculum. Gradual improvements were made in subjects such as reading, grammar, English, and spelling with the

³⁶ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 59.

³⁷ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 62.

³⁸ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 64.

³⁹ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 33.

general agreement that basic education was primarily about learning literacy skills and how to read and write properly. Subjects such as History, geography and Mathematics were left for later grades and more advanced education. Education now expanded to the modern graded system beginning in Boston in 1818 with the implementation of an eight-year elementary school program.⁴⁰ More school organization began to take place along with a grading system in urban areas. Education was improving across most of the nation, and the rate at which children attended schools began to increase. By 1850, 45% of children had received some aspect of formal schooling. While schooling was on the rise, the majority of classrooms were one room classrooms with strict rules and poor quality. Education continued to grow despite the limitations of schooling. The English High School in Boston became the first instance of a High School in 1824. High Schools were initially set up for boys not attending college, and again restricted for the wealthy elite.⁴¹

Europe again had an influence on education during Industrialization, as Kindergarten came to America with the first wave of German immigrants. It took a while for Kindergarten to take hold in America, but the first English Kindergarten was established in 1860 and has been a part of American Education ever since.⁴² Schools continued their robust growth up until the Civil War, with 300 high schools established before the Civil War. As about one third of high schools were in the state of Massachusetts, the Northeast continued to set the standard for public education.⁴³

⁴⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 65.

⁴¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 66.

⁴² Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 73.

⁴³ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 67.

Industrialization and the rise of poverty made education reform important as an influx of immigrants began to come to America. These immigrants had to learn American culture somehow, and education was seen as the main vehicle to Americanize them. The new political influences mandated that public schools taught primarily patriotic ideas within their lessons of basic reading and writing. These lessons were to teach a love for America, its democratic ideas, its History, and potential.⁴⁴ Both politicians and reformers now looked to solve social issues via schools during Industrial America. Many issues rose from the Industrial Revolution such as child labor, crime, poverty, diversity and immigration and were now all problems of the education system to combat as opposed to American society itself.⁴⁵ Culture differences were a major problem with the expansion of immigration. African Americans were nowhere to be found in the expansion of education as any education they would receive would be within the church and confined by religion. Even religious education for African Americans came to a halt with Nat Turner's Rebellion in 1831. Despite society rejecting the idea of educating racial others, Horace Mann and Henry Barnard believed and promoted the idea of schools having the power of uniting the United States into an integrated national community. Educational equality never gained any social backing because of the desire for a unifying American culture to be for the Anglo-Saxon majority.⁴⁶ The dominant voices of education also left women on the margins. While there was education for both sexes, education was distinctively separate. Schools for women taught "women skills" such as sewing, proper manners, and music. Despite sexist education, Industrial America was the first time that women began to be regularly educated in any capacity.⁴⁷ Education reform began to take shape in the decades before the Civil War and was able to begin

⁴⁴ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 62.

⁴⁵ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 61.

⁴⁶ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 78.

⁴⁷ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 77.

to chip away at the centuries of conflict in education. While issues surrounding education will never entirely go away, especially with the conflict over slavery being more important in the years prior to the Civil War, education now had a foundation that could be built upon and progress can be made towards more widespread education.

The Civil War had closed schools in the South yet left the North unscathed educationally.⁴⁸ The economic and racial issues that plagued the South prevented the region from recovering any of the pre-war education it had. Southern education wasn't as strong as other regions in the nation, as its overly-agrarian lifestyle failed to support any formulation of an education system.⁴⁹ The South would need outside support if they were ever going to have a viable education system, but any attempt of providing federal support for Southern schooling was shot down in Congress. The main dissenting thought was that it would not make much sense to only financially support a part of the nation's education. Even though the majority was against supporting Southern education, some notable bills were able to make it to the floor of Congress. The 1870 Hoar Bill would create federally controlled schools in the South as a sort of scaffold for Southern educational leaders to start creating and maintaining schools themselves. The 1882 Blair Bill proposed \$77 million to be distributed in the South by illiteracy rates.⁵⁰ While the Hoar and Blair bills got very little support, it shows the increasing support by the federal government to promote education. Supporting Southern education continued with the creation of both the Southern Education Board and the General Education Board in 1903 with an attempt to revive southern education. Despite all of these efforts to support Southern education, the Reconstruction Era and Southern racism got in education's way. Southerners were insistent on

⁴⁸ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 84.

⁴⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 85.

⁵⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 86.

segregation, so that would mean more schools and more budgets for schools as well as the pure existence of segregation pulled funding out of Southern education. The desire for segregation created poorer conditions for Southern schools in the post-Civil War era as the South had notably short school years (North Carolina had 70 days in a school year) and lower teacher salaries than what they already were nationally.⁵¹

The Industrial Revolution continued into the Reconstruction era, but the negative effects started to hurt educational progress nationwide. Corrupt governments do not focus on education, so local, state and national legislation took a lax approach to supporting education in favor of the market-based economy that was taking cover. With the rise of crime during the Industrial Revolution, education was not seen as the answer. Middle class leaders saw a vast prison system as the answer. The prison system supported a more punishment based approach as opposed to the rehabilitation approach that would have been more education-centered. Politics supported industrial growth and the need for labor reform over education, and with the laissez-faire government of the Industrial era in control, it naturally did not want to support education federally and education was stagnant in any area that could not support education themselves.⁵²

Despite all of the inhibiting factors stemming from Reconstruction and the Industrial Revolution, public education continued to be on the rise. Society now held a widespread belief that education was the key to social advancement and challenging the rigid class structure of America. Using education as a way to advance yourself in society was the plan for public education.⁵³ “Americans increasingly came to see education as the way that they could remake

⁵¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 87.

⁵² Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 88.

⁵³ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 89.

themselves.”⁵⁴ The school system was also still working to respond to the continuing numbers of immigrants entering the country. The overall response to the influx of immigration was best put by Carl Bankston III and Steven Caldas:

“These schools were responding to changes in American Society. In the decades from the end of the Civil War to World War I, unprecedented waves of immigrants had arrived in the rapidly industrializing nation. By 1908, a study by the U.S. Immigration Commission found that a majority of the students in America’s largest families (U.S. Immigration, 1911). In response to the new waves on American shores, public schooling became widely seen as a way of ‘Americanizing’ young people who were immigrants or children of immigrants. Not only would schools be places where new generations would acquire English as their chief means of communication, they would also be locations for inoculating beliefs about the United States.”⁵⁵

Immigration became central to the American population. By 1910 about one-third of the population were immigrants or children of at least one immigrant. 15% of the population were first-generation immigrants, 15% were children of two immigrants and 7% were children of one immigrant parent.⁵⁶ American society saw the increasing immigrant population as an “immigration problem”. Immigration was a threat to national unity and American culture. Politicians saw education as the answer to restricting immigrant cultures and values.⁵⁷ Public schools were the means to create a new unified social order that required the widespread education of millions of new immigrant peoples. Public schools gained support with the gradual decline of the wealthy School Academies after 1850 and the rise of the high school system. While funding was still a major issue, taxation and tuition were now being implemented with more regularity, especially with high schools. The primary goal of high schools became college preparation, as approximately 10% of the population ever attended college in by 1900. Yet high

⁵⁴ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 3.

⁵⁵ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 2.

⁵⁶ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 43.

⁵⁷ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 44-45.

schools were very loose in their structure with little standardization. One class could amount to a length anywhere from one semester to four years depending on the subject and location.⁵⁸

Organizations formed with the goal to standardize schools in mind. The Northeast again was ahead of the standardization initiative with many organizations in place before World War I such as The New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools in 1789. Many other organizations would soon follow across the country with the Middle Atlantic States Association in 1892, the North Central Association in 1894, The Association of College and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States in 1895, and the Northwest Association of Secondary and Higher Schools in 1918. The common denominator of all these organizations reflected the atmosphere of education at the time, that education was regionally separated and therefore vastly different. Regionally separated education was a major obstacle to the unity of American education. The differentiation of education looked to be resolved with the National Education Association in 1870. The National Association looked to standardize all levels of schools across the entire nation. The National Education Association was the first national attempt to standardize all of education. The association never really made much of an impact until the creation of the Committee of Ten in 1892. The Committee of Ten was mainly comprised of college-focused educators with no high school teachers amongst its ranks. The lack of high school teachers led the committee to solely focus on college preparation in its school reform and vocational education was scrapped entirely as a viable part of public education. The committee created the modern format of education of one subject per period, the five-day school week and the one year cycle for schooling.⁵⁹ The major reforms brought about by the Committee of Ten had a lasting

⁵⁸ Van Patten & Pulliam, *History of Education*. 90.

⁵⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam, *History of Education*. 91.

impact on the standardization of nationwide education. This reformation continued into 1902 when the National Education Association mandated 15 class credits required for high school graduation. The 15 class credits included a mandatory three English classes and two Math courses. The association also released the Seven Cardinal Principles in 1918. These principles created a framework for what common values that would be taught in classrooms that coincided with what American Society wanted to be their set of core values. These core values from the Seven Cardinal Principles were:

1. Health
2. Command of fundamental processes
3. Worthy home membership
4. Vocation
5. Citizenship
6. Worthy use of leisure
7. Ethical character⁶⁰

These values created a moral standard for the public education system. National associations looked to implement moral standards into education with the desire to create a national identity that has been desired since the founding of America. America began to create a system that actually supported the ideas of universal education that taught the masses common values and morals that American society desired.

Progress continued into the 20th century that looked to strengthen the school system. School reforms continued to create a rigid classroom system to stress discipline. The desire for a rigid education system led to the creation of junior high schools after 1930 to bridge the gap between elementary and high schools. Junior high schools completed the twelve-year school system that is in place today. The school system enforced and stressed socialization and guidance

⁶⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 92.

within a rigid school structure.⁶¹ The rigid classroom structure and more standardized education created a more pressing need for improved teacher education. Teacher education was on the rise during the late 1800s, as the number of teacher preparation schools increased from 70 schools in 1875 to 345 by the year 1900. Teachers also became a women-dominated field during the expansion of education as teaching was one of the few available jobs for women.⁶²

By the late 19th century and into the early 20th century, schools began to enter the center of American society. Politicians and society alike saw education as the vehicle of conveying the core values of American society and creating a national unity.⁶³ Despite the progress made before World War I, schools were still poorly equipped in the funding and resources in order to support widespread, universal education. Before World War I, education had changed to be almost mandatory with demanding regulation and discipline for students.⁶⁴ Schools were uniform before World War I without a lot of individualization in mind, and school reformers disagreed with the way widespread education was being handled. John Dewey was one of the first education reformers to take issue with the rigid education system that was created. Dewey and other progressive school reformers found the formal methods of education too extreme and arguably against the democratic ideas that American values were based in and taught in schools. The subject-centered system prevented natural growth and learning that progressive reformers argued children needed to function as individuals in society.⁶⁵ The interwar period between World War I and World War II struggled with satisfying the arguments for the factory model and the progressive model of education. Both approaches strived to create functioning citizens, but

⁶¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 93.

⁶² Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 99.

⁶³ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 61.

⁶⁴ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 100.

⁶⁵ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 103.

different kinds of functioning citizens. The factory model looked to create individuals ready for the industrial workforce and the progressive model looked to make people prepared to the complexities of the world and the beginning of globalization.⁶⁶ Towards the end of the interwar period, education reformers did not agree anymore on the way education should be standardized. Education was big enough in American society that individuals such as politicians could see universal education as a point of discussion and debate as America searched for the best methods to teach a large amount of people unifying ideas.

Education has been increasingly central to American society following World War II. With the rise of the Soviet Union and communism, society feared radical ideas and began to reject many foreign cultures. Schools reflected this fear with a shift from including immigrants to alienating them. Overall, “the view of American as a way of building the ideal society became blended with perceived threats.”⁶⁷ National solidarity became critical and connected with national security during the Cold War and society saw schools as a way to support national goals. Schools were now promoted to see the potential of students within society over the individual potential of students. Progressive thinkers lost their voice during the 1950s as society rejected progressive education as radical.⁶⁸ Progressivism of the 1920s and 30s became linked to redistributive ideologies such as communism. Conservatism dominated during the Cold War era and strengthened traditionalist ideologies.⁶⁹ Traditionalist regimes demanded re-evaluating education. War and an ever-evolving economy, society, and technology have forced education to change regularly to keep up at a fast pace.⁷⁰ A number of educational philosophies came out of

⁶⁶ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 65.

⁶⁷ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 69.

⁶⁸ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 70, 72 & 77.

⁶⁹ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 94.

⁷⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 109.

the beginning of the Conservative era to try to find an answer to the issues surrounding education. American education was in a conflict between teaching to the needs of both children and society. Older education focused on teaching to the needs of society, but certain groups promoted a resurgence in educational concern for vocational guidance and a new emphasis on special education.⁷¹

The first part of the Conservative era struggled with meeting the needs of individual students along with maintaining a national identity during the Cold War. The Cold War was one factor of the increasing globalization of the United States with the rest of the world. The Cold War was presented as a “Holy War” for freedom in the schools. The “Holy War” sparked a 1950s resurgence in popular patriotism and national religious revival. The increase in popular patriotism was when “under God” was added into the Pledge of Allegiance by President Eisenhower in 1954.⁷² One could not stray from the strict morals that America was trying to uphold, as “In a society of saints, dedicated to the strictest moral values, even the slightest infractions are grave sins.”⁷³ America continued to heavily invest in the conservative ideologies that enforced American and nationalist values. At the 91st convention of the National Education Association in 1953, the Association pledged allegiance to American heritage. This decision influenced the patriotic role of schools and defended the American way of schools that would come to enforce conservative values, traditionalist ideas and emphasizing American History over others.⁷⁴ Society saw education as the means of propagating membership and inclusion in the country and adhering to it.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 110.

⁷² Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 91.

⁷³ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 95.

⁷⁴ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 96.

⁷⁵ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 103.

American society began to reverse on this strict adherence to nationalism and cultural intolerance during and after the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-1950s and 1960s. The Civil Rights era returned the national conversation to thinking about marginalized groups. Martin Luther King Jr. came out of the era as a martyr and was implemented into schools similar to former Presidents Washington and Lincoln. The Civil Rights Movement reopened immigration during the 1960s, and racism was identified as a national flaw.⁷⁶ Lyndon B. Johnson brought the federal government into the national problem of civil rights with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. This legislation started the war on poverty and through its Title I legislation it provided funds for schools with low income classification. This system was regularly abused as schools could easily be reclassified and be eligible for this funding.⁷⁷ Race became a national issue in the schools and educators saw the poor and struggling students as mostly internal foreigners that needed to be Americanized. Said best by Bankston and Caldas, “internal foreigners” were best described as:

“Predominately Negro, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and southern rural or mountain whites, these people [the poor] are the bearers of cultural attitudes alien to those which are dominant in the broader communities they now inhabit, and their children come to the school disadvantaged to the degree that their culture has failed to provide them with the experiences that are ‘normal’ to the kinds of children the schools are used to teaching.”⁷⁸

Racism became a major conflict in the schools and very few programs were implemented to provide more equal funding for the disadvantaged. The ideals of the time preferred to solve racial issues by Americanizing the different racial groups of the nation with the Caucasian majority rather than integration of multiple cultures.

⁷⁶ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 111 & 113.

⁷⁷ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 116.

⁷⁸ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 117.

In addition to the other modern conflicts surrounding education, creating both funding and authority for public schools was now also an issue. The Federal Government was increasingly becoming more influential since the beginning of the 20th century and had now begun to fund education nationally. The Federal Government had tried to get control over public schools, but local and state governments noticed.⁷⁹ The fight over control of public schools and education between local, state, and federal governments came out the reformation and standardization era. The fight over control of the schools an ongoing conflict that has no real answer, but certain changes has helped improve education, even though there are an increasing number of influences that further complex the education system.

The education system in America could not be improved without taxation. Taxation began to change the way schools were funded and therefore who monitored them. This taxation was uneven however, with urban schools receiving more money than urban schools.⁸⁰ Overall, local funding for schools dropped from 83% to 51% during 1930-1970 in favor of federal funding. With this, the federal government expected to increase its control over public education and tried to implement standards.⁸¹ Federal programs rolled out in support of providing funding for schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965 also gave funds for instructional materials and educational research to give support for the instructional quality that had always been lacking in education. The Education Professions Development Act in 1967 continued support for teacher preparation for providing funds to improve teacher preparation

⁷⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 119.

⁸⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 120.

⁸¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 121.

programs.⁸² Programs like this continued into the 21st century as it became a federal initiative to help improve schools nationwide.

The 1980s and 1990s continued the concern over educational quality and the emphasis on standards. 1983's *A Nation at Risk* called schooling and specifically public schools "a rising tide of mediocrity." All levels of government shared a desire for a higher level of quality in education of American social ideals. The report also claimed that the condition of public education had eroded over the past twenty years and the main cause of it was the lack of accountability and standards.⁸³ Technological advances provided the answer with standardized testing. Standardized tests are now possible as they could be monitored nationally with more accessibility thanks to advances in technology. Standardized accountability became the new norm of monitoring and raising the standards of public schools. Public schools now were taxed with raising test scores with their regular socialization duties of solving social problems such as racial inequality. Teachers in the modern era began to fill multiple roles of parents, psychotherapists and social workers as they try to handle their multitude of social responsibilities.⁸⁴ With all these new standards came the implementation of the modern curriculum format consisting of four years of English, three years of Math, three years of Social Studies, and half a year of some computer Science. The modern curriculum format was rolled out with equity in mind across the nation's public schools as they were all expected to follow the same educational schedule.⁸⁵ The 1990s was much of the same as the federal government increased its involvement in education and the desire for excellence. President George H.W. Bush – proclaiming himself "the Education President" - set lofty goals by the year 2000. He expected all children to enter schools ready to

⁸² Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 124.

⁸³ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 131.

⁸⁴ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 133.

⁸⁵ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 134.

learn, a national graduation rate of at least 90%, tests at grades 4, 8, and 12 to measure and show competency in English, Math, Science, History, Geography, responsible citizenship, and a desire for further learning or employment. He also had national expectation of the U.S. to lead the world in Science and Math with all Americans literate and ready to compete in the global economy while exercising their citizenship. Bush also wanted to combat the national drug issues within the schools with drug and violence free school initiatives.⁸⁶ These lofty goals were not only not met, but initiatives to improve schools failed overall as ACT and SAT scores have remained flat from 1980-2000 when many different mandates and standards were implemented.⁸⁷ Even later policies like President George W. Bush's 2002 No Child Left Behind and President Obama's 2009 Race to the Top programs failed to provide the spark that public schools need in order to solve the issues ailing national education.

Knowing the History of education in America is important to understanding the flaws America currently faces in education. Specifically, Social Studies education has a vast number of issues that it is facing today. Issues such as the subject's dependence on detail-centered instruction, neglect at a national and state level, and the Eurocentrism and Americanization of History are three big problems that the modern American Social Studies classroom faces. These problems are resulting in the weakening of Social Studies as a content area and a general lack of enthusiasm to learn it. Identifying and addressing these issues will go a long way in helping Social Studies regain its importance as a subject in American schools. While there might not be a simple solution to these problems, acknowledging them collectively as problems is the first step

⁸⁶ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 141-144.

⁸⁷ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 135.

the American education system can take on the path to restoring Social Studies as a crucial topic for students to learn.

Social Studies does not have the educational History that is as in depth or focused upon as subjects such as Math or Science. Historically, Social Studies would not rise in importance until the 1800s. As colonial founders attempted to create a unified nation Jean-Jacques Rousseau played a large influential role as he provided many ideas on the idea of Civil Religion. Rousseau argued that leaders of the nation needed to create a civil faith that made good citizens. Society was innately corrupt, and individuals with good natural values had to be able to navigate a corrupt society. To Rousseau, people were naturally good, and through proper education, would be fortified against a corrupt society.⁸⁸ Rousseau saw education as a proper vehicle to disseminate a civil religion, but education currently had no logical subject to provide a platform to these ideas. History itself wasn't even educationally recognized until this time when it began to gain professional status and people could study History as a profession. The History profession played a large role in loosening the religious ties to education, as History now needed to be backed up with supporting details.⁸⁹ The importance of supporting details evolved over the century to viewing History as an empirical Science, not a speculative one. Detail-centered History invalidated the speculative nature of religion where viewing History had to be critical and systematic in nature.⁹⁰ The evolution of History over time creates our first problem in examining teaching History and Social Studies: too much is still heavily based in minute details and that inhibits Social Studies from reaching its full educational potential.

⁸⁸ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 10

⁸⁹ William J. Reese. *History, Education, and the Schools*. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan) 2007. 14.

⁹⁰ Reese. *History*. 20.

“All over America, high school students sit in Social Studies and American History classes, look at their textbooks, write answers to the questions at the end of each chapter, and take quizzes and examinations that test factual recall.”⁹¹

Regardless of the content, no student would get excited about this method of education and want to engage in the material. Over the History of education, historical understanding has become ignored and trivialized.⁹² Americans from the era that influenced education most preferred the practical over the cerebral. They wanted schools to teach solely the facts and the absolute, not the controversial and complex.⁹³ The era during the Cold War turned History education into a platform for the conservative ideals of the time. Moral education of the time is better classified as anti-communism and aligning with the fear of foreign entities brought about by McCarthyism. American society held a national fear from the 1950s throughout the 1990s about abandoning nationalist ideas.⁹⁴ Education was the vehicle to promote these nationalist ideas and Social Studies played this role through trivializing many aspects of History. The largely conservative majority of the Cold War era rejected the ideas that History was argumentative and between competing forces.⁹⁵ In 2000, the University of Connecticut administered a high school level American History examination to 556 seniors attending 55 colleges and universities. 80 percent of them received a D or F grade on this examination. These are supposed to be highly educated individuals and they are unable to pass an examination meant for high school students. The results reflect the increasing gap in History education in the years following high school, as many students avoid non-mandatory History classes, as their recollection of the subject is filled with mediocrity.

⁹¹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 340.

⁹² Lloyd Kramer & Donald Reid. *Learning History America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics*. Ed. By William L. Barney, Lloyd Kramer, Donald Reid. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) 1994. 2.

⁹³ Reese, *History, Education, and the Schools*. 28.

⁹⁴ Parkerson & Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education*. 138.

⁹⁵ Reese, *History, Education, and the Schools*. 26.

Textbooks played a key role in the systematic nationalization of students through historical trivialization. Textbooks from this era and leading up to today do not tell more than dates, names, and details about public events that are loosely related.⁹⁶ Students spend more time with their textbooks for History courses than any other adolescent subject. From simply reading them to answer the myriad of questions at the end of each chapter, students spend a lot of time with History textbooks.⁹⁷ It does not help that History textbooks are massive in size, where 1,000 pages is on the lower end of the spectrum. History textbooks contain simply far too much to teach if teachers were to cover everything textbooks do, but teachers must try to in order to help students acquire the knowledge needed for examinations.⁹⁸ The adherence to textbooks leaves all the critical thinking and historical analysis to the publishers of the book and not to the students learning the content. The result is students learning primarily details and dates with examinations that expect a pure regurgitation of these facts. History as a high school class is feared because of these textbooks, and much of them are filled with irrelevant information from the perspective of students.⁹⁹ The lack of deeper reasoning for learning them leads students to say that History is boring. Textbooks rarely make any connection to present times, so History is presented as lifeless within the pages of the textbooks. While messages like patriotism and citizenship are the main messages of textbooks, they are seldom presented in a way that allows any real patriotism to be formed in students, creating a historical narrative that lacks substance.¹⁰⁰ History education has been stagnant for a long time, as only more dates and people have been added to the current curriculum under the same model. Education that is has patterns and is systematic will fail over

⁹⁶ Mary Beth Norton. "Rethinking American History Textbooks." In *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics*. Etd. By Barney, Kramer & Reid. 26.

⁹⁷ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 9-10.

⁹⁸ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 19.

⁹⁹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 6.

time. Society moves too fast for an educational model that does not move with it.¹⁰¹ The systematic, detail-centered model does not promote the inquiry, argumentation and critical thinking that is required of colleges, universities and many modern careers. Schooling has become a mechanic process for enforcing conformity through bureaucracy. New thinking becomes difficult under this process. Mechanic schooling is a part of modern schooling, and it is part of the problem.¹⁰² James Loewen put mechanic schooling as a process of socialization and its effect on student understanding of History. “Education as socialization influences students simply to accept the rightness of our society. American History textbooks overtly tell us to be proud of America. The more schooling, the more socialization, and the more likely the individual will conclude America is good.”¹⁰³

The strict, detail-oriented model of History education is a problem if Social Studies curriculums want to be relevant in the modern world. Schools have become contradictory over time as it is stuck in traditional models with a modern society. Schools systems still support a streamlined process of assuming all students are the same, yet society is beginning to support ideas of individuality. Education claims to provide equal opportunity, but standardization clearly favors the appropriately intelligent.¹⁰⁴ This issue has made it evident that the demands of the mixed economy and the demands of the individual do not align.¹⁰⁵ Social Studies is the main victim of the traditional, assembly line-esque approach to schooling. Social Studies is trapped in a historical approach that is from sixty years prior, and it pigeonholes historical understanding into knowing trivial dates and people because of the conformist model to schooling and

¹⁰¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education in America*. 2.

¹⁰² Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 4.

¹⁰³ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 350.

¹⁰⁴ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 78.

¹⁰⁵ Bankston & Caldas. *Public Education*. 154.

standardized testing. The moral development that can occur through Social Studies cannot succeed in a standard-based world of education.¹⁰⁶ This model is not learning and makes Social Studies in this incarnation dangerous. Trivial dates and details that have no relation to each other provide the opportunity for dominant groups from taking over the historical conversation and oppress many groups from important learning opportunities. Students are privy to this kind of learning and only meet the short-term goals of learning facts. When two-thirds of seventeen year-olds cannot put the Civil War in the right century or 22% cannot identify who fought in the Vietnam War, students are forgetting information that is actually important to being an educated citizen. Not only that, but students cannot connect major developments of our past to current issues.¹⁰⁷ Part of Social Studies is critical analysis and claim-making, but when the powerful control the conversation, real analysis cannot happen as only part of the story is told.¹⁰⁸ Real learning and historical analysis comes from sudden insight and realization of knowledge done by students, not trial and error in trying to memorize disjointed facts. Trivialization puts Social Studies into a realm of right vs. wrong, and students understanding of History devolves into multiple choice and reciting what tests and teachers want to hear. In Social Studies, the whole context is critical, and pure memorization of dates and people takes away part of that context as students fixate on only the right answer, not the multiple perspectives that come from History.¹⁰⁹ Social Studies is simply outdated and need to be refurbished in order to start becoming relevant again.

Solving this issue is no easy feat, but this issue can be resolved with effort and commitment to reforming the way Social Studies is taught. Educational thinkers have had many

¹⁰⁶ Parkerson & Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education*. 142.

¹⁰⁷ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 342.

¹⁰⁸ Reese. *History, Education, and the Schools*. 31.

¹⁰⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education in America*, 129.

different ways to teach Social Studies that have been relevant for decades. While progressivism sounds like a new educational term, it has been around since the 1930s. Ideas such as non-graded courses, open classrooms and team teaching have been in progressivism for a long time and there is no need to reinvent educational practices in order to fix Social Studies.¹¹⁰ Progressive ideas are slowly becoming the dominant thought in education, and Social Studies could deeply benefit from many of the ideas that come with the ideology. Inquiry based education has also been around since John Dewey championed the progressive era in the 1930s, and it is the best model to support quality Social Studies education. Examining Social Studies and History is supposed to lead to questions being asked, and the learning comes from students trying to answer their own inquiries. While students can be guided by bigger, essential questions, students should be free to learn from the wealth of information that there is in the world of History. The inquiry-based model has many variations that are also not new to the world of education, as individual contracting was proposed in 1919 to support students controlling their own learning and not being dictated by standards. The same individualization can take place at the teacher level, as differentiated staffing allows for teachers to use multiple approaches to education and learning so students can not only experience the multitude of ways learning can be accomplished, but get to experience widespread modeling on how different teachers synthesize arguments.¹¹¹ An emphasis on differentiation leads to ideas that allow students to explore History through a critical lens and get away from seeing Social Studies education as mere repetition of what they are told to believe as fact.

¹¹⁰ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education in America*. 1.

¹¹¹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education in America*. 149.

Another part of the solution can also be changing the way we utilize History textbooks. Teachers should not rely on them to teach content that engages students but, they cannot abandon it entirely as it is a useful tool for framing lessons and modeling to students how History can be distorted. The addition of contemporary narratives in conjunction is also ineffective, as these narratives seem out of place in a narrative still dominated by textbooks.¹¹² But textbooks still have a place in education. Books that question how we attain knowledge, perspectives on morality and political justice are very valuable in the classroom so students can utilize them to see arguments and counter-arguments collide in real life.¹¹³ Presenting actual examples of how claims are made helps Social Studies teachers actually teach students. Controversy is still avoided in classrooms, yet is one of the best experiences for making Social Studies engaging. Some still view education as teaching things for students to learn and not to encourage students to learn on their own.¹¹⁴ Social Studies teachers have a great opportunity to challenge students' intellectually and help them develop critical thinking. Providing varying viewpoints is a key point of equality, as people think differently, but should all be able to state claims effectively and support their claims with evidence.¹¹⁵

Learning Social Studies can also come through independent observation. To do this properly, students should have the wealth of resources that is one of the strengths to teaching Social Studies. Students can learn to think independently and critically using different sources to create their own arguments and observations. Both primary and secondary sources can be used

¹¹² Norton. "Rethinking American History Textbooks." In *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics*. Etd. By Barney, Kramer & Reid. 30.

¹¹³ Daniel Gordon. "Teaching Western History at Stanford." In *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics*. Etd. By Barney, Kramer & Reid. 48.

¹¹⁴ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 80.

¹¹⁵ Gordon. "Teaching Western History at Stanford." In *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics*. Etd. By Barney, Kramer & Reid. 52.

here, and they both have their place in Social Studies education. Secondary sources help show students what effective historical arguments are made, and primary sources make History real to students, especially if you connect content to current events or their community.¹¹⁶ The expectation of mastery in Social Studies is foolish, but memorization and centralizing it around menial details makes mastery seem plausible. True History and historians center their research around detail supported claims because the reality is that mastery in Social Studies is impossible. The world is diverse and the cultures within it are more complex than a book or a few primary accounts, so mastery should not be the final aim of History or Social Studies education.¹¹⁷ The first issue in History education can be solved when teachers stop focusing on menial details and focus more on creating a narrative that engage students in material. The key in making material interesting is creating that engaging narrative or providing a relevant contemporary issue that shows students why History is important as a context.

After *A Nation at Risk* was released in 1983, every level of government accused schools of meddling in mediocrity. Under President Ronald Reagan, conservative organizations began to assert that schools needed to be reformed over this perceived mediocrity. In the report, schools were accused of being textbook driven, lacking resources, and having low graduation requirements. To solve these problems, *A Nation at Risk* proposed that changes should be made to improve learning that would support the United States' scientific, technological, military and economic aims. These goals were easy to define and measure as these goals could be easily achieved by improving Math and Science education.¹¹⁸ Math and Science are easier to

¹¹⁶ John Anthony Scott. "How Shall We Humanize the Teaching of History." In *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. by Bernard R. Gifford. 181 & 183.

¹¹⁷ Bernard R. Gifford. "Introduction: Thinking About History Teaching and Learning." In *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. by Bernard R. Gifford. (New York: MacMillian Publishing Company). 1988. 3.

¹¹⁸ Gifford. "Introduction." 1-2.

standardize nationally, but since Social Studies is an argumentative subject, it is far more difficult to monitor both nationally and within individual states. Social Studies education has struggled to maintain relevance in schools in comparison to other subjects that are considered commonplace in schools across the nation. The standardization of schools has led Social Studies to struggle in maintaining an independent identity when subjects are being prioritized by tests.¹¹⁹

A good starting point for examining how curriculums value each subject is looking at the amount of examinations for each subject area. As of the 2016-2017 academic school year, there is a clear value given to Math and Science. New York State has a total of seven Math Regents examinations in the State of New York and five for the Sciences at the High School level. Social Studies does not come close with those numbers with only two Regents examinations.¹²⁰ While tests do not mean much in terms of evaluating the quality of education, it does represent what is valued in the education system. New York State education reflects fairly well national sentiments toward education, and over the years it has become increasingly fixated on Math and the Sciences. National initiatives such as President George W. Bush's 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and the implementation of the Common Core State Standards have placed importance on all subjects except Social Studies. Even with the lack of attention toward Social Studies standards, the humanities are the first subject area examined for contemporary problems. The neoconservative revival from the Cold War era and throughout the Reagan Administration have blamed modern social issues such as the war on drugs from the 1970s and 80s or the rise of school violence on education and specifically educators. Humanities courses are looked at for the answer as well, as there is a never-ending tendency for leaning on intellectuals for the solution of

¹¹⁹ Gifford. "Introduction." 6.

¹²⁰ "OSA." *Elementary, Intermediate Tests and High School Regents Examinations: OSA: NYSED*. January 31, 2017. Accessed March 21, 2017. <http://www.nysedregents.org/>.

political and social problems.¹²¹ Yet while humanities courses such as Social Studies do have the power to influence society, there has been no prominent national reform for Social Studies. Creating a quality Social Studies curriculum is left up to not only individual states with no guidance, but individual schools with no guidance. Social Studies cannot succeed in any format if there are no standards to help guide teachers through the vast ocean of content that the subject presents.

It is hard to pinpoint how to create quality standards for Social Studies when there is no solid reasoning to teach Social Studies. Everyone knows that Social Studies has a place in education, but no one can really agree on a reason to teach it. Many different perspectives have been developing throughout time. Ancient historians such as Thucydides from around 450BCE see facts as the crucial part of History. History should be meant for inquirers searching for exact knowledge based in this mindset.¹²² Voltaire expanded on this approach to History in the late 1770s by noting that History is of a higher quality with “more details, better found facts, more precise dates, better authorities, and more attention to usages, laws, manners, commerce, finances, agriculture, and population.”¹²³ Some argue that History provides perspectives to expand on life and the world around us. This approach is powerful enough to change societies. In the 1930s, Charles Beard argued that History has the essential role of social reform, especially if it emphasizes the perspective approach and progressive ideas.¹²⁴ Diane Ravitch stated that “History will never be restored as a subject of value unless it is detached from the vulgar utilitarianism that originally swamped it. History should not be expected to teach patriotism,

¹²¹ Reese. *History, Education, and the Schools*. 120.

¹²² Reese. *History, Education, and the Schools*. 9

¹²³ Reese. *History, Education, and the Schools*. 15.

¹²⁴ Reese. *History, Education, and the Schools*. 23-24.

morals, values clarification, or decision-making.”¹²⁵ Regardless of how you see value in Social Studies and its associated subjects, it is there and it has to be settled upon in order for Social Studies to gain importance again against standardization.

Many voices speak to the value of History. Hazel Whitman Hertzberg sees the virtue and advantages of History along with its allied subjects as:

“They serve to broaden and cultivate the mind; that they counteract a narrow and provincial spirit; that they prepare the pupil in an eminent degree for enlightenment and intellectual enjoyment in after years; and that they assist him to exercise a salutary influence upon the affairs of his country.”¹²⁶

This statement speaks to the influential power of Social Studies. Social Studies broadens the mind while in the classroom and fights against the narrow-minded around them. The world has never been narrower in the eyes of many, and a more liberal future seems inevitable, but the world of Social Studies is stuck in the neoconservative past of the United States during its desire for global supremacy. History better speaks to the present anyway, as James Harvey Robinson and Charles A. Beard have attested to as History reformers. “History that speaks to the present” better describes the idea that recent History of the past few centuries is more important than ancient History. More recent History provides the History of modern, ordinary people, creating simpler and more relevant connections to students.¹²⁷ Proper History according to Ravitch shows the “great achievements and the terrible disasters” of humans and encourages the development of intelligence civility and perspective.¹²⁸ Part of History’s value is in how understanding the past can be used to find probable course for future events and the modern world.¹²⁹ These ideas for

¹²⁵ Diane Ravitch, “From History to Social Studies: Dilemmas and Problems” in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. by Bernard R. Gifford (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company) 1988. 52.

¹²⁶ Hazel Whitman Hertzberg, “Are Method and Content Enemies?” in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. by Bernard R. Gifford (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company) 1988. 15-16.

¹²⁷ Hertzberg, “Method and Content” 21.

¹²⁸ Ravitch, “From History to Social Studies” 52.

¹²⁹ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 255.

proper History education can be integrated into Social Studies classrooms and the schools.

“Exemplary school programs do not indoctrinate students to accept these ideas blindly, but present knowledge about their historical derivation and contemporary application essential to understanding our society and its institutions.”¹³⁰ The multitudes of reasons for teaching Social Studies is seen as a weakness in a system that wants exactness, but the fact that Social Studies has so many practical reasons for its teaching is why it should be given more value as a subject.

The “Common Culture” of current Social Studies forces a national unity when there really isn’t any.¹³¹ Quality History education questions interpretations of History, not values of a nation and the world around it. Interpreting History is a good decision because views and values are never singular, but multiple.¹³² National and State standards need to reflect this, as clear standards do not micromanage or heavily suggest a certain educational theory over another but allows differing styles to meet expectations of what skills students to learn.¹³³ History education has to come to some agreement on why the field is important to teach before we can go about teaching it. No matter where an educator lies on that agreement, having a solid understanding of what History education can influence is a good step toward fixing it. Unfortunately, textbooks and the associated examinations teach one thing after another and none of what is memorized is memorable. Very few of what is given to schools to teach History is connected and does not develop any construct of causation, leaving students unable to connect the past to the present.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ R. Freeman Butts “History and Civic Education” in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. by Bernard R. Gifford (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company) 1988. 68.

¹³¹ Nathan I. Huggins. “American History and the Idea of Common Culture” in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. By Bernard R. Gifford (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company) 1988. 119.

¹³² Huggins. “American History and the Idea of Common Culture” in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. By Bernard R. Gifford (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company) 1988. 121.

¹³³ Parkerson & Parkerson. *Transitions in American Education*. 199.

¹³⁴ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 11-12.

A logistical approach to teaching Social Studies is creating a list of topics that teachers want to teach in their classrooms. History has far too much content to be taught in one academic school year, so educators can choose 30-50 topics of what they want to cover. No two teachers will have the same list, so students will get coverage over most of what they need to know in order to understand History and society in their years of Social Studies education. If teachers are unsure whether a topic is important, they should ask: Why do I want my students to know this? What should they be able to do with this information if they do recall it after high school?¹³⁵ Students can also be involved on this process at the beginning of the year if the teacher explains this approach to the students and then has students develop a list of approximately 10 or so topics that they feel no History course would be incomplete without.¹³⁶ Having students help create part of the curriculum can easily be done in a think-pair-share approach that has students go from working independently, to small groups, and finally into a whole class discussion. A teacher can also look at national or state (if applicable) standards to ensure that teaching a certain topic can also help students meet educational standards. This approach will provide a good mix of material to students, and it will be taught with more passion as the teachers actually want to teach it.

Teaching Historiography skills in Social Studies classrooms can help preserve the subject's importance. Concepts of historiography fit well into concepts of critical thinking, as it requires the natural asking of certain questions when analyzing every source. These nine questions transcend all aspects of Social Studies and can provide a bedrock when looking at different sources:

1. When was it created, and how does that time differ from ours?

¹³⁵ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 20-21.

¹³⁶ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 40.

2. Who created it and what was their group's point of view and social position?
3. What are the creator's ideological needs, social purposes, and values?
4. Who was/is the intended audience and did the audience include people of power?
5. Who was left out and what points of view went unheard?
6. Are there words or symbols that would not be used today or by a different social group?
7. How was it received? Is it a well know source or was if forgotten?
8. What was left out of the source?
9. Was the presentation accurate? What actually happened and what do other sources say?¹³⁷

Education has many other ways to approach teaching historiography than just asking these questions, but they provide a good standard. Social Studies education needs to focus on the processes centered around being a good historian. Skills that transfer outside of the classroom and into real life include critical thinking, writing, sourcing and developing claims with evidence. These skills can be developed over grade levels, and teachers can “standardize” these skills as proper ways to executing these skills can be standardized without affecting students’ answers. Improving History education might require a change in how standardization is approached in the subject. Standardization centered around teaching students proper critical thinking skills helps provide value to Social Studies as a subject and prevent students having their understanding of History influenced by textbooks.

A Eurocentric approach to History is unsatisfactory, not only in preventing dominant cultures, but in its inaccuracy of understanding History as a construct of time. Europe and its

¹³⁷ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 77.

associates only were the unquestioned dominant force from approximately 1450 to 1950, and it is only one of the many phases of world History.¹³⁸ Textbooks have students believe that all innovations can be traced back to Europe, especially in terms of civilization. Most important developments in world History can be traced back to Europe in the current state of Social Studies education.¹³⁹ World History is not the sum of national histories, it is more about observing progress and its relation to the harsh and bitter sides of human experience.¹⁴⁰ Yet a Eurocentric mindset is so ingrained in our understanding of History that very few high school classrooms examine Europe's rise to dominance in an exploratory format. European dominance is expressed as natural, something without causation nor explanation.¹⁴¹ Eurocentrism is a special form of ethnocentrism, as Europe is not a conventional continent nor culture. Europe is only a peninsula, but has somehow become a point of reference to the rest of the world, as Middle East and Far East is used to refer to East and West Asia respectively. Other Eurocentric terms include "New World", "discover", "savages", and "settlers".¹⁴²

History can also make us more ethnocentric as well. Students can feel their culture is dominant over others easily when students have little context to other cultures and societies. Ethnocentrism is a form of ignorance, as it is hard to learn about another culture when one walks in assuming it to be inferior.¹⁴³ But when History is taught in a way that emphasizes American exceptionalism from middle school at the latest, ethnocentrism only rises. The current state of American exceptionalism is not a reason to avoid teaching the History of America at all, but we

¹³⁸ William H. McNeill, "Pursuit of Power: Criteria of Global Relevance" in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach?* Ed. by Bernard R. Gifford. 131.

¹³⁹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 45.

¹⁴⁰ McNeill, "Pursuit of Power" in *History in the Schools*. 133 & 135.

¹⁴¹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 37.

¹⁴² Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 137.

¹⁴³ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 13.

can afford to present ourselves in our totality. Social Studies education has a middle ground of sugarcoated textbook views of History and cynical “man is inherently evil” views. Finding the middle ground is the best course for History, as a middle ground lends itself to more critical thinking and a more objective view of an overly-manipulated subject.

Equality has been hard to find in the American classroom because of the actions that have been taken to try to systemize the system to educate the majority culture that has ruled American society since its founding. The No Child Left Behind bill from the Bush Administration inadvertently rejected equality with promoting English as the language of American schooling. Government programs created a single culture of education that put non-English-speaking cultures at a disadvantage, as English Language Learners (ELLs) are forced to learn how to abandon their native language. Many programs that have come out since the 1980s and *A Nation at Risk* report have created a single culture in education through programs like the Common Core and other educational policies that dictate teaching into only a few methods when there is a myriad of effective teaching strategies that are effective in their own right. Educational policies dominate over other cultures, as the many cultures of America have different educational approaches that are forced to be abandoned in order to succeed in our way of schooling.¹⁴⁴ Modern domination is very indirect today can is often seen as inclusive before being looked at with a more critical eye. The most prominent example of this is recognizing other cultures separately and not as a continuous, merged evolution of culture. This approach does bring other cultures in the discussion, but they are still subconsciously looked at as “foreign”, “other”, or simply “lesser because it is not mine” by students.¹⁴⁵ Much of what is done in maintaining

¹⁴⁴ Joel Spring, *Deculturization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*. (New York: McGraw-Hill) 2013. 1.

¹⁴⁵ Spring, *Deculturization*. 2.

dominance over others is done in this subtle, subconscious format. The same approach can be looked at in a sex and gender lens, as discussing influential women or those who do not adhere to our strict binary approach to sex and gender is often set aside and discussed as if it is in its own realm. If dominated voices were woven into the natural fabric of historical analysis, students would be able to grasp these cultures in connection to their own and see them more as one and interconnected instead of separate. Separating cultures and segregating narratives are just a few of the many different methods for Cultural Domination. There are others, and they all come with varying degrees of domination, including:

- Cultural Genocide – education to destroy culture of dominated groups. An example of this is documents such as “The White Man’s Burden” or the segregated Americanization on Native Americans in the late 1800s.
- Deculturization – replacing dominated culture with new culture; such as teaching English, Anglo-American centered curriculum.
- Assimilation – absorbing and integrating into dominant culture. This is primarily voluntary and recognizes the dominant culture’s acceptance as a part of cultural assimilation.
- Cultural Pluralism – practices designed to maintain other languages and cultures. This still happens
- Denial of Education – denying other cultures education based on their culture. This historically has happened to Africans, Chinese, and Native Americans.

- Hybridity – own culture in private, dominant culture in public. This is the primary form of religious groups outside of the realm of Christianity.¹⁴⁶

Maintaining power is key in controlling History education, as power goes to those that dominate the narrative.¹⁴⁷ The dominant culture controls what gets to be taught via History, which is why we are at the juncture of History education we are at today. This dominant culture has the power to reflect their world view primarily throughout textbooks. Race is distorted and omitted in the writing and teaching of American History. Omitting race as a social issue is an antiquated approach to History, as race is now an unavoidable wrinkle of life and culture in America. Unfortunately, little effort is put into textbooks and other widespread forms of information to address this aspect of society. Many students learn racism via their culture but cannot define it due to this avoidance of racism as a topic on its own.¹⁴⁸ Textbooks transmit a certain worldview, and students are still adhering to the information textbooks provide as fact. Textbooks are still considered matter-of-fact and are still above debate and critical analysis. Not only are critics seen as challenging the American republic, but challenging textbooks also shows the potential mishandling of thousands of dollars in school budgets to purchase these textbooks.¹⁴⁹ Textbooks still have their purpose in examining how dominant narratives are created. The issue of what textbooks argue, include, and omit are worth emphasizing, not rejecting. Discussing how textbooks examine race, class and gender can aid in the teaching of historical writing and argumentation. All texts are worth thinking about, and some are valuable

¹⁴⁶ Spring, *Deculturation*. 9.

¹⁴⁷ Reese, *History, Education, and the Schools*. 31.

¹⁴⁸ Norton, "Rethinking American History Textbooks" in *Learning History in America*. 87.

¹⁴⁹ Reese, *History, Education, and the Schools*. 88-89.

to think with to support claims, but no text alone can change societal thought. Regardless of quality, texts can engage the critical processes and initiate reflection.¹⁵⁰

James Loewen provides an interesting analysis of the issue of the misunderstanding of marginalized groups in the classroom. He defined the idea as soclexia, where many individuals can define sociological ideas and concepts, but fail to be able to apply those concepts to their own lives. Socioeconomic class is one factor that leads often to soclexia, as the majority of wealthy people believe that the society around them had no influence on their success and they were responsible for their own success. Students come to believe that the less successful are the sole proprietors of their own failures. High school education also plays a factor in soclexia and the inability to view sociological concepts in the real world. High schools have the ability to teach simple sociology in their Social Studies classrooms, but fail to do so often because of the textbooks' avoidance of social class and "any analysis of what causes what in society, past or present."¹⁵¹ School textbooks avoid social class at all costs even though social class is one of the most influential aspects of American society. When they don't avoid social class, it is distorted and disconnected from the rest of American History. Students know of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire in 1911 or Muckraker Journalism that sparked a change the labor conditions and the other negative developments that resulted from the Industrial Revolution. The problem is that they cannot connect that information to today with issues such as the wage gap between social classes and even races and genders.¹⁵² The fear of discussing social class and the general struggle of the working class is somewhat antiquated, as these discussions were quickly labeled Marxist during

¹⁵⁰ James D. Anderson. "How We Learn About Race through History" in *Learning History in America: Schools, Cultures, and Politics*. Etd. By Barney, Kramer & Reid. 88.

¹⁵¹ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 9

¹⁵² Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 205 & 207.

the Cold War era.¹⁵³ This fear leaves out a key aspect in Social Studies as a subject, and it plays into why it is so hard for students to make connections between the past and the present.

Recent approaches to History and Social Studies have focused primarily on the assertion of American values and telling the American story. “American” values are weakly described but loudly declared. Values such as respect, responsibility, patriotism, loyalty, personal achievement, neatness, punctuality, honesty and competition are just some of the values that can be said that describe not only American values, but traits that are preached in education. These values have changed very little over time, yet the audience who receives them has drastically changed over the course of American History. America has become more diverse over the years and so have the classrooms as more people have been granted the freedom of education over the centuries. The problem is that these values are a problem to teach in such a diverse classroom. Various social and racial groups do not observe some of these values as highly as they are promoted in the average American classroom. While American History – just like any other History – has its highs and lows of relevant storylines, textbooks adhere to the same, basic narrative: The United States has started out great and has only made positive progress ever since. It is hard to find a textbook that talks badly of the United States. Many narratives present the United States in a morality play playing the role of action for democracy and human rights. When the United States falters, textbooks present it as a misunderstanding or a deviation from the norm. The United States is seen as a peacekeeping entity and a giver of generous amounts of foreign aid. American financial benevolence is a myth relatively, as approximately twenty European and Arab nations give a larger percentage of their GDP (Gross Domestic Product) to provide aid than the United States. Textbooks like to hold the United States as the ultimate national standard and that the

¹⁵³ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 215.

United State is the pinnacle of sovereign statehood. The same idealism can be said of American domestic policy. Few textbooks mention the myriad of times the federal government fought against the civil rights movement in a way that students can view critically. Other than the Dredd Scott Decision or Plessy v. Ferguson, rarely does a textbook mention when the government has failed to support marginalized groups. Textbooks even oversell the good decisions made by the federal government in supporting civil rights. Yes, Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson proposed and signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, but not until after Kennedy tried to prevent the March on Washington from even occurring in 1963. The United States Government has made mistakes, yet textbooks fear those mistakes and don't present them to encourage allegiance from student readers. Students believe that criticism of the government or country as a whole is incompatible with citizenship. That criticism is the early stages of critical thinking that is so central to standards that look for these abilities from students. No system should be safe from critical analysis and reflection, yet America is and it falsely presents to students that America is superior to other countries as they are hidden from the full story of American History.

Herofication is another issue that has arisen in the Americanization and Eurocentrism of American education. Up until recent years, Christopher Columbus was the pinnacle of herofication, as his image was created into a perfect, flaw-free individual over time.¹⁵⁴ Today, figures like Martin Luther King and the vast majority of America's Founding Fathers are still held to this perfectionist standard, despite being deeply flawed individuals in their own right. Textbooks strategically do this to make individuals as palatable and sympathetic as possible.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁴ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 11.

¹⁵⁵ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 26.

This same process is done in the opposite in a term I will call vilification; where individuals are stripped of all of their influences and left with being remembered as villainous and of no value to the progress of society. Herofication/vilification prevents textbooks from showing shortcomings and the general whole story of certain individuals.¹⁵⁶ Herofication/vilification prevents any critical thinking or argumentation that standards and teachers are looking to build in students. People don't want complex role models and prefer our sources of inspiration to be uncontroversial. Herofication can lead to laziness in some students. If a classroom is asked about heroes in American History, students attempt to take the easy way out by saying names like Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Franklin Delano Roosevelt or others that reflect America's interest in the underdog story. Others will try to get creative and choose individuals from other countries, such as Nelson Mandela, Gandhi, Princess Diana or Winston Churchill.¹⁵⁷ This process inhibits development of critical thinking when students are taught to revere or vilify individuals without a change to discuss their wholeness as human beings.

History is the best disciplinary subject to celebrate the expanding cultural emphasis on previously ignored and marginalized ethnic, racial, and gender groups. Minorities are often typecast in History as either the victim or the role model. While this typecasting is not incorrect, it is incomplete to the whole narrative when discussing a topic.¹⁵⁸ The main fear of this approach is the fracture of social unity if there is no shared emphasis on unifying political and cultural beliefs.¹⁵⁹ This fear is validated, as recent attempts to teach History using both the textbook and supplemental materials tend to fall flat and confuse students. Just adding different materials into

¹⁵⁶ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 24.

¹⁵⁷ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 28-29.

¹⁵⁸ Charles Wollenberg, "A Usable History for a Multicultural State." in *History in the Schools: What Shall We Teach*. Ed. By Bernard R. Gifford. (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company). 1988. 109.

¹⁵⁹ Kramer & Reid. *Learning History in America*. 1.

the dominant narrative isn't effective and as Mary Beth Norton points out, "When new materials do not fit the narrative, it is time to change the narrative."¹⁶⁰ Creating a new narrative to include marginalized groups is not as daunting a task as many educational reformers have it seem. People of color outside of Europe have made significant contributions to the world and their inclusion provides an appreciation of heritages, promotion of tolerance and a disputation of racism.¹⁶¹ It is the duty to present cultures in a coherent, interrelated fashion as a whole. A common thread can be found to create a unified analytic framework. An example of this framework that focuses on more cultures and their eventual diffusion is how people responded to common social problems over time, and continues into an analysis of how it affected societies, economies, and politics. It is important to present cultures as interrelated from a global lens, as examining non-western cultures is not true world History. More critical World History exposes diversity in different areas of the world and challenges to think about the relationship between different parts of the globe. While this approach is extremely demanding, it can also be very rewarding in changing the critical lens of students onto more than just a Eurocentric worldview.¹⁶²

Race, like class and gender is specialized and abstract in the general understanding of America. Race is primarily only addressed when it cannot be avoided, so racism is often contained in the teaching of the Civil War, Reconstruction, Slavery and the Civil Rights era.¹⁶³ Teaching racism only during certain eras has had a lasting effect on our understanding of History, as we believe that racism is deviant from the norm and that racism is a modern social idea that was not in the minds of past figures. The view that racism is a resolved social issue is

¹⁶⁰ Norton. "Rethinking American History Textbooks" in *Learning History in America*. 31.

¹⁶¹ Norton. "Rethinking American History Textbooks" in *Learning History in America*. 55.

¹⁶² Norton. "Rethinking American History Textbooks" in *Learning History in America*. 63 & 68.

¹⁶³ Anderson. "Race through History" in *Learning History in America*. 122-124.

why the present is often labeled as “post-racial,” as we are taught to believe that racism is something that begins and ends.¹⁶⁴ It will not suffice to simply place racism over the in place American narrative (as has been previously discussed). Depicting racism along other central issues to America can improve the current state of teaching History. Showing multiple social issues simultaneously has to be done with examining various groups within the same event in order for this approach to be effective. Teaching specifically to pay attention to how race affected historical events prevents the separation of groups, which will inevitably lead to the juxtaposition of issues such as race to European History.¹⁶⁵ Race cannot be taught as separate and non-intersecting to human life. Students need to be exposed to an issue such as race to show the varied and conflicting concepts of race and how it has changed overtime. The concept of race has been created by people, and when it is taught as an issue throughout the History of society, there can be a growing desire to change it.¹⁶⁶

Slavery is one of the few topics that should be among the aforementioned 30-50 topics that teachers should teach. Many teachers still fear the topic however, especially in the middle school or childhood grades. Teachers fear alienating black students and filling white students with guilt.¹⁶⁷ Teachers fear of slavery feeds into racial misunderstanding, as if slavery is glossed over and avoided, race issues prevalent in society will be glossed over and avoided as well. Recent developments in society provide good amount of reason to believe that society is ready to look at our darker eras of History without fear. Rising numbers of people are more willing to talk about past societal norms such as lynching after the initial shame was weeded out in favor of more critical understanding of what it means to the American story. Lynching was a key part of

¹⁶⁴ Anderson. “Race through History” in *Learning History in America*. 89-90.

¹⁶⁵ Anderson. “Race through History” in *Learning History in America*. 102.

¹⁶⁶ Anderson. “Race through History” in *Learning History in America*. 103-105.

¹⁶⁷ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 155.

race relations during and following Reconstruction, but it was not the only. Jim Crow laws and sundown towns also contributed to the development of racism and students would not be able to understand the current state of racism without this historical context.¹⁶⁸ Textbooks weakly discuss racism throughout American History. The result is a poor understanding of the state of race relations in the present. The textbook narrative promotes consistent progress of race relations and even an optimism of a close by post-racial society, as if society has consistently gotten more tolerant when in reality, it has generally fluctuated.¹⁶⁹ Movements for civil rights occur once a century at least in American History, and it supports more than just African Americans as it also triggers movements for women's rights and LGBTQ+ rights in the modern era.¹⁷⁰ The story of American inequality and racism is far from over, and yet that continuation is not within the classroom. It is an ongoing story, and one that has a lot of momentum to engage students in the content as the effects of racial differences are still abundant in our society.

Reforming Social Studies education might seem like a daunting task, but those who look to reform the subject are not alone on the journey. Many teachers have already begun changing the way Social Studies is taught, and new teachers can learn from their successes and their mistakes.¹⁷¹ The literature in History is becoming increasingly comprehensive. Much of what teachers can use as resources in the classroom are readily available across a multitude of formats. The comprehensive literature just has not reached our teacher preparatory programs, educational media, and textbooks yet, so it has not yet fully reached the classroom.¹⁷² Schools are increasingly being given more demands and problems to be solved, and History education is no

¹⁶⁸ Loewen. *Teaching What Really Happened*. 16.

¹⁶⁹ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 171.

¹⁷⁰ Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 203.

¹⁷¹ Loewen, *Teaching What Really Happened*. 36.

¹⁷² Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 303.

exception. History education is actually the vehicle that can provide all members of modern society with the skills, values, information, and attitudes to survive in a changing world. Education should be the context where hotly debated social, economic, and political aspects of society are introduced and discussed with future members of society.¹⁷³ History and Social Studies can be used as a platform where current events in society can be discussed in an educational way. Controversial topics can be taught and should not be isolated from political, social, and Cultural History. Teaching this way can help students learn how to use History as an intellectual frame of reference for everyday life.¹⁷⁴

Students need to learn History properly, and current Social Studies education is not doing that. Telling only part of a historical narrative is not far off from lying to students. Lying through an incomplete historical narrative is a dangerous practice that leads to groups dominating over others and teaching ideas that lead into Eurocentrism and Americanization. Other cultures are left on the margins and are not only forgotten, but seen as unimportant. To resolve this problem, schools and teachers must learn how to ask questions that challenge students to figure out our society and History. Solving this problem has a starting point of simply introducing fewer topics and examining those topics with more depth.¹⁷⁵ History has thousands of topics that can be covered, but only a few provide connections to society today that can help students engage in the content as well as understand the world around them. Creating a curriculum through this approach encourages a more honest approach to History education. James Loewen says this idea best, as “the antidote to feel-good history is not feel-bad history but honest and inclusive history.”¹⁷⁶ Students respond and engage in this History in far greater numbers, as numerous

¹⁷³ Van Patten & Pulliam. *History of Education*. 1.

¹⁷⁴ Butts. “History and Civic Education”. 78.

¹⁷⁵ Loewen. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. 356-357.

¹⁷⁶ Loewen. *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. 92.

History departments on college campuses can attest to. History that connects to today, teaches students to critically think at a high level, and discusses more than just Europe and the United States is more influential and effective to responding to modern society and globalization.

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