

Geography, History, and Citizenship

These subjects are really three phases of one, namely, human life Geography treats the earth as the home of man. History is the story of the past life of man. Civics has to do with the present social, industrial, and political relations of man.¹

CALVIN KENDALL AND GEORGE MIRICK, *How to Teach the Fundamental Subjects*, 1915

The social studies of the American high school should have for their conscious and constant purpose the cultivation of good citizenship. We may identify the “good citizen” of a neighborhood with the “thoroughly efficient member” of that neighborhood; but he will be characterized, among other things, by a loyalty and a sense of obligation to his city, State, and Nation as political units.²

US BUREAU OF EDUCATION, “*The Social Studies in Secondary Education*,” 1916

IN 1900, THE NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION sent a collection of student work to the Paris Exposition Universelle. Among the submissions were the geography transcriptions of thirteen-year-old Italian-American Charles Digennaro, a student at Public School 26 in Brooklyn. In his account of North America, Digennaro reported: “the most important [country] is the United States. This is because . . . it has [a] temperate climate It is just the kind of place for people to work in The people of the United States have made more progress than any other nation in the world.” Digennaro contrasted the climate of the United States with that of Canada, where “the people cannot work because it is too cold,” and Mexico and Central America, “where it is so warm, the people are lazy.” In addition to favorable climate, Digennaro recounted the racial makeup of the United States: “Most of the inhabitants are white, but there are also Chinese, Negroes, and Indians.”³ Digennaro’s commentary on the preeminence of the United States in the Western Hemisphere mirrored contemporary geographical and historical

interpretations that filled the pages of the most widely assigned schoolbooks at the turn of the twentieth century. And while he wrote about geography and historical “progress,” the tropes Digennaro offered aligned his assertions with the kinds of nationalist and racial thinking only good white citizens and ardent patriots could muster. His civics teacher would have likely approved.

Together, these three subjects—geography, history, and civics—brought into focus a world in which race and empire were paramount in shaping the contours of national citizenship. The authors of school geography textbooks and curricula opened for schoolchildren the widest possible lens through which to see themselves and the United States in the world. Lessons emphasized three key threads of racial and imperial thought. First, they proved a critical means through which schoolchildren “[learned] to divide the world” into metageographical and racial categories. Undergirded by the science of evolution and by social Darwinism, authors offered continental and national schematics of human development that relied on the language of civilization, barbarism, and savagery.⁴ Cartographies of climate provided absolution for modern forms of empire and carried with them a host of economic and sociological arguments that validated Herbert Spencer’s “survival of the fittest” theory of human inequality. Authors further claimed that geographic determinism did not apply to Anglo-Saxon settlers in the world’s tropical and semitropical regions. To this end, they presented imagined reserved, open, and abundant landscapes where Europeans and Americans carried out the business of civilization at the expense of “barbarous tribes,” according to one author.⁵

Schoolbook histories in turn cast the United States and white Americans as an exceptional nation and people within the broader scope of world nations and races imparted through geography lessons. The Monroe Doctrine, the US War with Mexico, and the Spanish-American War provided explanations for America’s ascendancy to global and industrial power. Critical to these imperial narratives were the discourses of race and civilization. But most importantly for this study, despite in many cases the denial of American forms of imperialism by most authors of the day, empire punctuated and buttressed historical narratives used in schools. Its language of civilization, economic imperatives, and implications for national allegiance made empire a far more usable and animated historical framework than is generally ascribed to the otherwise boilerplate US histories published after about 1890.

If geography and history normalized for students the “natural” hierarchies of the world and nation in which they lived, civics offered approved ways to think and act as citizens of an exceptional nation and ascendant global power. Emerging in the curriculum in the 1890s, community civics intended to create patriotic citizens, deferential managers, docile workers, and for those with the franchise, predictable voters for a two-party system through active, localized participation in the national community of citizens, workers, and consumers. Courses and texts stressed cleanliness, industriousness, and loyalty and pitted capitalism against the radicalism of striking immigrant workers, a subject of utmost concern for school officials in New York City for example, subjects of the book’s fifth chapter. After the US entrance into World War I and the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, civics lessons commanded greater political and ideological conformity in efforts to dissolve the threats of collective organization by working-class nonwhites and immigrants. By the early 1920s, the American melting pot of races of the early twentieth century gave way to more rigid racial lines and an emphasis on cultural homogeneity and unquestioned loyalty to the state. But challenges to the postwar conformity of Americanism and the restrictionism of immigration debates emerged in tandem, transforming curricula from the 1920s onward.⁶

Despite a spike in the sheer number of schoolbook titles published in the late nineteenth century to meet the demands of rapidly expanding public school bureaucracies throughout the country, a relatively small number of titles in each discipline made significant impacts or had longevity. That is, few books made it into large numbers of classrooms in the largest urban school districts or were reissued for multiple editions. These narratives were either written by or directly descended from some of the leading practitioners of the period, who steadfastly believed they imparted to schoolchildren geographical, historical, and political truths derived from objective science. In geography, books authored by Harvard’s William Morris Davis, Cornell’s Ralph Tarr, Colgate’s Albert Perry Brigham, and Alexis Everett Frye, first school superintendent of the US occupation of Cuba, among several others, became the “leading” and “definitive” geographical texts of the period. They offered, according to their publishers, “definite science instead of the haphazard way” typical of earlier books that emphasized description over explanation. Ginn & Company, which operated seven national distribution houses, argued of its author Frye that his “books have a national use and are endorsed by the leaders of educational thought and methods as the most logical, the

most practical, and the most suggestive text-books on the subject.” The emphasis on logic and practicality informed how school geographers came to see their mission by 1900: to provide students with a worldview organized “according to principles of race, environment, and nationalism.”⁷

In history, Harvard’s Albert Bushnell Hart, Penn’s John Bach McMaster, and Columbia-trained Charles Beard, for example, fashioned themselves professionals who claimed the mantles of objectivity and historical truth but also regarded schools and school history as engines of “legitimizing the social and political order.”⁸ In 1910, Hart charged professional historians with seeking a “genuinely scientific school of history . . . which shall dispassionately and moderately set forth results.” At the close of World War I, American Book Company confirmed this methodological claim, arguing that Hart’s school histories gave “young people a new and broader understanding of our true relations, both past and present, with other countries” in ways that were “decidedly patriotic . . . yet devoid of ‘spread-eagleism.’” While some professional historians began to question their closely held “faith in [historical] progress” after the war, Hart’s optimistic ideological outlook, evident in his *School History of the United States* (1920) and *New American History* (2nd ed., 1921), seemed to persist. The consensus schoolbook historians of the period claimed to wield an “authentic and sound” patriotism, in the words of historian Peter Novick, and an “intelligent, tolerant patriotism,” according to the American Historical Association’s 1899 Committee of Seven.⁹

Civics then served as a kind of applied social science that extended from the presumed objective nature of geographical and historical study. In more intentional and overt ways, civics celebrated patriotism and national exceptionalism, at times seemingly as ends in themselves. Because civics courses and textbooks were rather novel in the late nineteenth century, their architects tended to come from the ranks of school administrations and teaching forces instead of the faculties of leading colleges and universities. Indeed in many school districts throughout the country, civics was simply part of the American history curriculum. But by 1915, the National Education Association endorsed community civics, what Julie Reuben has called a “radical departure from earlier forms of citizenship education,” because it de-emphasized political participation in favor of more benign and undefined acts of community engagement. Thus, school civics sought to carve out ways for all citizens to actively contribute to American economic and social progress, even if legal statute or local white resistance barred many newcomers and racial minorities from political activism, especially voting. So while

on the surface the new community civics seemed to run counter to the kinds of rigid racial hierarchies taught in geography or the Anglo-Saxonism of school histories, in practice the three reinforced each other. In the early twentieth century, despite the rhetoric of “community” and of “active and intelligent” cooperation, civics was still about national conformity to the hierarchies of race, the imperatives of empire, and the politics of immigration.¹⁰

METAGEOGRAPHIES OF RACE AND EMPIRE

In their 1899 *Complete Geography*, which Werner School Book Company pedaled as “in full harmony with the most advanced ideas on the ‘New Geography,’” Horace and Martha Tarbell asked primary school children about presumed novelties: “Have you ever seen a negro? An Indian? A Chinaman?” The authors’ use of the interrogative revealed several assumptions about audience. That students may have yet to lay eyes on a “negro” or an “Indian” or a “Chinaman” in their own lives certainly affirmed that the Tarbells believed their readership to be overwhelmingly and unequivocally white. It followed then that other races provided imperial spectacle for inquisitive, curious, and racially and culturally homogeneous schoolchildren whose daily interactions rarely or never transgressed racial lines. The authors continued: “The Caucasian or white race is the most intelligent and most powerful of all the races.” Schools were in fact much more racially heterogeneous if not necessarily integrated than the Tarbells assumed, but the authors’ ignorance or denial of the realities of racial diversity accompanied by a commonly constructed racial hierarchy helped shape and reinforce visions of the United States as a white republic for its neophyte citizens.¹¹ While geography lessons underscored American whiteness as an essential lesson for schoolchildren, the study of the Earth, its continental and national divisions, its climatic variations, and the racial varieties of its human inhabitants reinforced this consciousness and served as spatial justification for an expansive US empire.¹²

School geographers repackaged for schoolchildren three major tenets of American racial and imperial thought that affirmed the centrality of race and geographic origin to questions of citizenship, national belonging, and empire building. First, textbook authors drew on Darwinian theories of evolution to outline and detail three stages of human development, most commonly described as savagery, barbarism, and civilization. Not merely descriptions

but instead analytical scientific frameworks through which to understand humans and their relationship to the natural world, school geographers argued that to the trained eye, these stages presented themselves among contemporary racial groups, including “Philippine savages,” “naked [Japanese] natives,” and “dark-eyed, languid [Mexican] women,” at one end of the spectrum, and “intelligent” and “powerful” whites at the other end.¹³ William Morris Davis, “the father of American geography,” saw the new physical geography of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as a critical window into “the progress of mankind from the savage to the civilized state . . . largely made by taking advantage of favorable geographic conditions.”¹⁴ Evolution then served as scientific evidence of the privilege of white citizenship in the United States and the nation’s rightfully endowed position as a burgeoning global power by the early twentieth century. Its allegedly common racial heritage with strong European empires, especially Great Britain, further confirmed the distinction.

Lessons then mapped these grand divisions of race onto the Earth’s climate zones. The scientific and anthropological debates among European and American intellectuals, most of whom occupied distinguished positions at leading colleges and universities, including Ellen Churchill Semple (University of Chicago), Ellsworth Huntington (Yale University), and Charles Henry Pearson (Trinity, later University of Melbourne, Australia), found simplified form and resonance among colleagues that in turn narrated these arguments for primary and secondary schoolchildren. Despite disagreement over factors including blood purity, miscegenation, and global migration, these intellectuals agreed that differences in physical environment produced racial and cultural differences. The frigid, temperate, and torrid zones served as the cartographic framework to arrange and understand varied human racial typology—critical foundations for the justification of modern forms of imperialism that employed race as a primary marker of subjecthood, belonging, and power.¹⁵ Environment determined, according to climatological arguments, not only skin color, but also degrees of intelligence, industriousness, and the likelihood of one’s economic and social status and survival. The imperatives for educational policy could not have been more immediate. As subsequent chapters demonstrate, administrators used the kinds of claims about climate and race found in the pages of geography readers to argue that nonwhite children throughout the United States and its territories should receive manual training for agricultural and domestic work in lieu of an academic education. Because many white educators

regarded Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and African Americans, for example, as members of “tropical races,” their natural environments made them innately lazy and immoral but also well suited to toil in fieldwork. As a remedy, they needed lessons in productivity and morality.

Finally, geography textbooks conveyed the exceptionalism of the United States so crucial to its national historical narrative by embedding its people, climate, resources, landscapes, and political institutions within metageographical constructs of the world and its populations. But to do so, school geographers had to sidestep, qualify, or in some cases challenge the orderly schematics of climate, continents, and evolution that rendered Native Americans savages in the temperate zone, African Americans tropical races flourishing in the US South (though ostensibly under white tutelage), and white Europeans and Americans industrious empire-builders in the semi-tropical and torrid zones. The end results were at times twinned racial and national exceptionalisms that either avoided evolutionary and environmental explanations altogether or in other cases challenged them head-on.

It is perhaps ironic that Herbert Spencer, a vigorous opponent of state-supported education, found his “survival of the fittest” principle’s most basic articulation in geography readers used in publicly funded schools. According to the authors of most school geographies published from the 1800s through the 1920s, dispossession and disappearance was easily explained using the increasingly powerful science of evolution. By such rationale, the eradication of Native Americans or Australia’s “oceanic Negroes,” as the Tarbells described the continent’s indigenous population, occurred not because of malicious American or European imperial policies, the proliferation of technological warfare, or settlerism and forced removal, but through processes inherent in nature. Indeed, most school geographers argued that colonialism could alleviate the trappings of backwardness and racial inferiority. For Colgate University geographer and editor of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Albert Perry Brigham, Europeans were to be commended for integrating Africa into the global economy through a painstakingly slow struggle to overcome the “character of the native people”: “Fanaticism and intolerance prevailed in the north, and dark and ignorant savagery in the center and south, until far into the nineteenth century.” Only the commercial nations of Europe “served as the [forces] which [have] given Africa the beginnings of commercial life.” For Brigham, global capitalism imposed through European imperialism could ostensibly save the continent from its twinned states of Arab barbarism and African savagery.¹⁶

Mytton Maury provided perhaps the starkest endorsement of Euro-American imperialism and racial genocide in his 1893 *Physical Geography*. A clergyman who proselytized to the Crow Creek tribe of South Dakota, Maury also served as editor of his late cousin Matthew Fontaine Maury's children's geographical series, primarily during the 1890s. For Maury, contact between whites and nonwhites yielded not amalgamation and degeneration of the higher type but rather the extinction of the lower: "Wherever the white man establishes himself he speedily becomes dominant; while the communities of other races into which he introduces himself are commonly subjected to a gradual process of extinction."¹⁷ Though he grounded human difference in fixed stages of evolution, Maury also advocated, in some cases, limited self-government to presumed barbarous and savage races, usually under the watchful eye of colonial administrators or advisors. He praised the Japanese for adopting Western governmental institutions and the Chinese for the competitive nature of the civil service examination. These advances, according to Maury, were relatively recent phenomena contingent on contact with European and American science and government: "[The Chinese] remained for the ages just where their ancestors had been." That is, "in the past, they have displayed the mental activity which marks the Mongolian in general." He recognized potential in contemporary Chinese and Japanese society because of their interest in or embrace of constitutional government and global commerce and, most importantly for Maury, adopting "many important features of European civilization [which] entitle[d] them to rank among the progressive nations of the world." Only through the intervention of Western-approved forms of government and economic activity could non-white societies inch closer to the high mark of Caucasian civilization.¹⁸

By the 1890s, immigrants from eastern and southern European began to present American geographers with an intellectual dilemma: What would be the place of American racial Anglo-Saxonism in the genre of school geography? Would the white / nonwhite binary withstand the strong currents of racialization of European nationalities crucial to the more extreme wings of the Americanization movement?¹⁹ By situating gradations of whiteness within a broader metageography of race, Maury placed greater emphasis on similarities between nonwhites and dark-skinned, non-European Caucasians rather than on differences among European ethnicities. He noted the extremes of Caucasian physiognomy, offering Germans with "flaxen hair, blue eyes, and fair skin," and accompanying intelligence, ingenious, thrift, and "scientific and literary attainments" as the most favorable appearance

and “Hindoos with raven locks, black eyes, and olive-brown or brownish, black skin” as less desirable on the Western beauty aesthetic. According to Maury, South Asians shared more in common physically with “Mongolians” displaying “olive-yellow” skin and “straight, coarse, black” hair than they did with European Caucasians, even people possessing ostensibly darker complexions and tropical sensibilities in Spain, Portugal, or Italy.²⁰

Future president of the board of directors of the American Eugenics Society and, along with Davis, arguably one of the most famous American geographers of the early twentieth century, Ellsworth Huntington shared in the relative collective silence over European racial variety and the potential danger unfit European migrants posed to American citizenship. In his 1920 *Principles of Human Geography*, co-authored with Sumner Cushing of the Massachusetts Normal School, Huntington mapped “very high” civilization onto “most of Europe,” while “high” civilization blanketed the rest of the continent—hardly a warning about degraded or semibarbarous immigrants that might undermine the character of American liberty or the population’s capacity for self-government. While Huntington acknowledged that factors including race, religion, institutions, government, and education collectively determined a nation’s degree of civilization, his interest lay primarily in the historical and contemporary influence of physical environment on race and civilization: “The agreement between regions of stimulating climate and high civilization means that the health and energy imparted by such a climate are among the conditions necessary for progress.”²¹

Like the science of evolution, the imperial desires of myriad Europeans and their far-flung settlers, found on all habitable continents by the nineteenth century, informed geographic explanations of the inequalities of the physical and mental character of races. Though authors seldom used climate zones as the preeminent organizational framework for their narratives of human development, opting primarily for racial schematics, they meticulously embedded the study of continents, nations, and races within global representations of “isotherms and heat belts,” as Ellen Churchill Semple described in her 1911 *Influences of Geographic Environment*, where she attested that climate “helps determine [people’s] efficiency as economic and political agents.”²² Representations of the frigid, temperate, and torrid zones offered a global framework on which to hang racialized assertions about human character, constitution, and productive energy. William Swinton’s 1881 illustrations and descriptions of the Earth’s climate zones offered typical evidence of the effects of heat and cold on race. Bands stretching across both

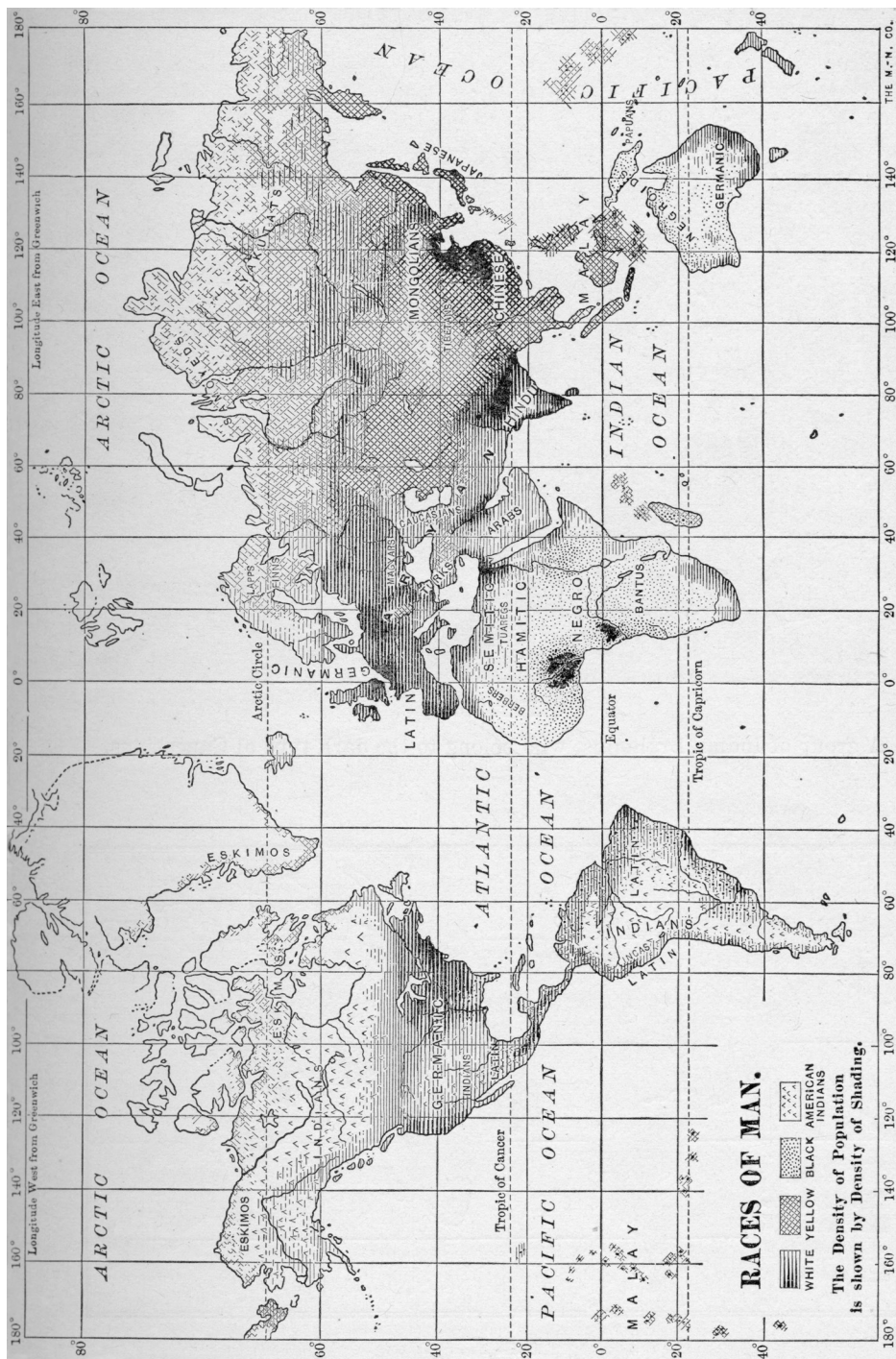


FIGURE 1. Races of Man. Ralph Tarr and Frank McMurry, *Advanced Geography* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), fig. 275, black-and-white insert between pp. 244 and 245.

hemispheres mapped Anglo and other European expansions and settlements rather neatly into the temperate regions of North America, South Africa, South America, and Australia. Meanwhile, largely nonsettler imperial holdings in Latin America, Oceania, Africa, and Asia straddled the equator.²³ Though Swinton's accompanying textual description did not directly implicate race, separate lessons on continents joined race and climate to make claims about the relative advancement and productivity of each continent's inhabitants. With the "greater part of South America . . . in the Torrid Zone," Swinton noted, "the people are in general uneducated and unprogressive," having "given to the rest of the world little except its tropical products." In contrast, Europe's position in the temperate zone and the "influence of warm ocean currents and warm winds" produced a "great number of powerful civilized nations."²⁴

High school geographies often joined preeminent climatic explanations with warnings about blood mixture and miscegenation. Cornell's Ralph Tarr and Frank McMurry of Columbia Teachers' College offered a multilayered explanation for why the British and their North American progeny, rather than the French or Spanish, managed to colonize the vast majority of the North American continent. Despite leaving only a "narrow strip" along the Atlantic coast in the wake of their early colonial successes, the French and Spanish soon lost most of their North American possessions to the "English-speaking race," save "Mexico, Central America and a few small islands." The authors offered "good reasons for this strange result," including racial differences among the English, French, and Spanish. But the combination of imperial desire and North America's climatic variation together constituted the primary cause of the Anglo victory. In particular, "after robbing and enslaving [the Indians]," the Spanish then "married them freely, so that, in time, half-breeds came to make up more than half the population . . . an ignorant class, far inferior to the Spaniards themselves, and so backward that they still follow many of the customs of the Aztecs." Climate offered the other half of the explanation: "in a large part of [Spanish] territory the weather is too warm to produce energetic people So little energy is required to find sufficient food that the people do not need to exert themselves, and hence do not." Though Tarr and McMurry located a more favorable climate in French North America, ignoring important historical and cartographic overlaps with Spanish territories, the French too had "intermarried with the Indians and adopted some of their customs." In contrast, the "temperate climate of [the English] section is the best in the world for the development of energy.

The warm summers allowed abundant harvests; but the long, cold winters forced the settlers to exert themselves to store supplies.” “Reasonable” expenditure still left energy and time for “improvement.”²⁵

If the Earth’s hot, steamy regions were “nowhere inhabited by a vigorous race of men,” and “reasonably dry climates” remained the “most salubrious for the people of the Caucasian race,” then it followed that European designs on Africa’s interior or America’s island empire in the south Pacific and Caribbean were also subject to geographic determinism.²⁶ Likewise, temperate climate could invigorate nonwhite races and lift them to the level of Euro-American civilization. This is where arguments tended to break down. Darwinian schematics of race and civilization and deterministic lessons about climate and coastline operated within a neat framework that treated continents as the natural homes of distinct races and oceans more as boundaries rather than conduits for human locomotion and commercial activity, industrious white Europeans excepting. Yet the entire foundation of these scientific claims had emerged from Europe’s imperial projects, of which migration to and settlement of North America figured prominently in US school lessons in geography and history. How did school geographers reconcile settler colonialism, racial hybridity, the spread of European religion and civilization, and other episodes of empire with the tidy narratives of race, climate, and continent? Where did indigenous North Americans fit into the racial hierarchies of human energy and into the temperate climate that supposedly produced active and industrious subjects and citizens? What role did geography play in the expansion of the US continental and overseas tropical empire and in the multiethnic and multiracial landscapes of America’s coastal urban centers? Answers to these questions varied, but a common tactic involved treating nonwhite natives and immigrants within the United States as inexplicable aberrations to the idea that favorable climate yielded intelligent, energetic, and productive commercial actors and citizens. In many cases, authors seemed willing to abandon their geographic arguments altogether. Likewise, white superiority often trumped the tropic’s allegedly negative influence on racial fortitude.

For school geographers, the history of imperial conquest had proven whites adaptable to climate variation, primarily through technological ingenuity, while weaker races remained subject to geographic determinism. Brigham’s numerous treatments of US geography omitted any explanations as to why indigenous peoples, living in the same temperate climate, had not developed agricultural methods or modes of life on par with European

settlers, opting instead for a mysterious historical ponderance: “What has become of the Indians?”²⁷ Maturin Ballou, author of a geography textbook that employed a travel narrative style, also reconciled Indian poverty with American prosperity in racial, not climatic terms. Other authors, though, took into consideration the logical problems that would inevitably rise in the minds of young students who might struggle to reconcile the myth of the open continent with what their history textbooks told them about European encounters with Native Americans. Davis, one of Brigham’s earliest mentors at the 1889 Harvard Summer School of Geology, argued that race, as much as geography, had influenced US history: “the aboriginal inhabitants of this great land were savages who did not know how to develop its riches.”²⁸ Yet even in this meeting of savagery and civilization, Europeans—the “original discoverers”—represented still only a stage in the progression of civilization. The struggle against British imperial and monarchical tyranny had culminated in a successful revolution that in turn secured for newly minted American citizens the freedom to realize the continent’s agriculture, mineral, and commercial potential.²⁹

Narratives like Davis’s established the United States as a nation *above* other nations. Not Europeans, but instead their descendants in the United States possessed the racial fortitude and heritage appropriate for and capable of establishing themselves as the preeminent carriers of human progress. Davis identified three factors—favorable geography, racial superiority, and republican government—that gave to the “young nation a giant’s strength.”³⁰ The dichotomy of empire and republic also obscured the racialized imperial activities of the United States both at home and abroad. And in a republic, technological imperatives and a system of free enterprise, argued Wallace Atwood, had enabled Americans to “overcome many of the difficulties that physical features once presented.” Accompanying the more recent “industrial and commercial prosperity of the United States” were “our demands from foreign lands,” as Atwood noted, which primarily consisted of “certain foods and various other raw materials which . . . we cannot produce in this country or which we can secure more economically from foreign countries for our exports.”³¹

Even if he had not named it as such, Atwood’s discussion of the United States and its new foreign trading partners cast the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific as natural fields of tropical empire for a nation no longer a European colonial outpost but instead a world power in its own right: “We shall look more to the countries of the tropics” with trade

“expected to increase more rapidly along north-and-south lines than along the east-to-west routes across the Atlantic.” Atwood also forecast “with confidence . . . the great increase in the trade across the Pacific Ocean,” where the inhabitants “are sure to want some of the wonderfully useful articles invented and manufactured in the United States” in exchange for “raw materials, foods, and many articles from their factories that we enjoy having in our homes.” Atwood’s long accompanying list of foreign imports underscored temperate appetites for tropical products.³² Written in 1920, the year he assumed the presidency of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, Atwood’s description was as much an account of recent imperial history as it was a forecast of the coming American Century, and it was embedded in a much deeper understanding of North American geography and European empire, as the author came to acknowledge in his concluding remarks. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Atwood failed to provide an explicit racial hierarchy for his readers, instead opting for the more idyllic representation of the United States as a nation where hard work and “difficult conditions” yield “greater freedom for the inhabitants.” In this interpretation, climate and race carried less weight than individual aspirations served well by the republic’s manifestly favorable political and economic conditions.

But if making good citizens could proceed irrespective of the grand divisions of race, a notion that many of Atwood’s colleagues rejected, the project of overseas empire came with a tremendous sense of responsibility and mission that extended from white supremacy, temperate climate, technological prowess, and republican virtue. “In time, we came into possession of foreign lands. We assumed new responsibilities in caring for those lands and in governing, or helping to govern, other people. We now have a great responsibility, with other nations, to maintain peace and freedom in the world,” Atwood concluded.³³ The authors of myriad school histories of the United States built on this providentially, geographically, and racially endowed sense of exceptional place and purpose in order to further bound the paths of good citizenship by race and national origin as the United States exercised imperial power at home and abroad.

AMERICAN HISTORIES OF IMPERIAL EXPANSION

In the immediate aftermath of the 1898 US invasion of Cuba, Harvard historian Albert Bushnell Hart commented on the role of historians in what he

called the “up-building of the nation” and on the condition of historical study in the United States. He argued that Americans possessed a profound reverence and interest in current events, yet when it came to thinking historically about those events, Americans—including academics, policymakers, and citizens—displayed a woeful ignorance. As an example, Hart scorned the popular notion that the insurrection in Cuba existed in isolation from the history of colonialism in the Americas—that it somehow appeared at the end of a relatively “quiet and uneventful decade” to awaken the United States to its task of policing the Western Hemisphere. He placed most of the blame for America’s collective historical disregard on historians themselves for failing “to set clearly before their countrymen the course of our diplomatic policy” and on history teachers “who have not imbued their students or pupils with the sense of the sequence of historical events.” But what Hart had in mind was not a historical account of *American* expansion, which history textbooks covered quite thoroughly if usually in a celebratory fashion. Rather, students needed to comprehend the deep history of *Spanish* conquest and colonial rule in the Americas in order to situate the Cuban revolution within its proper historical context. Only then would it vindicate American action against Spain in the Caribbean and Pacific and alleviate concerns and tensions over the course of both historical and contemporary American empire.³⁴

The word *empire* and iterations of it figured rather subtly in most school histories of the United States published from the 1880s through the 1920s, precisely the period in which the United States officially became an overseas imperial power and completed its conquest of the American West. When it appeared, empire was almost always in reference to other nations’ empires that were despotic and tyrannical (like Spain) or at the very least antithetical or indifferent to American republican values (like Britain). Exceptions, of course, existed. Hart’s 1923 *We and Our History* provided one of the few direct references to American empire, but Hart’s reasons were of a geographical nature. The sheer and “immense” size of the United States—forty-eight states, three organized territories, and far-flung island possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific—produced an “Empire of the United States.” And Hart’s American empire was diplomatic. It asserted power in the interest of stable global trade, not to subjugate supposedly lesser races or nations.³⁵ In other words, it did not think or act as its European equivalents.

But empire’s career within those historical volumes was in fact lively, discordant, and central—not peripheral—to the framing of an American

historical narrative for schoolchildren. It manifested as international trade agreements, extensive transportation networks, industrious homesteaders, brave and daring explorers, transformed natural environments, subdued or civilized Indians, subordinated Negroes, docile and hardworking immigrants, and the expansion of continental and transoceanic frontiers. Between lines espousing the virtues of the republic and Washington's warnings against entangling alliances lay ideological and historical foundations for American imperial power. Moreover, the framing of American histories closely informed the kinds of people school officials hoped to render good citizens and those who they worked to subordinate or exclude. Using historical accounts purportedly informed by objective, "scientific" truths, authors explained, for example, the reasons why African and Native Americans, among others, required industrial training instead of an academic education. They offered "evidence" of Chinese and Japanese inferiority and thus the need for Asiatic exclusion in the US West. And they legitimated colonial rule and education in Hawai'i, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.³⁶

Imperial narratives relied on a framework of four interdependent categories of people that overlapped with and confronted one another in both in the past and in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century: settlers, natives, immigrants (or more appropriately, would-be immigrants), and colonial subjects (who were very seldom, if ever, labeled as such). In school histories, settlers were white, more often than not explicitly Anglo-Saxon, and endowed by both Providence and racial fortitude to forge on western frontiers a special democracy to be revered and emulated but never fully achieved by others. On continental and overseas frontiers, white settlers confronted both natives and potential immigrants. Authors cast Native Americans as historical threats to national security and the extension of American enterprise at precisely the time in which federal policy and popular imagination sought the incorporation of remaining Indians into the community of citizens by dismantling the reservation system, educating native children to white norms, and extending limited rights. And yet Indians remained integral to school histories even as notable authors, including Charles Beard, disavowed their role in shaping American character.³⁷

So too did colonial subjects and prospective immigrants serve to juxtapose white citizenship with those kinds that potentially changed, endangered, or polluted it. This was particularly true after 1848 for Mexicans in the Southwest against whom Anglo-Texans and shortly thereafter the United States waged war in the 1830s and 1840s to extend American sovereignty and

power. It was also the case for myriad peoples and nations of Latin America and the Caribbean over which the United States claimed a special protection vis-à-vis the Monroe Doctrine and its subsequent evocations in the service of “Open Door” liberalism. But by 1898, protection gave way to direct colonial rule over Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the Caribbean (and Filipinos and Hawaiians in the Pacific), who all held the potential for migration to the United States in the wake of conquest. In response to overseas empire, authors projected their anxieties about incorporating racial inferiors into the polity by recasting the Monroe Doctrine as a policy tool that while originally wise and benevolent had, over time, imperiled American international standing by shielding the democratic claims of inferior peoples not yet ready to govern themselves.

An unwavering commitment to self-determination and republicanism in the Western Hemisphere underscored most schoolbook treatments of the Monroe Doctrine and its subsequent applications. In particular, sympathy, integrity, and danger served as a common vocabulary set on which to hang arguments about the benevolence of American foreign policy and the complementary toxicity of European colonialism.³⁸ But after 1898, schoolbook historians projected their anxieties about US interventions onto historical applications of the Monroe Doctrine. US entry into World War I further heightened the skepticism of historians about the efficacy of the Monroe Doctrine in the twentieth century.³⁹ For example, authors cast potential Spanish recolonization after the revolutions of the 1820s and 1830s as a threat to the national security of the United States, not simply an affront to Bolivarian revolutionary republics. European monarchical alliances necessitated an active American foreign policy that at times required expansive measures, however reluctantly, in order to protect national sovereignty and the integrity of republicanism at home. In particular, the Holy Alliance between Austria, Russia, and Prussia, created “for the purposes of suppressing in Europe just such revolution as had happened in South America,” as historians Charles Beard and William Bagley argued, prevented “the rule of the people” everywhere. But more importantly, an alliance between Russia, with ambitions in the Pacific Northwest, and the Spanish, with colonies in the Caribbean, had “imperiled” American freedom. Confronted with encroaching monarchical colonialism from the south and west, “the future of the [United States] would have been in peril.” A policy tool of “imperial anti-colonialism,” as historian William Appleman Williams has described the Monroe Doctrine, was in this formulation not only a matter of commitment

to national values but also an imperative of national security that legitimated a robust military presence on land and at sea.⁴⁰

In the wake of national reconciliation after Reconstruction, new perceived threats to American liberty and sovereignty arose, and a collective dedication to republicanism did little to abrogate the political and racial hierarchies that characterized US involvement in Latin America. Authors often undermined their claims that self-government should serve as the standard for all nations in the Western Hemisphere with anxieties about the ability of the younger republics to govern themselves. Though an important “tenet of American national policy,” the Monroe Doctrine was fraught with “increasing difficulty of application” in Yale historian Emerson Fite’s estimation. The “vagueness of the doctrine,” and the backing of American naval power, Fite asserted, invited “the southern republics to be reckless in their foreign relations, upon the almost certain knowledge that the United States will step in to protect them from too vigorous action on the part of outside [European] powers.” He and other authors, including John Latane of Johns Hopkins University, likened the relationship between the United States and its southern neighbors to that of a parent and a child. The United States was steadfast, omniscient, and evenhanded, while Latin American nations were immature, ill behaved, and rash. Under the assumption that the United States had finally fulfilled Monroe’s desire to achieve equal imperial footing with European powers, it had come to occupy an authoritative position charged with restoring order among chaotic and ungrateful southern peoples. For Latane, Monroe’s declaration thwarted domestic opposition to an imperial agenda and ultimately proved effective in arbitrating international conflict between unequal nations. Moreover, Latane argued that the proclivity of presumably inferior Latin and African races to endanger law and order required the guiding hand of Anglo-Saxon rule.⁴¹ Fite too was deeply concerned with the implications and responsibilities of overseas empire. Yet despite his ideological reservations about direct control over the Philippines, for example, he nonetheless regarded American colonial policy as in keeping with racial and civilizational order.

US entrance into World War I yielded sharper criticism of the expansionism and deepening involvement fostered by liberal internationalist statesmen who justified many of their actions using the Monroe Doctrine. For school-book critics writing during and after the war, Monroe’s message became an idyllic symbol of righteous and benevolent hemispheric and international policy that had, over the decades, descended into a questionable and

wrongheaded foreign policy contrary to national interests. In particular, detractors deplored the foray into the affairs of continental Europe and argued that President Wilson had betrayed the fair-minded policies of Monroe and Adams, who adhered to George Washington's warnings against entangling alliances. In *An American History*, first published in 1911 and reprinted again in 1920, David Saville Muzzey, a Columbia-educated left-leaning historian at Barnard College, Anglophile, skeptic of corporate power, and arguably one of the most widely distributed schoolbook authors of the entire first half of the twentieth century, offered such skepticism to growing US internationalism:

Our statesmen have gradually stretched the [Monroe] doctrine far beyond its original declaration . . . It has even been invoked as a reason for annexing territory to the United States . . . With the entrance of the United States into the great World War . . . that part of the Monroe Doctrine which regards the world as divided into two separate and remote halves has been rendered obsolete. If we still maintain that our interests are "paramount" in the Western hemisphere, we no longer refrain from interfering in the political and territorial questions of the Eastern hemisphere.⁴²

Despite a relatively sustained critique of overseas American empire and an expanded role in international politics by schoolbook historians of the early twentieth century, few if any connected Monroe's 1823 message to the continental expansions of the mid-nineteenth century. The Monroe Doctrine, they argued, did not apply to disputes over contiguous territory that, after about 1850, had become part of the nation with paths to statehood, even when the United States wrestled those lands away from a Latin American state whose sovereignty the United States claimed to honor and protect. Authors extricated the Mexican War of 1846–48 from historical treatments of American foreign policy and instead folded the annexation of Texas and subsequent war of questionable legality into a national narrative insulated from questions of international relations. Though deeply embedded in the imperial experience, historical accounts denied the culpability of the United States in a key exercise in territorial conquest. In this view, the American Southwest was destined to become part of the United States, and war with Mexico was simply the means by which settlers, soldiers, and policymakers fulfilled that destiny.⁴³

Assumptions of Anglo-Saxon supremacy and complementary theories about Mexican racial inferiority injected inevitability into historical

narratives that authors used either to cast Mexico as shortsighted in its policy of open Anglo settlement or, in critiques, to render the War with Mexico unnecessary in the context of Anglo-Saxon destiny. As Fite argued, “not realizing the inevitable result, [Mexico] freely invited the citizens of the United States Only after it was too late did the Mexicans attempt to stem the tide. It was like the irresistible march of settlers across Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, or through Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi.” While he certainly implicated Mexican settlement policies in Texas in the ensuing conflicts, manifest destiny trumped any preventative action or foresight on the part of Mexican officials: “It could not be expected that citizens of the United States, with Anglo-Saxon blood in their veins and with the independent spirit of frontiersmen, would feel loyalty to a weak and shifting government in Mexico.”⁴⁴ Similarly, Beard and Bagley interpreted the Southwest as a vast resource hitherto untapped by “the descendants of the men who had despoiled Mexico and Peru” and who “had no bent for hard or steady labor. These pleasure-loving idle soldiers became owners of vast stretches of land which they had no inclination to till or develop.”⁴⁵

Race and manifest destiny rendered the Mexican War at once unnecessary but justified given the trajectory of a presumed and foregone Anglo-Saxon right to inhabit the Southwest and to spatially and culturally displace racialized aliens in the name of progress. In doing so, Anglo-Saxons would usher into these regions the structures of republican citizenship and government they believed ultimately to be in the service of other races—a kind of citizenship and identity to emulate but never fully achieve. The notion even allowed critics like Haverford College historian Allen C. Thomas to assert that “while it has been far better that that large territory acquired should be under Anglo-Saxon control, there is little reason to doubt that it would soon have come under the rule of the United States through settlement, or purchase, or in some way less questionable than that which was followed.” Confident in the assured completion of continental expansion, Thomas endowed the violence of territorial conquest with an extrinsic quality. War, he argued, was lamentable given what he and others believed to be the providential certainty of Anglo-Saxon expansion.⁴⁶

Thomas and Hart offered what seem to be two of the few dissenting historical opinions, drawn from Whig criticisms of American bellicosity, but stopped short of questioning the efficacy of Anglo-Saxon destiny.⁴⁷ In the second edition of *History of the United States*, published in the midst of the American conquest of the Philippines, Thomas argued that the United States

had “little reason for glory, for her successes were won in a questionable war against a weak and divided [Mexican] enemy.” Likewise, Hart condemned President James K. Polk’s dubious claims of Mexican aggression in his 1920 *School History of the United States*: “[Polk] forced war upon Mexico, on the plea that the Mexicans had begun it.”⁴⁸ But the vast majority of authors blamed Mexico for the outbreak of hostilities, described the embattled Anglo-Saxon settlers as the rightful occupants of the Southwest, and rendered the military campaign a crucial and consequently justified episode in the fulfillment of America’s manifest destiny. Perhaps no author defended the Mexican War more boldly than Muzzey, who described the annexation of Texas as a “perfectly fair transaction.” As he revised *An American History* at the height of the Red Scare, his justification fit neatly within a framework of American foreign policy that sought to extend American military power, acquire territory, and pursue economic markets under the auspices of national defense against aggressive enemies abroad and subversive elements at home. Muzzey positioned his argument squarely against the consensus of school historians like Thomas and Hart who offered open if not entirely firm critiques of American foreign policy that extended from the southwestern frontiers to overseas campaigns in Hawai‘i, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. Muzzey took his fellow historians to task: “The Mexican War has generally been condemned by American historians as ‘the foulest blot on our national honor’ But Mexico had insulted our flag, plundered our commerce, imprisoned our citizens, lied to our representatives, and spurned our envoys.”⁴⁹ While Muzzey may have departed from his colleagues on the issue of initial aggression (though more sympathized with his view than he disclosed), authors shared a racialized understanding of the longer arc of American expansion in which the Mexican War was but an episode among many. Ironically, in 1925, a former Army director targeted Muzzey’s alleged pro-British interpretation of the American Revolution and led an unsuccessful campaign to remove *An American History* from schools in Washington, DC. Muzzey’s bellicose defense of American continental expansion in the 1840s was, in the 1920s, apparently not enough to withstand conservative charges of subversion and unpatriotic historical writing.⁵⁰

Schoolbook historians described the Mexican War as having served two primary functions: to complete the project of continental manifest destiny and in turn to place the United States on the road to settling the issue of slavery that in hindsight reciprocally elevated US standing as a world power. Fite argued that the eradication of slavery in the United States, which he

applauded, “happily” united North and South America in the 1860s after a decade of distrust following the American acquisition of the Southwest. Furthermore, the two peoples found “a sense of common danger following the French invasion of Mexico [in 1861].” In Fite’s estimation, the Monroe Doctrine, the sincerity of which he acknowledged had been in jeopardy following the War with Mexico, resumed its rightful place as the tie that bound the United States to its southern neighbors.⁵¹ One of the few to explicitly connect the continental conquests of the 1840s to the overseas extensions of the 1890s, Fite concluded his section titled “Mexican Annexations and Phases of Expansion” with a quote from Richard Dana, who visited Hawai‘i in 1860 and who “paid the following tribute to the labors of these pioneer [American missionaries]”: “They have established schools, reared up native teachers . . . and whereas they found these islanders a nation of half-naked savages . . . abandoned to sensuality, they now see them decently clothed . . . going to schools and public worship with more regularity than the people at home.”⁵² Those penning their school histories following 1898 engaged what many considered to be new epochs in American expansion, disconnected from the continental expansions that swept away Mexican sovereignty as well as the imperial claims and aspirations of European rivals. Yet many accounts of the Spanish-American War echoed the historical narratives that rendered the Monroe Doctrine benevolent and nonaggressive and the War with Mexico justifiable by racial theories of Anglo-Saxonism, even if authors injected these new imperial forays with a tone of reluctance infrequently applied to continental empire-building projects of the nineteenth century.

Though Anglo-Saxonism remained paramount in accounts of American empire, school histories of *overseas* expansion seldom employed the kind of bombastic defense present in Muzzey’s interpretation of the War with Mexico. Instead, authors trotted out the paternalism that accompanied treatments of the Monroe Doctrine to ultimately claim that despite the sometimes questionable means of imperial acquisition and its detriment to democratic rule at home, the globalization of American republican values and free enterprise was ultimately a force for good. The United States did not *want* to become an empire, as schoolbook authors claimed. The republic was *forced* into its “new role” by a combination of Spanish tyranny, native savagery, and a perceived obligation of American Anglo-Saxons to extend the guiding hand of civilization to oppressed peoples abroad as they had done and were doing among Native Americans, blacks, Mexicans, and immigrants at home.

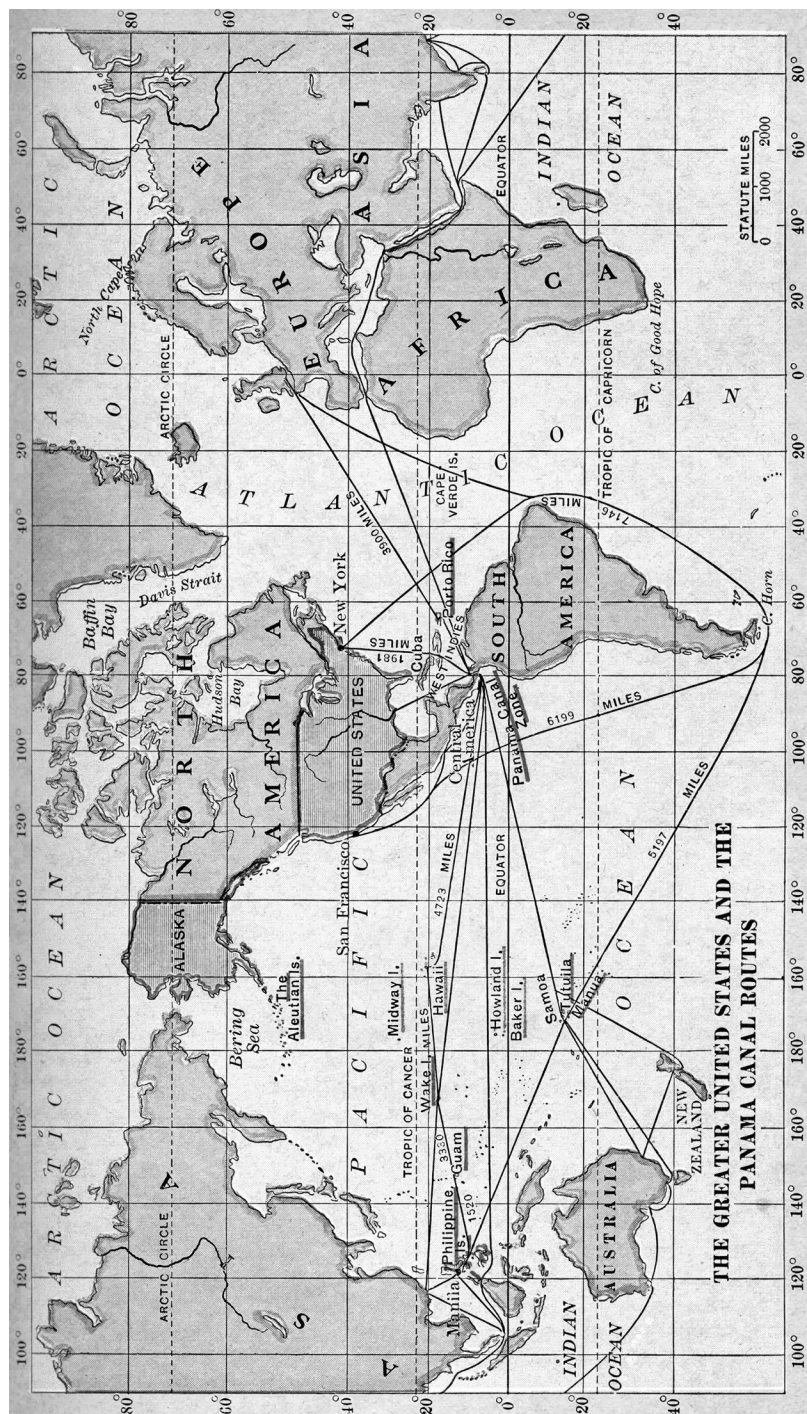


FIGURE 2. The Greater United States and the Panama Canal Routes, David Saville Muzzey, *An American History* (Boston: Ginn, 1911), color map insert between pp. 602 and 603.

School historians writing after the American victory in 1898 attested that Spanish colonialism in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines had reaffirmed an inherent Iberian tyranny at work in Mexican-ruled Texas that had necessitated earlier interventions in the Southwest. The brutality of “the Butcher,” as Fite described General Valeriano Weyler, in reference to the earned notoriety of the Governor-General of Cuba and the Philippines, “made it harder for the sympathetic neighboring [United States] to keep her hands off.” On the eve of US entry into World War I, when Fite penned *History of the United States*, Prussian aggression was proving equally irresistible.⁵³ Syracuse University historian William Mace agreed that “harsh things done [by Spain] in an attempt to break the spirit of the Cubans filled the American people with bitter indignation.”⁵⁴ Muzzey too described American intervention in Cuba as one of methodical hesitation that ultimately proved futile in light of calls to end Spanish repression. He argued that “corrupt officials squandered [Cuba’s] revenues, raised by heavy taxation, and Spanish soldiery ruthlessly quelled the least movement of rebellion.” Adding that Spanish colonialism had endangered “large amounts of American capital” invested in sugar and tobacco, Muzzey, in the end, justified what had come to largely define the American way of empire by the early twentieth century—conquest in the protection of liberal capitalism.⁵⁵

If postwar Cuban independence, secured by the “promise” of self-government laid out in the Teller Resolution (1898), was preferable though not necessarily required, the Platt Amendment, a 1901 congressional act that granted the US military unilateralism on the island, extended the protection of American military power to Cubans struggling for liberty, argued several authors. Boston-based David Henry Montgomery, whose *Leading Facts of American History* went through seven editions between 1890 and 1920, noted that following formal US recognition of the new republic in 1902, “Cuba had occasion to ask for our assistance. An insurrection broke out [in 1906].”⁵⁶ Hart likewise listed the benefits of these “occupations” for his readers, including modern schools, sanitation campaigns, and the suppression of yellow fever epidemics—advances he believed negated any threats to liberty afforded by continued military rule. “The United States did much to help the people before it withdrew . . . in 1902 and left the Cubans to rule themselves,” declared Mace.⁵⁷ The benefits of empire extended to Puerto Rico and the Philippines too, argued Hart, who noted that Puerto Rico received “the great advantage” of free trade with the United States. Montgomery likewise hailed the “many excellent public schools” established for the benefit of Filipinos;

Beard and Bagley offered new highways, railroads, agricultural methods, and industries as evidence of American progress in the Philippines; and Fite described the proliferation of public education in Puerto Rico in the first fifteen years of “[prosperous]” American rule. His account corroborated what US school officials and local elites in Puerto Rico touted at the time. American colonialism, these authors claimed, was for the benefit of the colonized, as Fite so vividly relayed regarding American influence in Hawai‘i.⁵⁸ As Mace unequivocally declared: “This [Spanish-American] war was fought for the sake of humanity and freedom and not for gain or glory. The United States had taken the side of an oppressed people struggling for independence but she did not claim these countries as the spoils of war.”⁵⁹

Despite authors’ faith in the efficacy of Anglo-Saxon superiority, school histories of the Spanish-American War also revealed the wider debates and disagreements over US colonialism among policy makers, academics, and the American public.⁶⁰ This was especially true in the case of the Philippines, which historians singled out as too savage, too foreign, and too unfit for self-government to enter into congress with the United States in any other fashion but as a subordinate colony. Echoing the rhetoric of Senator Albert Beveridge, whose 1900 defense of the war against the Philippine Republic pitted the “just, humane, civilizing government” of the United States against the “savage, bloody rule” of the Spanish, schoolbook authors—to borrow from Paul Kramer—“[sublimated] conquest into liberation.”⁶¹ The experience of the war against the insurgency offered evidence of Filipino savagery for imperialists and anti-imperialists alike. The former were certain that they could subjugate inferior races. The latter were wary of the future implications for American democracy should Filipinos become assimilated into the republic as either distant citizens or migrants to North America. Ultimately, school historians concluded, American racial ideology necessitated the suppression of the insurgency followed by the “admirable moderation and wisdom” of American imperial rule that characterized the “strong and sympathetic administration of the Islands.”⁶²

In the closing pages of the 1921 edition of *New American History*, Hart offered a concise recap of US expansion in a chapter titled “What America Has Done for the World.” After a brief chronological summary of continental and overseas expansion, Hart listed the myriad freedoms that he argued extended from international power. Personal freedom, freedom of the mind, of labor, of business, and popular government—the “largest contribution that America has made to the world”—contained the essential lessons of the

American past, argued Hart, in a rework of earlier conclusions that “westward movement was in part an application of one of the greatest lessons which America has taught mankind, the right of personal liberty.”⁶³ But Hart, like most of his fellow authors, believed that no matter how far the United States might extend its authority over distant lands and peoples, liberty had its limits among both colonial subjects and nonwhite immigrants until they deem themselves capable and worthy of its exercise. In the case of immigrant children and the children of immigrants—white, nonwhite, and of questionable whiteness—public school officials attempted to accelerate this process by crafting a third subject to complement the racial architecture of world geographies and historical narratives of US expansion. Civics emerged in the 1890s as a form of explicit instruction in American loyalty and patriotism designed to transform young citizens into supporters of US imperialism and the racial and class hierarchies that underscored its logic, execution, and outcomes.

CIVICS AND THE POLITICS OF PATRIOTISM

On the eve of the US entrance into the Great War, Jasper McBrien charged schools with what he deemed to be “the prime and vital service of amalgamating into one homogeneous body the children alike of those who are born here and of those who come here from so many different lands.” The former Nebraska state superintendent and US Bureau of Education official argued that only the “right material on which the American youth may settle their thoughts for a definite end in patriotism” would eradicate divided loyalties in times of both peace and international conflict. McBrien drew on the authority of President and professional historian Woodrow Wilson who, in a 1915 address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, called on citizens and noncitizens alike to make clear their national loyalties. McBrien stressed the need for “study and reflection along patriotic lines” in America’s schools.⁶⁴ McBrien’s call for a clearly defined program of civics and patriotism in the public schools was not novel in 1916. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, administrators, teachers, and schoolbook authors debated and crafted the “right material” by which to bind an increasingly heterogeneous school-age population to the ideals of the nation, the policies of the state, and the demands of burgeoning corporate power attached to each. Writing in the *California School Review* in 1891, Amherst College

president Merrill Edward Gates argued that the US “supply of new citizens” came from two primary sources: “immigration and the growing up of American children. We are all keenly alive to the dangers that threaten our government when ignorant and immoral foreigners are made citizens by hundreds and thousands.”⁶⁵ For the children of nonwhite or dubiously white lineage, Americanization frequently came with subordination and exclusion.⁶⁶

Between 1898 and 1917, civics lessons broadened the meaning of patriotism and the paths of good citizenship by infusing disciplined support for the nation’s expansive military power with a sense of civic responsibility to a national community of citizens. During and after World War I, many school officials, particularly those presiding over schools populated with “new” immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, embarked on programs of “100 Percent Americanism” that demanded sharply drawn lines between patriot and dissident. Wartime and postwar Americanization stressed not only cultural conformity but also strict and active adherence to the political ideology of anticommunism. At every step, the paths of citizenship forged in America’s expansive imperial ambitions both reimagined and reinforced established boundaries of race and national origin. One potential solution to the perceived problem of increased heterogeneity was a fresh civics curriculum. Community civics emerged in the 1890s and gained widespread acceptance by the 1910s as the primary method for imparting lessons in civic duty. The new curricula, developed in large part as a response to the dramatic social and economic transformations of the late nineteenth century, offered a redefinition of citizenship. Progressive supporters of community civics argued that political activism was unsafe given the dramatic changes wrought by industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. Southern and eastern Europeans, Asians, Mexicans, and African Americans made up increasingly larger proportions of urban school populations.⁶⁷ Should these children—who according to prevailing pseudo-scientific and social theories of human development did not constitute the kind of democratic citizens the founders had supposedly envisioned—be encouraged to strive for full participation in the American democratic process? Or, should civics instruction open alternative spaces for these future workers and citizens to contribute to national discourse and economic progress?

Advocates of the new curricula tended to favor the alternatives. Rather than emphasize a partnership between individuals and the republic through voting, the new civics model stressed membership in a larger community of

citizens and workers. Patriotic citizens were not concerned with elections necessarily, though the right kinds of citizens (white males) were certainly encouraged to participate in the electoral process. The individual, reified as hard working, loyal, obedient, and unquestionably patriotic, continued to enjoy symbolic meaning within the school curriculum. Rather than eradicate the individual's role in favor of mass loyalty to the state, the individual citizen simply became, in theory and symbol, the most ardent supporter and pillar of the national community of citizens.⁶⁸ The embrace of community civics did not signal the immediate demise of more traditional notions of civic participation. But a focus primarily on voting and a knowledge of the branches of government seemed out of place to many progressive educators, whose female, black, and foreign-born students would likely be excluded from such participation once of voting age. So while older definitions of civic engagement persisted, they did so amidst a groundswell of change in the nature of school civics and the broadening of its scope to include a culture of patriotic loyalty to both the state and its free market ideological underpinnings.⁶⁹ The community civics model at once opened new spaces to marginalized citizens and reinforced the inequalities of white-only primaries and male suffrage.

A sizable body of pedagogical material appeared in support of the recharged mission of the nation's public schools. While geography and history often remained confined to the pages of books, compositions, and exams, civics could not, argued many educators, succeed unless schools emphasized an active and ritualistic participation in American patriotic life. To this end, exposition exhibits, daily pledges of allegiance, patriotic songs and exercises, war commemorations, and active support for America's war efforts became the hallmarks of community civics. These activities often transcended the walls of schoolrooms and pages of books and gave schoolchildren a visible and prominent presence in local communities and national life. The new civics model de-emphasized political activities like voting in favor of a more open patriotism among individuals who were to see themselves as part of a national community of citizens. As Michael Kammen has observed, "every conceivable mode of education was viewed as a potential contribution to solving the nation's pressing social problem of extreme heterogeneity."⁷⁰

One of the most common and public forms of patriotism was participation in national commemorative celebrations, where patriotic sentiment translated into active nationalism. In October 1898, San Francisco school



FIGURE 3. Kindergarten Flag Drills. Manhattan Public School 21, ca. 1905. Courtesy Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

board president Charles Barrington requested the presence of students and their families at a Drill Competition between three US volunteer regiments—a benefit to “[obtain] funds for our boys in Manila.”⁷¹ The city held similar events on Memorial Day to commemorate those who died serving in the US military, events that by 1903 included those who had died in America’s wars for overseas empire. The city’s Memorial Day committee appealed to public school children: “In your daily routine you salute the flag, and in that way show your love for the principles for which our Comrades fought and died . . . Will you not join with us in this beautiful tribute to heroic deed, and thus testify a gratitude to those who participated under God, in the maintenance of this glorious Union, now a leader of Nations?”⁷² The committee’s plea not only recognized schoolchildren as potential participants in national rituals, but also as a group upon which to impress the notion of the United States as an exceptional nation—one that fought just wars of liberation in order to extend freedom abroad while also serving as a model to other nations. While the subsequent brutal suppression of Emilio Aguinaldo’s Philippine nationalists suggested otherwise, schoolchildren were instead to concentrate their efforts on honoring fallen American soldiers and glorifying death in military service. By providing time and space for the performance of these rituals outside of the classroom, the committee

hoped that at young ages, students would find value in national remembrance and in demonstrating patriotism, particularly during times of war. They supposedly developed strong faith in a government intent on expanding US influence abroad despite the sovereignty and desires of other nations and cultures. Schoolchildren who recognized national “purity through fatality” could be counted on as adults to actively support and serve in the nation’s wars of expansion.⁷³

War mobilization joined commemoration rituals as a primary vehicle of patriotism at century’s end. School officials attempted to transform schools into community centers to foster support for the nation’s geopolitical endeavors and to directly involve local communities in war efforts. Wars of empire in the Pacific and Caribbean, which demanded virulent nationalism, had the power to rejoin North and South in the common cause of American global leadership, the expansion of US commercial interests, and an imagined anti-imperialism that claimed to prevent European powers from meddling in the affairs of free peoples in the Western Hemisphere. So too did wars to make the world “safe for democracy” demand such nationalism. In 1917, the Georgia Department of Education declared “each school house should be a community center to teach patriotism and to give proper information as to the cause and real meaning of this [World] War to every citizen.” It encouraged increased agricultural production, conservation, the purchase of Thrift Stamps, and envisioned the state’s schools as the centers of activism. “It will not make [schools] less efficient but transform many a pale anemic institution into a throbbing center of life and learning as well as of patriotic activity,” the department claimed. Teachers and students were to become the bearers of patriotic sentiment and activism to their communities.⁷⁴

Financial commitment to the US war economy also formed part of schools’ multidimensional projects of creating patriots. New York district superintendent William O’Shea, who was in charge of War Service Work for the city’s superintendent’s office, asked all principals to invite parents and any other adult relatives of the schools’ students to a meeting regarding the logistics and benefits of buying US war bonds. In 1918, the National War-Savings Committee in Washington beseeched “every school teacher in the land” to organize “War-Savings societies” among students. This, they hoped, would mobilize the nation’s youth to educate their parents about active patriotism in the form of economic assistance.⁷⁵ “A very good way of advertising the Liberty Loan in the home is to get the school children to talk about it . . . by the assignment of compositions or by giving them . . . questions . . . and

asking them to bring their answers to school after they have conferred with their parents.” O’Shea hoped that by having children educate their own parents on the benefits of patriotic almsgiving, both parent and pupil would develop and maintain vested interests in the nation’s military and economic expansion.⁷⁶ Board president William Willcox appealed to principals and teachers to purchase Liberty Loans themselves. He argued that in doing so, school employees could help to “demonstrate the loyalty, patriotism, and interest of the personnel of the public school system,” further solidifying the role of public schools in the support of the state’s foreign military endeavors.⁷⁷

By 1917, patriotism had become synonymous with Americanization in many schools that took on the responsibility of assimilating European immigrants. As the fear of Bolshevik infiltration escalated in the years after the US entry into World War I, the more tolerant Americanization of the century’s first decade—the “Melting Pot”—gave way to more coercive, militant calls for patriotism.⁷⁸ Public education stood on the front lines of the ideological battle against Bolshevism, and school officials seized on the perceived necessities of anticommunism to expand their influence in states and local communities by pushing for an expansion of public support for schools. Moreover, appeals to taxpayers for public education were not confined to urban centers with large populations of immigrants. In its annual report to the General Assembly, the Georgia Department of Education argued that “taxation for schools is just as much a part of the American scheme of government, just as much in accord with democratic principles, as taxation for courts, for police protection, for roads.” Should the state’s taxpayers neglect their duties to support education and thus protect the Republic, they “ought to move into the jungles of Africa where [they] would be called upon to pay no taxes, where [their] road would be a path through the wilderness, ‘zigzagged’ by some denizen native to the wild.” The department’s chosen imagery was certainly befitting its white Southern audience, but threats posed by the “denizens” in the “jungles of Africa” to “American government” and “democratic principles” permeated white racial thinking throughout the nation. In its appeal, Georgia’s leading educators bound together the projects of Southern economic growth, national expansion, the growth of state power, and the preservation of rights to liberty and property.⁷⁹

The state’s black intellectuals and progressives challenged the paradoxical patriotism imposed on African Americans during times of international conflagration. Atlanta’s Neighborhood Union, founded in 1908 by Lugenia Burns Hope, wife of Morehouse College president John Hope, addressed the

president, cabinet, and Congress of the United States in March 1918. The Neighborhood Union, which took up the improvement of black schooling as one of its primary campaigns, wrapped the nation's failure to address the lynching of African Americans into the immorality and hypocrisy of wartime patriotism: "We accordingly regard lynching as worse than Prussianism which we are at war to destroy." In particular, the Neighborhood Union questioned the efficacy of the tacit promotion of lynching given the willingness and eagerness of black Americans to fight in the name of the nation's founding principles: "What thinks you will be the effect on the morale of black men in the trenches when they reflect that they are fighting on foreign fields on behalf of their nation for those very rights and privileges which they themselves are denied at home? We appeal to you in the name of our American citizenship!"⁸⁰

On the West Coast, at a special school bond election in November 1922, city superintendent Alfred Roncovieri and school board president F. Dohrmann, Jr. echoed the Georgia Department of Education's sentiment in an open letter to the citizens of San Francisco. The schoolmen appealed to taxpayers' sense of civic duty, patriotism, and economic self-interest:

Be generous—not only to the children of your city, but to yourselves in this matter [C]onsider that school taxes are the insurance premiums . . . to protect . . . persons and their property against anarchy. Lack of proper education is the basic cause of the crimes being committed by the Reds and fanatics of Europe WHAT WOULD YOUR PROPERTY BE WORTH WITHOUT AN EDUCATED DEMOCRACY? For your answer look to Mexico, to Russia, to Turkey, to India and to all lands where dense ignorance prevails.⁸¹

By educating schoolchildren about the perceived evils of socialism, labor unions, and anarchism, the nation's leaders could rest assured that the next generation of workers, teachers, professionals, and policy makers would in turn protect democracy and capitalism. Drawing an ideological line between democratic capitalists and socialist despots allowed Roncovieri and Dohrmann to remind white citizens of the social and political perils of immigration. Their acute emphasis on Mexico, Turkey, and India, three decidedly nonwhite countries, especially after 1924, rather than the more generalized "Reds and fanatics of Europe," implied both ideological *and* racial dangers. While German and Russian immigrants might become white through Americanization, Indians, Mexicans, and Turks met social and legal resistance to any desires for naturalization or national belonging.⁸²

From the 1890s through the early 1920s, civics education shifted from an emphasis on voting to a process of Americanization to meet the perceived challenges of immigration, racial diversity, social revolution, and global military conflict. During the prelude to the war mobilization and propaganda of 1917–18, school authorities generally upheld a commitment to a more inclusive Americanization. Even the most coercive attempts to win over immigrant children to American ways and values were usually tempered by sympathy for abhorrent slum conditions. But with the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution, Americanization became for the most part a totalizing, immediate, and coercive effort to purge the nation of foreignness and radicalism. Consequently, charges of anti-Americanism, Bolshevism, and radicalism bore racial implications. And despite the tireless efforts of school reformers, many still doubted the overall effectiveness of schools in Americanizing the nation's foreigners and regarded immigration restriction as a more definitive solution. As popular anxieties and fears about a socialist takeover pervaded American social discourse, school authorities, in the service of national security, set aside their liberal and civic Americanization responsibilities in favor of a more militant antiradical and racial nationalism.⁸³

In 1924, Harvard professor Robert Ward lauded Washington representative Albert Johnson's Immigration Act for its "definite numerical limitation" and, in particular, its racial exclusivity. The National Origins Act of 1924, signed into law by President Calvin Coolidge on May 26, limited the overwhelming majority of future immigration to "the same racial stocks as those that originally settled the United States." Ward's *Foreign Affairs* article recounted what, in his opinion, amounted to important but ultimately ineffective attempts to stem the tide of unwanted and inassimilable aliens before 1924. Ward singled out schools for perpetuating the myth of the American Melting Pot: "It was believed that sending alien children to school, teaching them English, giving them flag drills, letting them recite the Gettysburg Address and read the Declaration of Independence, would make thorough-going Americans of them, similar in all respects to the native-born or the traditional type." Instead, he argued that the Melting Pot had become corrupted with inferior races and thus provided "no hope of producing a superior or even of maintaining a homogeneous [American] race." According to Ward, "the public consciousness awakened to the realization that . . . education and environment do not fundamentally alter racial values [or] . . . offset the handicap of ancestry." In the late 1920s and 1930s, restrictionists like Ward directed their energy at new groups of immigrants and colonial

subjects, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in particular, that they believed to be biologically and culturally unassimilable.⁸⁴

After 1924, schools continued to carve out paths to good citizenship, but did so within the context of immigration restriction. The next two generations of European-American schoolchildren would learn that “nations” and “races” were not coterminous. Myriad European nationalities, including Irish, Armenians, Italians, Greeks, Sicilians, and Poles who were naturalized as “free white persons” under the 1790 Naturalization Act, became *Caucasians* only after legal restrictions effectively sealed the borders in the mid-1920s. The transition in terminology from *white* to *Caucasian* was neither precipitous nor totalizing, and 1924 represented more of a high point of Anglo-Saxonism than an abrupt end to whiteness as a category or an identity. *Caucasian* lent the authority of science and anthropology to the process of liberating European immigrants from racial ambiguity and re forging Americanism along the lines of the major racial divisions. From 1924 until the post-World War II civil rights movement, *Caucasian* and *white* were often interchangeable. Though the division of humanity into white and non-white never disappeared in American society during the first decades of the twentieth century, the dubious whiteness of certain European “races” had no doubt complicated its centrality in educational and popular discourse.⁸⁵

Yet even as proponents of “100 Percent Americanism” and immigration restriction couched radicalism and Bolshevism as biologically ingrained cultural and political proclivities, new strains of progressive civics emerged to counter the totalizing and racializing effects of patriotism and restrictionism. In fact, the extremism of Americanization, anticommunism, and exclusion potentially undermined the efforts of school geographers and historians to explain contemporary inequalities through the lens of objective science. If hierarchies of race and nation were natural, why did restrictionists and Americanizers expend so much energy to maintain them? The intolerance that crested from 1917 to 1924 also galvanized rather than demoralized leftists and minorities, and from the edges, they continued to formulate alternative and more inclusive visions of American citizenship.⁸⁶ The case studies that comprise the following five chapters will explore not only the mechanisms through which immigration policy and imperial power on the one hand and school policy on the other reciprocally shaped each other in specific local and regional contexts, but also how marginalized communities, parents, and children challenged the forces of imperialism and inequality so central to American public education.