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ABSTRACT

The public schools responsible for educating hundreds of thousands of East European Jewish immigrant children in New York City between 1893 and 1917 had three major goals: scholastic preparation, especially literacy in English, acculturation, and socioeconomic stratification. According to information obtained from interviews of students and teachers who were in the schools before 1917 (all of whom remembered their experiences with fondness and pride), the schools were enormously successful in achieving the first two goals--goals which the immigrants shared. A number of factors blended together to provide the immigrant students with a new "American" persona: the curriculum, which taught American ideals and American ways and emphasized the commonality of American citizens; the teachers, who were looked on as role models of "Americanhood"; school rituals; high levels of structure and discipline; the enforced use of English; and underlying pan-Protestantism and the ignoring of Judaism and the students' historical and cultural roots. The German Jewish leadership aligned itself with New York's educational leaders in the promotion of rapid assimilation of Jewish immigrants. A drifting away from Jewish religion and culture thus often accompanied the "Americanization" of the eastern European immigrants. The schools' third goal, however--that of facilitating and rationalizing socioeconomic stratification--was not shared by immigrant students. They saw the schools as a way out of their confined communities and as means of achieving higher status and greater material rewards. Instead of maintaining the social order, then, schools became vehicles for upward socioeconomic mobility. (CMG)

Tales Out of School:
Reports of East European Jewish Immigrants
in
New York City Schools, 1893-1917

by

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"We cancel our experience. This is an American habit."
Clifford Odets, "Paradise Lost," 1935

I. Introduction

Hundreds of thousands of East European Jewish immigrant children poured off the boats and into the schools of New York City in the decades surrounding the turn-of-the-century. There the children of the old world were schooled in the official version of America. And so much had to be learned in order to become proficient in the ways and manners of this strange new land:

> I didn't know what the utensils were. We'd set the table and Miss Themig would say to me, "You don't have a butter knife there," so I took an ordinary knife and put it down. She said, "Oh, that's not a butter knife, that's an ordinary knife." I said, "Oh, there's such a thing as a butter knife?" I didn't know at 12 what a butter knife was...We learned to make muffins and when I'd go home I used to make these muffins and my mother would say, "Yeah, a 'goyisha'muffin," but they were delicious and I used to bake from what I learned in school.(1)

The task of educating these children, children who were alien to America in nearly every outward respect, fell to the New York public schools. Instead of valuing and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, the schools consciously set out to transform these foreign-speaking, socio-cultural greenhorns, into English speaking

Americans. How was this transformational effort perceived by the objects of this attention, the Jewish and other immigrant students? What did they think the schools were doing to or for them? How did they actually learn the language and culture of their new world? At the same time as the schools tried to shape and influence them, how were these children using the schools to prepare for their personally defined "American" futures? To what degree did immigrant students internalize the values, beliefs and behaviors of the dominant culture, as represented in the programs of the public schools?

To better understand how educational policy was translated in classroom practice in N.Y.C.'s public schools, and how the immigrant "objects" of instruction interacted with the education that was offered, I have interviewed students and teachers who were in the City's schools before America's entry into the First World War. Using these interviews I will seek to provide an account of key aspects of schooling in the period, and try to determine the degree of match between the goals immigrant students held for their own education and the goals the school system was seeking to achieve in the children's name.

This paper will confine itself for the most part to the East European Jewish immigrant community, who

arrived in N.Y.C. in great numbers between 1881 and 1917, and who numbered approximately 1.6 million in 1917, including an estimated 275,000 children in the public schools, or 30% of total enrollments.(2)

II. Major Goals Pursued by the N.Y.C. Board of Education

Public schools in nineteenth century America sought to provide its students with moral guidance and limited scholastic preparation; basic literacy heavily weighted toward reading and spelling, arithmetic and a simplified, if not simplistic, version of geography and history. By century's end, however, schools, especially in north-eastern cities, were asked to assume much broader functions. Children had to be prepared, it was argued, for useful and productive adult work roles in a rapidly urbanizing, industrializing economy and, since the family and traditional workplace were no longer willing or able to provide such training, the public schools were to step into the breech and add manual and vocational training and domestic science to their courses of study.(3)

Schools in communities with large and rapidly growing immigrant populations were asked to take on an even more formidable task--the acculturation of vast numbers of immigrants and their children. Educational leaders in N.Y.C. avidly embraced the challenge. As expressed by John Haaren, Associate Superintendent of Schools,

> The school, as one of the instruments of civilization, must take its part in solving the problem that has been precipitated by the great immigration of people who differ from the great mass of our population not only in language, but in customs, political ideals, and to a considerable extent in religion.
>
> The school must of necessity assume the duty of instructing the immigrant in the language, customs, and political ideals of our country. (4)

One can almost feel Superintendent Haaran forcefully restraining himself from adding "religion" to his required list.

The content of instruction was fashioned to meet the objectives of such a "transformational" curriculum.(5) The influence exerted by a student population which approached 70% foreign stock in N.Y.C. by 1910 is revealed in the logic which guided the development of the first City-wide curriculum adopted by the Board of Education, in 1903. William H. Maxwell, first City Superintendent and founder of the modern public school system of N.Y.C., explained the principles underlying the course of study as follows:

> the predominance of the study of English--a most necessary provision in a city whose population is so largely foreign; the inculcation of a love of good literature;...history, not as a mere chronicle of events, but as an introduction to our "heritage" of institutions and as a reservoir of moral worth; and physical training and athletics... to inculcate the virtues of self-reliance and unselfish cooperation.(6)

Before the outbreak of the Great War, pressures grew to sharpen a third function of education--the use of schools to facilitate and rationalize socio-economic stratification. Such stratification had always been a latent function of schooling. Now, given the laboring class background of the vast majority of students and their presumed working class futures, there were efforts to make this function manifest. Scholastic content of schooling would be reduced, vocational instruction increased, and students would be channeled into early terminal specializations. Such a restructured education would improve the match between the (trained) supply of workers and the (projected) demands of the labor market. It would also address the critical issue of school drop-outs by providing them with "relevant" education and making their stay in the schools more "productive." Utility, effectiveness and efficiency would all be increased and schools would be realistically connected to life.

The issue was debated in the first half of 1913 by the Board of Education, not, of course, in terms of early sorting and assigning, but of relevance and efficiency. A key report by an Associate Superintendent, adopted by the Board, urged

> the differentiation of courses of study for classes of pupils who will never be able, on account of limited ability, or social condition, or perspective vocations in life, to complete the studies of the higher grades of our schools...The rights of every boy and girl demand equal opportunity. We have offered equal advantages, but we have also imposed equal obligation to attain high efficiency. In so doing we have attempted to lift the majority above their possibilites...(7)

Only a third of those entering grade one in N.Y.C.'s schools made it into grade eight. The problem, therefore, was massive and it was undoubtedly true that the school system had not well served these students.

> Their lives are to be spent in occupations different from those who attain scholastic heights, yet we have not equipped them adequately by our general elementary course of study for the activities which they must assume. (8)

The Board, as others before and since, sought out and exploited the then popular ideas of John Dewey to serve their own ends. A 1913 report of the Committee on Studies and Text-Books, quotes from Dewey that "the child is related as a whole to life as a whole." Thus education of the whole child must be directly related to the life he now occupies and to the (presumably similar) life he or she is destined to occupy as an adult. Except for the select few, those with brilliant academic records, it was not presumed that there would be large-scale upward socio-economic mobility. Given the "cosmopolitan population" there would be middle and upper class children in the public schools, but

> our concern should be for the child who, lacking [a cultural atmosphere and ideal influences], must suffer the effects of a grinding process, that, by exacting more than he is capable of, tends to drive him away from rather than attract him toward school...As the majority of the boys are destined to be industrial citizens, we feel that the curriculum should possess industrial attractiveness.(9)

On this occasion the future of girls was not addressed. There was considerable ambivalence during this period as to whether the schools should prepare girls exclusively for a homemaking role, or for positions in manufacturing and commerce, resulting in elements of both being introduced into the curriculum.

In mid-1913 a simplified curriculum with "industrial attractiveness" was unanimously adopted by the full Board. In addition to course simplification, the revised curriculum called for added emphasis on English, especially oral English, provided for early introduction of shopwork, and for the elimination of foreign languages and science (the latter to be partially redeployed and merged with Hygiene). The Board also authorized two schools in each borough to experiment with a differentiated 7th and 8th grade curriculum: academic, commercial and industrial-vocational.(10)

In 1914 additional pressures were exerted on the Board to make the elementary course of study even more practical and more immediately suited to the perceived nature of its student population. Mayor Mitchell and

progressive educational leaders of the city had become enamoured with the theory and practice of the "Gary Plan." The Gary Plan involved an extended school day, the inclusion of shopwork and play, physical education and community activities in its program, and enabled twice the number of students (but only slightly more teachers) to be accommodated in a given school plant. Politicians especially liked its perceived potential to reduce per pupil outlays and capital expenditures. They also believed it to be a more "relevant" education, tied more directly to the life and work of the community. They pushed the Board to adopt the "Gary" or "duplicate plan" of instruction in all elementary schools, and funds were voted expressly for that purpose. Several schools were restructured as "Gary Plan" schools, but a majority of the Board and most high level officers in the Department of Education were opposed to this reform. Before it was irrevocably defeated in 1917, along with the Mayor who championed it, the Gary Plan was the most heatedly debated issue of its day, helping to focus attention on the role of the City's public schools and the legitimate functions they could be asked to discharge.(11)

What were the reactions of immigrant students to the instructional agenda of the schools: academic learning, acculturation and stratification? Did they have educational goals which differed from those of the educational

leadership? How were they actually affected by their encounter? We shall also try to see, if we can assess, in restrospect, the extent to which each side in the encounter achieved its goals.

III. Informants

Twenty individuals were intensively interviewed in sessions lasting from 1½ to 3½ hours. (See Appendix A for a list of informants and relevant biographical data.) Due to the temporal distance of the period and reliance upon voluntary participation, a randomly selected and statistically valid sample could not be constructed. However, in a modified form of quota sampling, I have attempted to include all major categories of students and teachers of the period, and have used the interviewees as informants who could provide information on relevant, educational experiences. Information generated in the interviews enabled me to construct a living picture of the schools as experienced by their students and teachers. The recollections of informants can be checked against the official written records and can, in turn, serve as a validity check against official claims. Consistency of accounts among respondents also serves as an internal reliability check. Contemporary written accounts could also be used as a check against informants romanticizing their youthful experiences.

Of the twenty informants, 9 are male and 11 female, half are foreign born and half native American. (See Appendix B for Tables summarizing salient characteristics of the informants.) Sixteen of the respondents are Jewish and four are not. Since teachers were sought out as informants to provide recollections from the front of the classroom, the group is weighted toward students of the period who later entered teaching, as well as teachers of the period: 11 informants taught at some point in their careers, 6 in elementary, 3 in secondary and 1 in college. While the group, taken as a whole, has a higher level of education than was common for the period, it does enable us to see how schools were used by that generation to meet vocational, social, intellectual and personal ends.

It should be noted that 6 of the teachers are graduates of teacher training or normal schools, 1½ to 3 year post-secondary courses at that time. While they entered a "middle" level white-collar profession, it was one with a built-in escalator effect. As requirements for the teaching profession were raised, those teachers with ambition went back to school to earn more credits and to work toward higher degrees. In the case of many of the informants, initial educational choice and direction had long-term (often unanticipated) consequences.

All of the respondents lived in the N.Y.C. metropolitan area, most within the city limits. All had volunteered to be interviewed, contacts coming through recommendations of mutual acquaintances, from responses to a query published in the Book Review of the N.Y. Times (July 25, 1982), and through an interviewee suggesting a friend. In addition, talks were given at senior citizens residences and people in attendance were invited to volunteer. Individuals were selected who were in good health, exhibited adequate recall, and who had had relevant educational experiences prior to 1917. Nearly all interviews were conducted in the home of the the informants and were held between April 1982 and November 1983.

IV. Tales Out of School

Learning American Ideals

Even allowing for nostalgia, I was struck time and time again by the fondness and pride with which the elementary schools were recalled by the informants. Teachers were uniformally reported to have been strict disciplinarians, generally aloof and not above recourse to occasional corporal punishment. But they were recalled as generally fair in their dealings with the respondents and caring in what they (the Jewish students) saw as "goyish" (gentile) ways.

Interestingly, it was the methods by which they were instructed, much more than the content of instruction, that was best recalled. The rigid, rote method employed, with heavy reliance on memorization, especially in the years before 1900 was not seen as incompatible with learning.(12) Nor did students seem to take personal affront from "direct" disciplinary methods. One respondent recalled a rather strict and severe teacher, nick-named "Slaughterhouse."

> She was very tall, very lean, wore, ALWAYS, all the years I knew her, a long black dress up to here /points under chin/. She was the English teacher and to justify her name Slaughterhouse: once in answering a question or somehow she heard me utter in class the words "Jesus" or "Jesus Christ." I'm sure I didn't know what they meant. But she dragged me up to the board and banged my head against the board, and that was the last time I took the name of the Lord in vain. But, I got an education.(13)

A "high tone," therefore, was one of the recalled characteristics of education. One respondent, a teacher in the City schools for over 40 years, recalls that at the beginning of her career they were careful to maintain a cleancut appearance. She and her colleagues would meet after school to cut out cardboard patterns of animals, which were used in phonetic reading lessons (mmmooo, oi, baa, etc.)

> Then we cut the utters off the cows so there would be no question about that. Somebody said to me one time, "You're mutilating nature." But that was alright, the cow didn't mind. (14)

Nearly all informants recalled studying history in elementary school. It is interesting to compare their recollections against the intentions of the public schools, as spelled out in the"Elementary Course of Study for History." The History Course of Study, revised and approved in 1914, focuses even more narrowly on American history than the 1903 course of study, and in so doing reflected the recommendations of the American History Association's Committee of Eight,formed to devise a history curriculum for America's elementary schools.(15) History was to focus almost exclusively on America, including European history only as it impinged upon that of the United States, or to provide relevant background to interpret American events.

History was explicitly taught as an introduction to American myths and legends, a call for the affective involvement of the learner with his or her country, and as a vehicle of moral education using great national heroes as role models. Among the stated aims of the History curriculum were

> To engender in the pupil a recognition of and a feeling for what is good and great, and to awaken in him a sympathy for all praiseworthy human endeavor. To induce right conduct through imitation of illustrious examples. To foster a love of country.(16)

The formal study of history, which commenced in the fourth grade, conveys the message that the torch of

civilization had been passed on to the New World, and specifically to the United States, and that it was manifestly ordained. There was a decidedly Puritan-Protestant tilt to the official version of American history, little notice paid to Catholic Americans and none to Jewish Americans.

Respondents' recall of history instruction started with dates. The times, dates, places and people were readily remembered, a testament to the vivid imprinting of 70 and 80 years ago. None seemed to resent having learned these facts. One felt American history was "brought out beautifully with dates."(17) Everyone knew the American Pantheon, and most could recite historical-patriotic verse (e.g., "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere").

American holidays and our Puritan roots were emphasized, as seen in the following typical reply:

> We had a textbook about Puritans, pictures of Puritans with the big hats and Thanksgiving and so on, and then about the Revolutionary War and the 4th of July and Betsy Ross and George Washington, and those things we learned. (18)

The aim of the curriculum was not to present an objective reality. Rather it sought to create an ideal picture of our national past, and in so doing engender a positive affective orientation to one's "noble nation." As recalled by a student of the period who later became a teacher and principal,

> you emerged from 8 years of elementary school sort of armed against the hostile world with strong positive feelings about your own country. To a degree it was distorted but distortion by omission rather than distortion by commission. They left out all the terrible things that happened...(19)

Such a skewed and sanitized version of history was not peculiar to the public schools. One informant, the graduate of a N.Y.C. parochial school, and later a teacher in the public schools, felt that

> If I had any real complaint about the...school...it would be that I'd come out of there with the feeling that the only heroes in the world were Roman Catholic. [Catholic heroes of the American Revolution were decidedly stressed.] It was pro-Catholic rather than anti-anything else.

None of the informants could recall the inclusion of Jewish history in the school curriculum, or Jews in American history. "All things that were Jewish and Yiddish were outside school..."(20) The emphasis was exclusively "mainstream," minorities and their pasts had no place within the curriculum, just as Catholic-Americans had been largely excised. Given the aim of the curriculum to have students embrace a mythic America, founded by noble men who could serve as moral examplars and as guides to proper contemporary conduct, it is not surprising that conflicts in our past were suppressed and diversity minimized. What the schools were seeking to shape were American citizens who would revel in their commonality, not their diversity. The aim was not to reinforce the

alien and divergent nature of immigrants, but to make them as much like "us" as possible.

And the schools were enormously successful in achieving the aim of fostering love of country. In the words of one informant, a former teacher and one time active member of the politics of the left,

> We learned about the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and our founding fathers. I think that's why I feel very sympathetic towards the history of our country. I'm not anti-patriotic, far from it.

The history curriculum taught the virtues of the moral life as it related to our past. Civics sought to promote virtue in the present.

> In teaching civics the aim should be to train for citizenship. Good citizenship depends not so much on a knowledge of the governmental forms of a community as upon the practice of civic virtue in that community. (21)

The school became the small community in which these virtues were to be modeled (by teachers) and practiced (by students). Civic virtue, proper personal behavior, and aesthetic taste were unconsciously communicated by "American" teachers to immigrant students.

> I saw they were a different breed...the way they acted, dressed and so on. I think I got /American ways/ that way, there was a certain thing--very retiring. See, my Jewish background is to be outgoing and to yell and scream and do everything. And I think the one big thing that I learned is to behave and to be retiring, not to be pushy. I think I learned that from my teachers. I think that's an American trait. (22)

At the institutional level, a number of elementary schools established "School Cities," opportunities for students to role play good government versions of elective politics. The forms were popular, even if the content of such organizations were meager. We learn, for example, in the school of one informant, that

> The School City did not have very much work to do this term for the reason that the school was in a good condition. ...the Judicial Department had almost nothing to do because there were few offenders. The School City co-operated with the Civic League in keeping the yard clean. (23)

Order and form in civic life was to be matched by proper manners and conduct in personal life. We learn, for example, from the "Syllabus on Manners and Conduct of Life," (1917), an extension of the Course of the study in "Moral Education" (1903), that "order is the soul of life." The authors of the syllabus inserted a quotation from Hermanus which sums up the ideal of school procedure and why it is critical to pupil learning.

> If a child grows up surrounded by an irregular and confused condition of things, a similar condition will be so firmly fixed upon him that his mind will get into a condition of disorder and the consequence will be that he will become a disorderly, variable, and fickle man. Therefore, children should be brought up to order and punctuality in all things... The example of the teacher is the best means to this end. (25)

Thus the high levels of structure and discipline encountered in early 20th century schools were, as Marshall McLuhan

was later to tell us, part of the message.

> School was a place I wanted to go to. I was afraid of certain teachers, but that would hold true any time. The school was not a symbol of repression. It was a symbol of order, it was a symbol of structure and it was a symbol of important things to learn, like good manners, keep our nose clean, wash your hands, go to the toilet, to learn to read, and to respect your elders, to say, "yes, please, thank you." (26)

Learning American Behaviors

Learning about America and becoming an American, while related, were two distinguishable operations. The facts and concepts of history and civics had to be extended into the realms of everyday life (as in the "Course of Study in Manners and Conduct of Life"), and had to directly involve the sentiments and emotions of the immigrant child. And to "feel" American, one had to establish a connection with the "land." The child of the tenement could never fully comprehend the God-given nature of the American Commonwealth until he or she had plunged their hands into native soil.

> God made the country and man made the town. The conversion of open spaces into building lots has robbed the urban dweller of his noble heritage of field and forest, bird and blossom, of starry vault and sunny sky. /A vast number of children/ grow up in an environment from which the charm and beauty of nature are absolutely barred. The sordid panorama of our city streets pours its pernicious influence into the very soul of the rising generation... until the sense of beauty and naturalness is stunted and the garishness of city scenes is preferred to the gentle charm of nature's offering. (27)

Few schools in the older tenement districts of the city, such as the Lower East Side, had available space for gardens. But in the newer districts opening up in the Bronx and Brooklyn, and to which Jewish immigrants moved to be in less congested areas, gardens were established. One respondent, Mary F., recalls that when she was in the third grade of her Brownsville public school

> a troop of us went with my teacher, a gorgeous lady, and we traipsed over to New Lots Avenue and there was this huge wilderness under the El /elevated train/, and she gave us all kinds of implements, but our job was to weed. And we weeded and we got burrs in us and we planted. How often we did this I don't know but it was a very lovely experience in my life and I've loved gardening ever since. /Even then/ I used to plant seeds and I used to pick up manure in the street because we had horses then.

To behave like an American, a girl needed to learn the role a woman was expected to perform in American society. The 1915 course of study in "Home Economics and Sewing," an elaboration of earlier courses of study, stated the role of women as follows: "The mission of the ideal woman is to make the whole world homelike." Every girl had to be exposed to such instruction since "every girl is destined at some time in her career to contribute in some measure to the making of a home." And as they stressed, home-making was more than spit and polish and frugal shopping, but involved child rearing and the very "preservation of the family."

> No other vocational teacher can ever accomplish so much for good citizenship as the home teacher, the mother. For that reason we aim to supplement the teaching of the three R's by inculcating the principles of the fourth R, the science of Right Living. (28)

Some schools, as we learn from one respondent, established little apartments in the school building to better instruct in house care and in cooking and serving.(29) And what was learned in cooking and sewing classes was often carried home. (Nearly all the women in the group recall making their own dresses for elementary school graduation as part of their sewing instruction.)

> I came home and made hot chocolate and corn bread and showed [my mother] how to make it. I taught her how to make toast, of course. [She learned to cook "by the book," following recipes, and for this she was teased by mother and brother.] But mother, if she had company, asked me to "give there a look in your book." (30)

The syllabus in Home Economics, and the actual recalled instruction, included information on the purchase and preparation of pork products, and recipes and menus involving the mixing of dairy and meat products. There did not seem to be a recognition that a large proportion of the students practiced dietary restrictions ordained by Jewish law that forbid the eating of pork and shell fish, and the mixing of milk and meat. Instruction in nutritious and economical cooking led to conflicts both within students (guilty consciences) and between parent and child, as reported by several informants. The boys,

provided with limited instruction in shopwork, did not experience analagous conflicts from their newly won knowledge. Some recall with pride bringing home a project from carpentry class. None, however, seemed to see this as relevant preparation for adult life, nor did their parents. This was school recreation, unconnected with its adult counterpart, "shwartzarbet," black work, manual labor. We shall return to this issue below.

The public schools seemed to have had their greatest impact on students through what I call, School Ritual. It involved the melding of structure, punctuality, and discipline, noted above, with affective content. The ritualization of school life began with arrival in the morning. Students would line up in classical sex-segregated fashion with the boys at one entrance and the girls at another (some schools were still single-sex at the time). Students were marched up in silence and hung their "cloaks" in orderly fashion as they passed through a "cloak room" or hung them up in clothes closets behind sliding doors. Then on to morning assembly. In older buildings this involved sliding back walls, with military precision, to create a large open space encompassing 6 or more classrooms. The precision impressed one informant, who also wistfully recalled the piano playing of Miss Dunfy, seated at the first piano

he had ever seen.[31] To insure proper respect for ritual, the By-Laws of the Board of Education were formally ammended "so as to provide that at all assemblies of the schools at least one patriotic song shall be sung, and that at least once a week there shall be a salute to the National Flag," followed by the singing of the 'Star-Spangled Banner.'[32] All respondents recall salute and song, including one informant in her 90's whose memory was failing.

Next came the reading from the Bible, usually by the principal. This had a mixed reception according to the various informants, but none could ever recall any objections having been made regarding scriptural reading, "without comment," from the Bible. Several respondents stated that in high school, the "Lord's Prayer" was added. As one person recalled

> It made absolutely no impression on me. We used to do this in the auditorium. I remember the sound when the kids said "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," a thousand kids saying this sounded as if all the radiators were leaking, pst, pst, pst. (33)

Following the scriptural readings, the principal often gave a brief morally uplifting or exhortatory speech, often followed by choral singing and at times by a class presentation. While the Assembly resembled a morning prayer service as one might encounter in a Protestant chapel with its tone of moral uplift, ritualization of

activities and choral song (radically different from a morning service in a synagogue), it tended to be quite popular with most of the informants.

> /Sliding back the walls/ was all done in precision, real Germanic, /reports a former student who attended school in an upper class neighborhood, and who was herself Catholic/. There was a great big beautiful looking platform, there was a grand piano and a big desk where the principal stood up, all carpeted. And--I can see it yet--very elegant. Anyway, you would get up there and then you would say, in our own language, what you had learned. And I thought that was a wonderful thing for children because it gave them, right from the beginning, the ability to express themselves. (34)

Assembly ended with a recessional, and for one little girl, the martial music and five hundred voice chorus was the most satisfying time of the school day.

Ritual and regularized behavior continued throughout the day. "Of course, we did the 2 minute drill...you had to open the windows, top and bottom, and do deep knee bending--did you even hear of the 2 minute drill? Get a little exercise," wheezed one informant, smiling at the recollection.(35) Even passage within the building was used to teach self-control and structure. But the high degree of order, the ritualization of activities, did not seem to be resented, at least as filtered through memory. Describing passage in the halls, a highly perceptive informant attempted to express this seeming anomoloy,

> This is not tramp, tramp, tramp, this is walking like ladies," [we were constantly informed]. We would walk through the halls and no-one could talk. But you didn't mind it. I mean, that's what I'm trying to explain. This is the way it was. I had far more arguments in the church. I never had an argument in school. (36)

Perhaps a more subtle element of school ritual was the school calendar which shaped the child's year: opening of school in September, Columbus Day, Thanksgiving (the great holiday of America's secular religion), Christmas and Easter vacations (acknowledging the Christian roots and underlying ordering pattern of American society and culture) and summer vacation. Summer was not determined by the solstice but by the closing of school. Holidays were central subjects of study in the curriculum, and rewards meeted out by the PUBLIC SCHOOL. The progression of the school year, its observances and meanings, shaped the child's year far more powerfully than the religion of their fathers, which had to be "fitted" into the secular school calendar.

Blending form and content, ritual and subject matter, the schools provided its immigrant students with a new "American" persona. The school clerk often changed the names of recent arrivals. Among those interviewed, we find Moses changed to Morris, and Nachum to Nathan. Last names become altered as well. (37)

The school enforced conversion to a new mother tongue: only English was permitted in the class, the school building and the playground. Not one respondent can recall using Yiddish in school. Along with language, the school served a banquet of new and "wholesome" foods, American diet and taste. It enforced a code of proper dress and hygiene and schooled the children in American etiquette--doffing hats, and setting table. And it enshrined cleanliness as the holiest of American virtues. Every respondent had some recall of hygiene checks, some with considerable embarrassment and dismay, 70 years after the fact, especially the lice check. The image of a teacher probing one's hair with two pencils used in the manner of knitting needles, was recalled by all the women in the group.

The handkerchief became the symbolic flag of truce, signifying one culture's concession and adoption of the habits and behaviors of another. Carrying a clean white handkerchief was a school "rule" but alien to most of the children. "I had a cold and I didn't have a handkerchief, but I had a rag, and I took it out and when my teacher saw it she was really disgusted with me."(38) Another respondent recalled a teacher who came to school with stacks of clean handkerchiefs and would call students up to blow their noses. She would have been mortified

if called. "I always carried a clean handkerchief." (39)

As we have seen, the schools also provided each student with a past, an American past, American ancestry--patriarchs and matriarchs. As the boys had Washington, Lincoln and Franklin to emulate, so too were the girls in need of appropriate role models.

> Many foreign born girls in our schools have practically no means of acquiring any adequate idea of the ideal standard of American womanhood--a standard radically different from that in their own native lands. (40)

To remedy this a book devoted to the biographies of famous women was published, A Group of Famous Women, Stories of Their Lives, which was lauded in its "Foreward" that had been written by the female head of the Brooklyn Training School for Teachers.

One's forefathers and foremothers were studied, memorized and memorialized in declamations, dramatizations and in birthday celebrations.

The schools also provided a most potent force for shaping one's American self--the teacher as role model.

> We thought [the way they dressed] was so clean because our parents didn't dress that way. Nobody we knew dressed that way. They were all clean looking. Not that our parents were dirty looking, but they were inclined to be slatternly as compared to these people. And by virtue of their speech, their attitude, their manners, their dress, they set a model. This meant being an American. They didn't say "Emulate us because we're Americans," but they became synonymous and perhaps because they did not say they were Americans, and because they sort of breathed Americanism all over you, you absorbed it. (41)

For some immigrant children the models provided by teachers were not sufficient to learn the minutiae of cultural competence. For those confined to the immigrant tenement districts, many never learned the nuances of speech and dress, body carriage and social graces. Such learning often had to be delayed until the momentous trip "uptown" or crosstown to attend high school and where one encountered fellow students of the "established" classes.

> I saw kids dressed differently, they were from uptown, the way they carried themselves, I used to marvel at them...I modeled myself after them.(42)

But learning the ways of America was not always pleasurable. It could be a brutally traumatizing experience as one's sense of what is normal, right and proper confronts a culturally distinct set of values and behaviors. One informant, selected for the most prestigious high school of its day, Townsend Harris Hall, arrives at school the first day of his freshman year in the company of two downtown (tenement district) classmates.

> We were three boys in new knickers, long stockings, white shirts with tie, something special for high school and each of us had our lunch in a bag. Come into Townsend Harris Hall and we're the only boys in short pants and without a jacket. Come into this Upper West Side atmosphere and we felt utterly conspicuous and we had to go home and get long pants.../purchase of the clothes was a heavy financial burden on the family, but it was done, however/. There were a few days we were wandering around in this gentile school.../with/ Gothic buildings--I had

> never seen a gothic building before, and I know it affected me very, very sharply. ...I had been a street corner speaker at P.S. 64 /on the Lower East Side/ but here I began to stammer and stutter... (43)

Losing the Past

To the extent students internalized an American persona, to that degree they tended to become separated and alienated from their mother cultures and from their mothers and fathers. And most immigrant students consciously and subconsciously soaked up American cultural influences in the school and outside--books, settlement houses, (later) movies, and the streets. This was especially true of informants who went to high school and were touched by the worldly sophistication of their teachers. "The process of veneration for the culture of the cultured class in this country represented by your high school teachers, was something important." One also imbibed the imbedded prejudices, including anti-semitism, along with other aspects of the culture, as captured in the school curriculum. (44)

The very absence of any attention to the world of their fathers in the school curriculum was an implicit devaluation of its importance. It was not so much that the school policy makers and curriculum writers were out to consciously denigrate the parents' culture as it was a silence arising out of a lack of knowledge and a

sense that old world cultures were "foreign" and inappropriate to life in the new world.

The very training and selection of teachers reflects this virtually exclusive American cultural focus. One was selected as a teacher on the basis of those traits which insured that the applicant had fully embraced the dominant American way of life. One had to speak English without trace of accent. The Oral portion of the licensing examination held by the N.Y.C. Board of Examiners was looked upon with great dread, and was vividly recalled by each of the informants who had entered public school teaching. One informant, 91 years old at the interview, walked over to his bookcase, extracted 18,000 Most Frequently Mispronounced Words in English and recalled the hours of prepping for the exam.

The screening procedure also insured that those with political views uncomfortably outside the mainstream were also excluded, as one informant reported who had been an early and life-long union activist. She also had been involved with the League for Industrial Democracy and worked with Jack London and John Dewey in the Pacifist campaign prior to and during the First World War

> I lost a license because of my peace work during the First World War, and I took the high school examination, passed everything, and they told me

> frankly they wouldn't give me a history license at that time...My name had been in the New York Times [in a pacifist advertisement]. (45)

Professional and teacher qualifications, especially as the entry educational level increased, also insured that those recruited into teaching and the professions had been adequately exposed to American education and appropriate role models and had demonstrated their successful achievement in mastering the offered content. These were individuals who learned within the system and through the schools, not informally and outside of officially supervised channels. Schools granted neither time nor legitimacy to most out-of-school learning.

The intellectual world of the Yiddish speakers--their excitement of political concepts, religious controversies, avant-garde developments in literature and graphic arts, seemed to largely escape the attention of the generation of American born or young immigrant Jews who were striving to learn the American content of the public schools. As a 92 year old respondent expressed it with regard to traditional Jewish studies, "I didn't study Hebrew. I said 'I'm an American--I have to study English.'" (46) Another respondent recalls that he was oblivious to the intellectual developments of the Yiddish speaking world in which his parents were active participants, especially in economic and labor union activities.

It was years later, into and beyond college, that he came to realize the advanced nature of the political and economic discussions which swirled around him as a child, but that he had neg. ted in favor of Ivanhoe and "Julius Caesar." (47)

The socialism and unionism of one's parents were often at odds with the academic instruction of the schools which was more conservative, Republican-Progressive, capitalist-free enterprise oriented. One was marked at school for the right answer, but loved at home no matter one's views, so the school "position" often became the fixed and proper one.

Language became for many immigrant children the critical aspect of their struggle to adopt a proper American persona. All but one of the Jewish informants entered school as Yiddish speakers. None recall, however, how they learned English, though each had an anecdote to share about an early embarrassment caused by lack of comprehension or poor pronunciation. Each worked at the language and seemed to have mastered it rapidly, as testified to by their rapid progress through the grades in schools, and high marks while there. (48) Yiddish receded as a working language, and was generally confined to the home. Out-of-home Yiddish became a source of shame for several of the informants. As they began to identify

more fully with English and American ways, they were made extremely uncomfortable with recollections of things not quite past.

> I spoke [Yiddish], it was the only way I could communicate with my parents. Somewhere along the line I became aware that it wasn't an "American" language, so that when I went with my parents on a Sunday to visit relatives in Brooklyn--it was a long ride by the Myrtle Avenue line...and my mother would sit with my father, and she would read the Yiddish newspaper and I would get as far from her as I could in that elevated car because I didn't want to be sitting next to a person reading the Yiddish newspaper. I remember that sharply, and it annoyed them. "Come here, Moishela," and so on and my "no," - I wouldn't tell them why...(49)

There was a fear that one would be thought a "greenhorn" if one was heard speaking Yiddish, a terrible state to be avoided at all cost--no child could stand being thought less than completely proficient in the ways of America. As a result, one informant admitted that "I was embarrassed to speak Yiddish to my mother when we were outdoors where people could hear me." (50)

The embarrassment of having Yiddish-speaking parents who spoke heavily accented English, may account, in part, for the near total lack of contact between home and school. Not one Jewish informant recalls their parents visiting the school after their initial enrollment, whereas the gentile informants all recall such visits. There were no parent-teacher conferences and apparently no organized outreach effort on the part of the schools. From the student's point of view

> You never told your parents about things [that were negative]. You never got your parents to go to school to complain or anything. (51)

The language barrier even inhibited children from informing parents of school experiences.

> I seldom spoke to my parents about anything except household things because the things I had learned I could not readily translate into the Yiddish I knew at that time--which was a domestic,household bread and butter Yiddish. It wasn't a cultural Yiddish--I couldn't express ideas in Yiddish or even unusual experiences. (52)

The inability to communicate inflicted pain and created burdens.

> No one could ask you, "Well, what did you learn?" because they didn't know themselves. That was one of my hardships, because when I had--whatever I had--I had no one to interpret for me. It was terrible. Like, take again this Ivanhoe, I had to get an upper classman whom I knew to ask him to explain to me. I couldn't understand. (53)

Parents gave their children the front parlor to study or the big kitchen table, but few could help with homework or offer scholastic advice. The wisdom possessed by parents was considered irrelevant to their American sons and daughters.

Encountering Discrimination

Given the central place of language in the curriculum and the efforts to improve the English of immigrants (54), and the importance the informants attached to speaking proper English, it is interesting that few incidents

were reported of being ridiculed or discriminated against in the elementary schools. In general the informants reported no anti-semitism in their elementary years. If it was encountered it was in their high school years. For many this was the first time they had mixed with large numbers of gentile classmates. In the segregated tenement district schools, nearly all students were of the same group. Inter-group hostilities were common on the streets between "gangs" representing the competing ethnic groups in a neighborhood. Street fights, however, were not generally perceived as signs of anti-semitism, but of inter-ethnic frictions. Irish fought the Italians too, so it really couldn't be taken too personally.

In high schools, however, increased frequency of encounters with "others" and heightened maturity and sensitivity led to an increased awareness of slights and perceived discriminatory treatment. High school teachers, who were viewed as more "upper crust" than those in elementary school, were also viewed as somewhat more critical and more prejudiced, but whether this was true in fact, or an artifact of increased awareness, we cannot tell.

Anti-semitic encounters reached their peak among those who entered teaching. All recalled incidents of anti-Jewish feelings on the part of fellow staff members. One informant recalled "integrating" Jewish and Christian teachers

into one teacher's lunch room when he became principal.(55) Another teacher recalled a colleague who "hated Jewish teachers." The teacher had given a test on a Jewish holiday when a number of Jewish students were absent and the informant asked her

> "Do-you think this is right?" She said, "You know, this is a Christian country." These are all Catholic girls, Catholic teachers. I said "That's right, it is a Protestant country." You should have seen those looks that I got. That's in the lunch-room where I was teaching. (56)

While the teachers may have had problems among themselves, it did not seem to reach their pupils. Before 1917 there were few Jewish teachers in the school system, and thus few of the respondents encountered teachers of their own religious background in the classroom. Few recall ever having had a Jewish teacher in elementary or secondary school. All their teachers were "Americans." Given the central role of the classroom teacher in scholastic instruction and as American role model, this was a critical perception, one which the system had wished to portray.

To verify the recollections of informants, I examined the register of teachers for each of the elementary and secondary schools they had attended, using a school's list for the year in which a respondent had entered. Employing two judges, working independently, teachers were identified as Jewish by analysis of first and last names, and by place

of residence. A conservative count was taken, possibly excluding some teachers whose names may have been German and who lived in areas of "mixed" ethnic residence. Also missed were those who anglicized their family names and who lived outside of traditional Jewish neighborhoods.

As can be seen in Table I, just under 15% of the teachers in the schools of the Lower East Side, the original area of Jewish settlement, were identified as Jewish.

Many Jews moved to Harlem in upper Manhattan after 1900 and respondents who attended the schools in this neighborhood would have found that about 12% of the teachers were Jewish. Elsewhere, there were hardly any Jewish teachers to be found. There were none in P.S. 6 or 78, serving, at that time, upper-income neighborhoods which were largely Protestant. And there were less than 3% in the Brownsville and Williamsburg schools attended by respondents, schools which had overwhelmingly Jewish student populations. There were even fewer Jewish teachers in schools serving other areas of Brooklyn. At the high school level (Table II) there were few or no teachers of Jewish background.

In general, the recollections of informants were verified by the official record. Those who attended schools on the Lower East Side and Harlem, however, should have known of Jewish teachers even if they were not placed in

Table I

Elementary Schools Attended by Informants, with Location, Year Occupied, Size of Staff, No. of Jewish Staff and Proportion of Staff Jewish (for year informant entered a school)

School	Year Occupied	Year Informant Entered	Number Teachers	Number Jewish Teachers	% Teachers Jewish
A. Lower East Side					
P.S. 147	1898	1902	53	8	15.1%
147	1898	1907	70	13	18.6
1	1898	1902	75	4	5.3
2	1887	1903	66	12	18.2
4	n.d.	1904	50	10	20.0
34	1870	1902	60	7	11.7
62	1905	1906	93	12	12.9
71	1880	1910	41	2	4.9
161	1897	1913	35	6	17.1
64	1906	1914	69	16	23.2
(Subtotals)			612	90	14.7
B. Harlem					
103	1896	1911	54	9	16.7
171	1901	1912	65	8	12.3
170	1901	1908	33	3	9.1
184	1902	1912	70	9	12.9
24	1905	1914	28	1	3.6
(Subtotals)			250	30	12.0
C. Other Manhattan & The Bronx					
78	1884	1902	40	-	0.0
6 (Girls)	1894	1904	23	-	0.0
10 Bx	1891	1906	53	3	5.7
(Subtotals)			116	3	2.6
D. Brooklyn-Brownsville & Williamsburg					
150	1908	1910	53	2	3.8
84	1892	1914	55	2	3.6
19	1878	1915	78	1	1.3
(Subtotals)			186	5	2.7
E. Other Brooklyn					
129	1903	1908	37	1	2.7
103	1894	1913	38	1	2.6
162	1909	1914	41	-	0.0
164	1910	1914	62	2	3.2
94	1908	1915	64	1	1.6
(Subtotals)			242	5	2.1
TOTALS			1,406	133	9.5%

Source: Directory of Teachers in the Public Schools Board of Education of the City of New York, 1902-1914.

Table II

High Schools Attended by Informants, with Location, Male/Female/Mixed Register, Size of Teaching Staff, No. of Jewish Staff and Proportion of Staff Jewish (for year informant entered a school)

School	M/F	Boro	Year Informant Entered	# Teachers	# Jewish Teachers	% Teachers Jewish
DeWitt Clinton	M	Man.	1904	94	8	8.5%
DeWitt Clinton	M	Man.	1914	133	10	7.5
Wadleigh	F	Man.	1902	100	1	1.0
Boys	M	Bklyn.	1910	68	3	4.4
Girls	F	Bklyn.	1914	122	-	0.0
Eastern District	M&F	Bklyn.	1904	65	-	0.0
Morris	M&F	Bx.	1909	99	5	5.1

Note: No data was available for Hunter High School (1902, 1909), Townsend Harris Hall (1920) or Manual H.S. (Bklyn.) (1917).

Source: Directory of Teachers in the Public Schools Board of Education of the City of New York, 1902-1914.

their classes. It would appear that students who saw teachers who spoke, dressed and behaved in the American style, considered them to be "Americans." One didn't wear one's religion on one's sleeve in those days and Jewish teachers never used Yiddish (as attested to by Jewish teachers in the group). Rather than being perceived as ethnic role models, Jewish teachers also served as the very models of Americanhood.

Other Educational Settings

As important as the public schools were in shaping an American persona for immigrant Jewish children, they did not hold a monopoly on instruction. The immigrant child's knowledge was accumulated over time in a variety of settings. Heading the list of sources of learning were books and the library. Every informant spoke lovingly of books and the library, and several recounted strategies they employed to up the 2-book library quota per visit. One informant was known as "Finish the Chapter" Bertha. Another explored surrounding neighborhoods for new branch libraries. Yet another recalls the first book (by name and author) he "took" out of the public library, only to be chased and caught by the librarian who showed him how books were "checked out," not just "taken." There were book-buying expeditions to Third Avenue:

> There must have been 20 bookshops, where you got second hand books and where you got wild west books, two for a nickle, Diamond Jim Brady books, 2 for 5¢; Horatio

> Alger, Nick Carter, all of that--for 2¢ or 3¢. (57)

Girls read Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm and Little Women. "Little Women I loved. In fact I was crazy about it. I think I got my first romantic twinge when I read [it]." (58) Reading was recounted as pleasure, recreation and learning all rolled into one.

For a number of respondents, settlement houses figured prominently in their lives. For one it was a source of learning English and to receive social polish.

> The Henry Street Settlement had people who came, who had graduated from the Ivy League colleges and they would come down to get their "slum training," social work, so to speak. Herbert Lehman [later Governor of N.Y.] used to come down, I remember. He would talk to us in good good English and they would correct us if we spoke poorly.

The same informant recalls visits from Teddy Roosevelt and Ramsey McDonald. Lillian Wald, founder and head of Henry Street, had important friends whom she obviously pressed into service. (59)

Another respondent felt that

> The gentile community in New York City at that time, the higher strata, was very interested in the immigrant children, and they had these settlement houses. [referring to a small settlement on Jefferson Street on the Lower East Side] They gave talks and lectures. And they had small libraries and small classes in English and American history. They really Americanized the people..., the Jews on the Lower East Side. (60)

The major Jewish-sponsored settlement agency, the Educational Alliance, had been visited by some of the respondents.

But not all were enamored with the social service agencies. As an active socialist put it, "they were to the right of where we stood...They didn't seem to espouse the kind of things that fired my imagination." (61) For the several respondents who were active in socialist politics, it was the street corner speaker, the party lectures, the Land School, the work in election campaigns, that served as training-grounds and social center. They provided many of the same services offered by the settlements, including evening English language courses to workers.

Evening education of every stripe was also a central feature of the educational experiences of nearly all informants. From evening classes in English offered by the public schools, settlements, political parties, proprietary schools and by private tutors, to evening high schools and trade schools. The day school had not yet locked up a monopoly on formal instruction. The evening schools provided an alternative route to educational and occupational advancement at every level from elementary through professional school. Leaving day school for work at age 14 did not foreclose education as a means of advancement. Tens of thousands seized the opportunity of attendance at night school, raising questions as to the interpretation of high dropout rates from the day schools, which so concerned educational reformers of the period.

Every informant, Jew and Gentile, attended some form of religious school. All of the Jewish boys prepared for Bar Mitzvah (the ceremony commemorating passage into manhood at age 13), and several boys and girls continued Jewish studies through the high school years.

The final source of learning we will mention was perhaps the most critical--one's immediate neighborhood. Most respondents lived in "homogeneous" neighborhoods--and most children confined their explorations to "the Block" where one played and went to school with kids who generally shared the same religion, language and family background as you did. Schools were, for many, the only window on the world outside the Jewish ghetto. It usually wasn't until high school that children travelled out of their immediate community. And the shock and sense of awkwardness could be devastating. One informant was given a project to complete over Christmas vacation, his first year in high school.

> We were all expected to go down to St. Patrick's Cathedral and identify the flying buttresses, because when you study medieval history you study...architecture--you study everything except what they did to the Jews during the Crusades, and nothing about Jewish medieval history...So I go from [the Lower East Side] to St. Patrick's Cathedral. I'd never been on Fifth Avenue in that area. And I go in, I'm scared. I didn't know what to do, whether I should put my hat on or off, terribly awesome. I looked around trying to find the flying buttresses and they turn out to be outside the Cathedral. This was an awesome experience. (62)

Uptown and downtown were different and distinct worlds. And while geography is not quite destiny, each neighborhood pressed its daily lesson upon its children. The instruction of the schools could not help but be affected by place.

Shared Goals

What did the immigrant students want out of their education, and how did this compare with the goals of the Board of Education? All respondents would be in agreement with the Board's first goal, noted at the outset of this paper, basic scholastic preparation, especially literacy in English. As we have seen, this was keenly desired by the immigrant students of the period, whose love of books continued throughout their lives.

The second goal, acculturation, was also shared by immigrant children and the Board. Typical was the response, "I think my parents were very anxious, even though they were very Jewish, to Americanize me." (63) They were all anxious to participate in American life, though the desire to maintain ties with their Jewish past varied considerably.

The third Board goal, using the schools to facilitate and rationalize socio-economic stratification, was not shared with the students. The immigrant students saw the schools as openings out of their confined communities and as a means to achieve higher status and greater material

rewards. One respondent was placed in a pre-vocational course for the 7th and 8th grades. Having just transferred to the school with a straight "A" record in addition to being skipped several semesters, she felt she had been poorly counseled. She believed she had been steered into the program to improve its academic record. She went on to high school, but still feels the injustice of trying to side-track her into a vocational course. (64)

Another informant recalls the "Gary Plan." "It was something you were afraid of - it was bad - it was something you were scared with by the teachers." This same student, child of a working class father who was an active unionist and an ideological anarchist, was not expected to follow in his father's footsteps. "[My Parents] turned me over to the school for the school to make me an American and to get out of the working class." (65)

Students and their parents saw school as the way out. If one didn't want to go into the sweat shops or small commercial establishments, if one wanted the status of a "white-collar" occupation, school-teaching was one of the few options available, especially for women. Jewish girls faced discrimination at the large insurance companies and the Telephone Company. One respondent recalls that at the time it was believed "that the phone company was part of the Catholic Church." (66) For boys, it was understood that

most banks and insurance companies were closed to Jews as were the larger newly emerging business corporations. Thus, the "free professions" became the classic options. As one informant put it, "You know, they kicked us upstairs. Why do we have so many doctors and lawyers?... It was a complete drive to pull yourself up out of the mire and it had to be without money." (67)

Schools had to be used to overcome real or perceived barriers caused by discrimination in the job market. Any attempts to impose additional obstacles to participation in the educational system, to sidetrack a student onto a vocational track from which no viable future could be perceived, had to be opposed. The propensity of Jews to fully utilize the educational opportunities open to them resulted in mixed reactions. They were praised for their studiousness and talent for learning, but criticized for their pushiness. This somewhat schizophrenic attitude toward Jewish students was reported time and again in interviews and found its way into much of the scholarly literature of the period.

> They learn English with amazing rapidity, throng the public schools and colleges, and push with characteristic zeal and persistence into every open door of this liberal land. (68)

The public school system was just emerging in this period as an integrated system running from elementary to

college and professional school. Jews, as a group, were among the first to realize its potential as a ladder of rapid upward mobility, a means of leaping over age-old barriers of class and economic protectionism. The Board policy of stratification seemed intent on crystallizing the order of things as they then existed. The objective of the students was to use the schools to overthrow (in a peaceful way and by legitimate means) things as they were. The Jewish immigrant students also wanted the status and rewards of Middle-Class American life. Most wanted to participate in a free-enterprise economy. Perhaps the political elites misread the political agitation of the socialist and labor organizers on the immigrant left. They didn't have to worry about controlling the working classes, the agitation from below. The socialists and union activists were, in fact, their allies. Both sides were seeking to spring the children of immigrants out of the working and into the middle class. Or, as one informant put it, "They all got an education in those days, there was no other way for a Jew: either a grocery store, a pack or an education." (69)

There was one additional educational goal held by many immigrant children and generally ignored by the Board of Education--schools as a means for young women to escape

oppressive manual labor or confinement in a family business. This led one informant, who, at 92, was enfeebled and had limited concentration and recall, to remember that her father

> was a very learned man, and he believed that the man counts, the woman doesn't, and I was more or less of a revolutionary. The woman has to count. (70)

She and others like her, with academic talent, used the schools to climb out of a position of subservience and into a position of relative responsibility and esteem--as a school teacher. At 92 she felt it had been worth it all. She had counted.

V. Conclusions and Speculations

In a very real sense the presence of large numbers of immigrant Jews in the public schools of New York, their desire to learn American ways and accommodate themselves to American culture, and their use of the schools as a means to achieve economic and social mobility, forced educational leaders and policy-makers to confront their own traditional American values, the American creed, if you will. These Jewish students forced the gentile leadership of the schools to test their belief in the American verities of equality of opportunity, freedom of speech, and separation of church and state. The public schools were forced to empirically define the boundries of each right or

"freedom": how were religion and religious celebrations to be handled in the schools; does "freedom of speech" give public school teachers the right to express unpopular positions in public forums; at what point does the right to avail oneself of an available opportunity shade from ambition into aggressiveness, from desire to better oneself to forgetting one's proper place? Does America wish to keep class division informal, "fuzzy" and highly fluid, or, --bowing in the direction of arguments regarding rational allocation of resources, efficiency and scientific assessment of achievement potential, and more effective production of needed trained manpower,-- clarify and crystalize classes in American society, and slow the rate of inter-class mobility between generations?

The very presence of "others" forced answers, although at any given time the specific responses varied greatly. Even in 1984 we have not yet found answers satisfactory to all participants in the ongoing encounter of majority and minorities in the public schools. But the presence of minorities who have pressed for the right to full and equitable participation helps to keep the majority "honest," helps to keep the "creed" alive.

With the exception of soci-economic stratification, the public schools were enormously successful in achieving their goals of scholastic preparation and acculturation.

The efforts to culturally and socially transform immigrant children into mainstream Americans had impact well beyond the confines of the school and beyond that point in time. Implicit in the transformational goal was an effort to separate the religion of the immigrant from the culture in which the religion was embedded. Not surprisingly, school leaders perceived of religion in Protestant American terms. This was not part of a conscious WASP conspiracy to deny Jews their birthright. In fact, when there were overt attempts to "convert" the Jews, there was usually a strong counter-response and the efforts failed. The fact that it was "unconscious," that the WASP school leadership was unaware of what they were doing, made it all the more successful. Changes were not imposed with venom, but with paternalistic solicitude.

Public schools were to be non-sectarian, and Jews could join the line of denominations as Irish and then Italian and other Catholics had been invited to do. The basic ground rules, however, were to be Protestant--St. James Bible, readings without commentary, prohibition against sectarian interpretation of religious or secular issues, no doctrinal instruction, etc. That a pan-Protestantism was <u>the</u> legitimate and proper backdrop for public education was not questioned by the leaders of public

education in New York City at the end of the 19th Century. It was questioned by Irish Catholics and was in large part responsible for their founding their own system of schools.

Schools, while non-sectarian, were not to be irreligious. New York's schools were to open each day with scriptural readings, and Christian holidays were to be honored in the schools by "secularized" celebrations. (71) Far more significant from the child's point of view, however, was the closing of the schools for Christmas and Easter, but not on the major Jewish holidays. While there were attempts to petition the Board to close schools on the Jewish High Holy days, arguments regarding the separation of church and state were marshalled to deny these requests. (72) I have found no record of petitions against the observance of Christian holidays. Jewish immigrants took for granted, as did school leaders, that America was a Christian nation, and as such had a right to observe its holy days. European Jews, after all, were accustomed to such a minority status.

School leaders did not understand nor could they accept that adherence to a religion might involve rituals, behaviors, calendars, modes of dress, eating practices, etc., contrary to established conventions. No hats in class meant no hats, call them "yamulkas" or bowlers. The Jewish boy who had learned to cover his head as a sign of respect to

God, now learned to bare his head as a sign of proper manners in an American school. The fact that the hat came off, spoke volumes.

School leaders, like most Americans, believed that religion was abstractable from culture. They did not see that American perceptions of religion--largely confining religious observances to a sabbath service, acceptance of schisms and rampant denominationalism, of proselytizing, of official favors and recognition of Protestant beliefs and practices--were imbedded in Protestant American culture.

The desire to divorce Judaism as a religion from Judaism as a culture, and to destroy the concept of Jews as a "nation" was strongly embraced by most Reform Jews of the period, largely represented by the established German-Jewish community. (73) They argued that an archaic, ritually encrusted traditionalism was an anachronism in an enlightened, post-emancipation world. Jews were now in the position to escape their millennial caste status as a nation apart, and become participating citizens in the nation states in which they lived. And in America one ought to become an American of the Jewish faith. This was to be an English speaking Judaism with synagogue practices reflecting high levels of decorum and structure, as encountered in contemporary liberal Protestant sects. The nation of Israel was to be disolved. "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community,"

they argued. (74) Thus, it became the goal of Reform Jews to assist their orthodox co-religionists to dissolve themselves into the secular American state, or as the motto of the Educational Alliance put it, "to dissolve the ghetto."

The German-Jewish leadership thus aligned themselves with New York's educational leaders to promote the rapid assimilation of Jewish immigrants, and to separate the religion of the immigrant from his imported culture. (75) The tacit objective was to radically alter the immigrants' conceptions of religion to make them consonent with American practice. They wished to limit the sphere of influence of religion in the daily life of Jews, to confine religion to moral and ethical teaching, to spiritual uplift and to consolation in times of emotional stress. Secular learning and American cultural practices could then help to shape the life of the American Jew.

East European Jews were expected to shed the all-pervasive nature of orthodox Judaism as it had been traditionally practiced where religion influenced all realms of life: dress, occupations, social relations, eating, legal relations, language, interaction with the gentile world and education. To a considerable extent, the combined forces of German-Jewish social agencies, the public schools and the relative freedom to participate in American life,

did serve to radically transform Jewish immigrants. Divorced from their cultural roots, many drifted away from the religion of their fathers. Others were able to implant themselves in American soil, achieving their own forms of accomodation between religion and the secular state.

Footnotes

1. Mary F. See Appendix A for a list of informants, including biographical and interview data concerning each. To guarantee confidentiality, last names of informants have been omitted.

2. For estimates of Jewish children in the public schools, see The Jewish Communal Register of New York City, 1917-1918. Kehillah of N.Y.C., 1918, pp. 349-359. For estimates of Jewish population see Horowitz, Morris C. & Lawrence J. Kaplan. The Jewish Population of the New York Area, 1900-1975. N.Y.: Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, 1959, p. 3.

3. Lazerson, Marvin. Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1971. See also, Cremin, Lawrence A. The Transformation of the School. New York: Vintage, 1964, Chapter 2.

4. "Education of the Immigrant Child," in Education of the Immigrant. Abstracts of Papers Read at a Public Conference under the Auspices of the New York-New Jersey Committee of the North American Civic League for Immigrants, held at New York City, May 16, and 17, 1913. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 51, 1913, pp. 19-20.

5. See my "Teaching America: East European Jewish Immigrants and the Public School Curriculum in Turn-of-the-century New York City," ERIC # ED 230 646. To be published in the publication series of the American Jewish Archives (in press). See also my "Shaping an American Curriculum," Integrateducation, April, 1984.

6. "School Achievements in New York," Education Review, Vol. 44, Oct., 1912, p. 288f.

7. Journal, Board of Education of the City of New York /hereinafter referred to as Journal/, Feb. 3, 1913, Associate Superintendent Meleney, p. 233.

8. Journal, June 25, 1913, p. 1200; Journal, Feb. 3, 1913, p. 233.

9. Journal, June 25, 1913, p. 1192.

10. Journal, June 25, 1913, pp. 1188-1202.

11. Ravitch, Diane. The Great School Wars; New York City, 1805-1973. New York: Basic Books, 1974, Chapts. 17-21.

12. Ida R. and Max W.

13. Morris S.

14. Mary H.

15. Journal, Jan. 28, 1914, pp. 276-277. "Course of Study for the Elementary Schools of the City of New York," Board of Education of the City of New York, May 27, 1903; The Committee of Eight, American Historical Association /James Alton James, Chair./ The Study of History in the Elementary Schools, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

16. "Course of Study & Syllabus in History for the Elementary Schools of the City of New York," Board of Education of the City of New York, 1914, p. 3.

17. Harry L.

18. Morris S.

19. Abraham L.

20. Morris S.

21. "Course of Study in Civics as adopted by the Board of Education, May 27, 1914, with a Syllabus Adopted by the Board of Superintendents, June 4, 1914," Board of Education of the City of New York, 1914, p. 3.

22. Mary F.

23. The Courier (New Series, Vol. 2, No. 2), June, 1914, p. 14. This was the school magazine published semi-annually by P.S. 147 Manhattan. School publications of the period provide excellent materials regarding school life and practices.

24. "Syllabus on Manners and Conduct of Life," Board of Education of the City of New York, May, 1917, p. 5.

25. Ibid., p. 5f.

26. Abraham L.

27. "School Gardens for Public Schools of New York City," /an elaboration of the syllabus on Nature Study/ Board of Education of the City of New York, April, 1917.

28. "Course of Study in Home Economics and Sewing, with a Syllabus," Board of Education of the City of New York, 1915, p. 3.

29. Alma S. The apartment was created at P.S. 162 Brooklyn, in the Bushwick section of the borough.

30. Rose K. Translation from the Yiddish by the author.

31. Harry L.

32. Journal, June 24, 1914, p. 1465.

33. Abraham L.

34. Loraine S.

35. Mary H.

36. Loraine S.

37. The problem of recording "foreign" names became widespread and the City Superintendent issued procedural guidelines. See Committee on School Records and Statistics, Teachers' Council, Digest of Matters of Current Value from Circulars Issued by the City Superintendent of Schools, 1902-1915. New York: Department of Education, Dec., 1915, p. 39.

38. Mary F.

39. Rose K.

40. Horton, Edith. A Group of Famous Women, Stories of their Lives. Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1914, p. viii.

41. Abraham L.

42. Harry L., speaking of DeWitt Clinton H.S., entering class of 1915.

43. Morris S.

44. Morris S.

45. Mina W.

46. Sarah Z.

47. Morris S.

48. In several instances it was possible to check recollections against saved report cards, diplomas (with course grades recorded) and permanent record cards. In nearly all instance the recall was remarkably accurate.

49. Morris S.

50. Rose K.

51. Morris S.

52. Morris S.

53. Harry L.

54. See, for example, "English Accent," a syllabus designed to correct the oral English of immigrant students. Board of Education of the City of New York, 1917.

55. Max G.

56. Bertha B.

57. Morris S.

58. Mary F.

59. Harry L.

60. Samuel B.

61. Ida R.

62. Morris S.

63. Mary F.

64. Rose K.

65. Morris S.

66. Bertha B.

67. Ida R.

68. Orth, Samuel P. Our Foreigners: A Chronicle of Americans in the Making. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1920, p. 180.

69. Ida P A pack refers to a peddler's pack, a grocery store to a shoe-string commercial enterprise which produced little more than many hours of work.

70. Sarah Z.

71. See, for example, the Board of Education regulations covering the school celebration of Christmas, Journal, Jan. 9, 1907, pp. 75-77.

72. See, for example, Journal, Jan. 2, 1906, p. 5; Jan. 9, and Jan. 16, 1906, concerning Jewish teachers' absences during the High Holy Days.

73. See my "Teaching America," op. cit.

74. The "Pittsburg Platform" of the Reform movement, 1885, in Dorff, Elliot. Conservative Judaism: Our Ancestors to Our Descendants. N.Y.: United Synagogue of America, 1977, p. 16.

75. See my "Teaching America,"; see also Berrol, Selma, "In Their Image: German Jews and the Americanization of the Ost Juden in New York City," New York History, Vol. LXIII, No. 4, Oct. 1982, pp. 417-433; Rischin, Moses, The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1962.

Appendix A

Informants

	Name	Place & Year of Birth	Occupation	Date(s) Inter.
1.	Max G.	N.Y.C., 1891	teacher/prin./super.	4/19/82
2.	Samuel B.	Russia, 1896(?)	businessman	5/5/82
3.	Sarah Z.	Russia, 1890	teacher	7/27/82
4.	Ida R.	Russia, 1887	teacher/asst. prin.	7/28/82
5.	Sarah L.	Austro-Hung, 1897	housewife	6/18/82
6.	Mina W.	N.Y.C., 1895	teacher/union offic.	8/5/82
7.	Nathan M.	Russia, 1899	real estate broker	8/10/82
8.	Hannah M.	Russia, 1890(?)	housewife	8/10/82
9.	Mary H.	N.Y.C., 1902	teacher	8/25/82
10.	Samuel B.	Conn., 1892	accountant	10/27/82
11.	Bertha B.	Russia, 1894	teacher	10/27/82
12.	Abraham L.	N.Y.C., 1907	teacher/principal	5/11 & 6/6/83
13.	Peter G.	N.Y.C., 1889	dentist	6/13/83
14.	Charles C.	L.I., N.Y.,1907	teacher	7/29/83
15.	Loraine S.	N.Y.C., 1898	musician	8/2/83
16.	Harry L.	N.Y.C., 1901	doctor	10/18, 10/25/8
17.	Rose K.	Russia, 1906	school sec./lawyer	10/23/83
18.	Mary F.	Russia, 1904	teacher	10/28/83
19.	Morris S.	Russia, 1907	teacher, editor	11/14/83
20.	Alma S.	N.Y.C., 1906	secretary	11/21/83

Appendix B

Summary Tables of Informant Characteristics

1. Gender of Informants

Male	Female	Total
9	11	20

2. Educational Attainment of Informants

	Elem.	Some H.S.	H.S.	Secondary Trade	Some College	Teacher T & College	T
Male	-	1	-	1	1	6	9
Female	1	1	-	1	1	7	11
TOTALS	1	2	-	2	2	13	20

3. Birth Years of Informants

	Pre 1890	1890-94	95-99	1900-04	05-09	Total
Male	2	2	1	1	3	9
Female	1	2	4	2	2	11
TOTALS	3	4	5	3	5	20

4. Place of Birth of Informants

	Europe	U.S.	Totals
Male	3	6	9
Female	7	4	11
TOTALS	10	10	20

5. Religion of Informants

	Jewish	Christian	Totals
Male	8	1	9
Female	8	3	11
TOTALS	16	4	20

6. Attendance at Day/Evening School of Informants

	Day Only*	Day & Eve.	Eve. Only**	Totals
Male	5	3	1	9
Female	7	2	2	11
Totals	12	5	3	20

*Includes those who took evening courses for advanced degrees, but attended day classes through the Bachelor's Degree.

** Includes informants who had attended day schools in Europe.

7. Occupation of Informants

	Educator	Med./Dent.	Other Prof.	Bus.	Homemaker	Other	Total
Male	3	2	2	2			9
Female	6			1	2	2	11
Total	9	2	2	3	2	2	20