

1989

Horace Mann: A comparison of a traditional and a revisionist biography

George C. Whiting
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biography**

Whiting, George C., Ed.D.

The College of William and Mary, 1989

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HORACE MANN: A COMPARISON OF A
TRADITIONAL AND A REVISIONIST BIOGRAPHY

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

George C. Whiting

May 1989

HORACE MANN: A COMPARISON OF A
TRADITIONAL AND A REVISIONIST BIOGRAPHY

by

George C. Whiting

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DEDICATION

Writing this dissertation would have been impossible without the encouragement and help of:

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Nature and the Significance of the Problem

Assuming that "history" is an individual's perception of both the past and the relationship of the past to the present, people's perceptions of history will affect their perceptions of the present (Neustadt & May ix-xii). For example, some New York City school integration advocates in the 1960's seem to have had a "traditional" perception of educational history. They argued that access to schools had enabled the children of European immigrants to gain access to opportunity; therefore, giving blacks access to schools would give them access to opportunity (Ravitch 1974, 240-243). Others, however, seem to have had a "revisionist" perception of educational history. They argued that conducive social and economic conditions, not access to schools, had enabled the children of European immigrants to gain access to opportunity; therefore, giving blacks or anyone else access to schools in the absence of conducive social and economic circumstances would not give them access to opportunity (Ravitch 1974, 243-244).

People with different perceptions of history make different assumptions about historical cause-effect relationships. And different perceptions

of history may impede communication. If each perception is sufficiently accurate so that those who hold each perception can find enough objectively verifiable evidence to sustain their faith but if each is also sufficiently dependent on inferences drawn from those facts to be considered a matter of opinion, those who hold different perceptions of history may lack the common frame of reference upon which communication depends. An example of this phenomenon is the reaction to the National Commission for Excellence in Education argument in A Nation at Risk. Authors like Chester Finn and Diane Ravitch accept the NCEE argument while authors like Lawrence C. Stedman and Marshall S. Smith do not accept it (Gross & Gross 74-105, 199-209). Thus, while people with different perceptions of history may agree on the facts of a case, they may disagree about which facts are important and how those facts should be interpreted. Assuming the integrity, intelligence, and expertise of those who accept the traditional and the revisionist perceptions, one reason for these conflicting perceptions may be the historiographical assumptions the traditional and the revisionist authors make. Ravitch defines the traditional genre as consisting of those authors who concur with Ellwood P. Cubberley's explanation of school history, and she defines the

revisionist genre as consisting of those authors who both dissent from Cubberley and concur with the "democratic-liberal tradition" (Ravitch 1978, 25-37).

The democratic-liberal tradition in education has been bound up with the spirit of reform, a sense that education could be consciously arranged to make American society more open, more just, and more democratic.

(Ravitch 1978, 8-7)

One of the more significant conflicts of opinion between the traditional and the revisionist authors concerns the extent to which and the means by which individuals can affect the course of history (Carr 61-64). This conflict is apparent in Burke A. Hinsdale's Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States (1900) and Jonathan Messerli's Horace Mann: A Biography (1972). The Hinsdale biography is traditional (Cremin 26). Hinsdale creates the impression that Mann was a successful reform advocate because he advocated reforms that were the best means of achieving desirable ends, and he was the personification of traditional New England values. The Messerli biography is revisionist (Clifford in Best 64). Messerli, by contrast, creates the impression that Mann's success as a reform advocate depended on conducive social, political, and economic

circumstances as much as it depended on his character.

Although the question of whether the traditional or the revisionist perception of history provides the better definition of relevance and historical cause-effect relationships is important, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Indeed, this question may be empirically unanswerable. Nonetheless, to the extent that one work may be representative of a genre, comparing the Hinsdale and the Messerli evaluations of Mann's career may provide clues to which genre provides the more logical selection and interpretation of evidence.

The Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The historical context within which schools have evolved is important because, as David B. Tyack argues, the present can not be properly understood without understanding how the present evolved from the past:

If it is wise to be suspicious of historical prescriptions, it is foolish to ignore the storehouse of experience ... Few of the current panaceas for reform are new ... and contemporary power struggles in urban education are often new forms of past conflicts.

(Tyack 8)

The traditional and the revisionist genres are alternative responses to the problems of determining what happened in the past and the relationship between what happened in the past and the present. While each set of historiographical assumptions makes sense within its parent frame of reference, neither set of historiographical assumptions provides a "neutral" means of determining which genre provides the more logical selection and interpretation of evidence.

This problem of conflicting historiographical assumptions is complicated by the absence of a generally accepted canon of rules of evidence (Fischer ix). However, although David H. Fischer argues that "historical thought" has a "tacit logic" that can be determined, he fails to provide such a description (Fischer xv-xii). Nonetheless, the rules of evidence that Fischer proposes provide a means of analyzing the logic of a historian's use of evidence to support an argument.

Fischer argues that the process of historical writing consists of inquiry, explanation, and argument. Although Fischer attempts to provide some positive generalizations about inquiry, explanation, and argument, these generalizations are too vague for use as critical tests. Fischer's 116 fallacies, however, may be used as such tests. Accordingly,

if the significant generalizations that an author makes can not be inferred from the evidence that the author introduces without violating Fischer's rules, then to the extent of the generalizations thereby invalidated, the author's argument may be considered defective.

While Fischer's rules may serve as a basis for determining whether an author has furnished adequate evidence in support of the generalizations, Fischer's rules do not enable a determination of whether those generalizations are significant. For this purpose, the concept developed by Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May in Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision-Makers (1986) may be used.

Neustadt and May define "history" as "any happenings of record, down to and including today's headlines" (Neustadt & May xii). And they argue that the purpose of studying history is "to use experience, whether remote or recent, in the process of deciding what to do today about the prospect for tomorrow" (xvii).

Neustadt and May recommend using history to frame more precise questions, form a more precise perception of the present, clarify present concerns, and find clues to future possibilities (32, 91-92). To achieve these ends, Neustadt and May recommend

concentrating on three variables: individuals, institutions, and issues (Neustadt & May 156).

Therefore, a biography should not only provide a hypothesis about its subject's frame of reference, but it should also provide a hypothesis about what its subject attempted to do, how and with whom its subject worked, and the results thereby attained.

Research Questions and Methodology

The question of the extent to which an individual can control events is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Nonetheless, Mann's career as a reform advocate may be used as a case study of the limitations of the role of a reform advocate in influencing public policy. And the Hinsdale and Messerli biographies of Mann may be used as examples of conflicting explanations of Mann's career.

For the purpose of analysis, Mann's career may be divided into the years before and after he was elected to congress in 1849. Before 1849, Mann was an influential state legislator. He played a central role in establishing a state mental hospital. He was involved in temperance work and proposed temperance legislation that was enacted. And he played a central role in reforming Massachusetts schools. After 1849, Mann served as a member of congress, participated in the anti-slavery movement, ran unsuccessfully

for governor of Massachusetts, and was the first president of Antioch College. Mann was never an influential congressman, and Mann was a coalition candidate for congress who lost his seat when his coalition dissolved. Immediately after being defeated in the gubernatorial election, Mann became involved with the group that founded Antioch, which was a private institution. Therefore, the most significant part of Mann's career as a reform advocate was the part before 1849. Accordingly, the Hinsdale and the Messerli explanations of Mann's career before 1849 may be used as a basis for comparing their explanations of his career.

Thus, the research questions are:

1. Assuming a traditional and a revisionist genre of educational history, how should each genre be defined?

Although this is a contextual question, it is important because how the genres are defined establishes a basis for their comparison. Since this question has been discussed extensively, the answer to it may be drawn from secondary sources.

Edward H. Carr, a Cambridge University historian who gave a series of lectures on the definition of history, discussed the distinctions between the traditional and the revisionist genres of

historiography. Therefore, the printed version of his lectures may serve as the source of the criteria by which to distinguish between the traditional and the revisionist genres. Carr, however, is not an educational historian; accordingly, his definitions need to be supplemented. Since both Bernard Bailyn and Lawrence A. Cremin have provided working definitions of the traditional and the revisionist genres of educational historiography, their definitions may be used to supplement Carr's.

2. Assuming definitions of the traditional and the revisionist genres of educational historiography, to what extent is Hinsdale traditional and Messerli revisionist?

This is also a contextual question. However, it is important because, although Cremin categorizes Hinsdale as traditional and Clifford categorizes Messerli as revisionist, neither Cremin nor Clifford describes the degree to which the Hinsdale and the Messerli biographies are characteristic of the traditional and the revisionist genres. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the extent to which Hinsdale is traditional and Messerli revisionist.

This determination may be made by summarizing each author's account of Mann's career before 1849 and comparing each author's use of argument and evidence

with the criteria that define each genre.

3. Which biography provides the more logical use of relevant evidence to explain Mann's frame of reference, how Mann attempted to achieve his ends, and the results Mann achieved?

In answering this question, Fischer's rules of evidence may be used as critical tests of the logic of the inferences each author makes from the evidence he introduces. Likewise, Neustadt and May's concept of focusing on individuals, institutions, and issues may be used to determine the relevance and comprehensiveness of each author's explanation of Mann's career as a reform advocate.

4. What inferences about the relative merits of the traditional and the revisionist genres may be drawn from the answer to question three?

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 1

This chapter contains a description of the nature and significance of the problem, the theoretical/conceptual framework within which the problem is considered, the research questions this dissertation will attempt to answer and a discussion of the means by which these questions may be answered, and an outline of the chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter 2

This chapter contains a discussion of the definitions of the traditional and the revisionist genres. Carr (1962) will be used to define the traditional and the revisionist genres generally, while Bailyn (1960) and Cremin (1965) will be used to further define the traditional and the revisionist genres of educational historiography. And this chapter will conclude with a discussion of the cardinal characteristics of each genre that will be used in Chapter 3 to determine the extent to which Hinsdale and Messerli are consistent with their respective genres.

Chapter 3

This chapter contains a discussion of the extent to which Hinsdale and Messerli are consistent with the criteria developed in Chapter 2 to define their respective genres.

Chapter 4

This chapter contains a discussion of the similarities and differences between the Hinsdale and the Messerli explanations of Mann's career before 1849.

Chapter 5

This chapter contains a discussion of the relative merits of the two biographies in an attempt to determine which biography provides the more logical

use of relevant evidence to explain Mann's frame of reference, the means Mann used to attempt to achieve his ends, and the degree to which he was successful.

Chapter 6

This chapter contains inferences drawn from the conclusions reached in Chapter 5 about the relative merits of the traditional and the revisionist genres of historiography.

CHAPTER 2: THE TRADITIONAL AND THE REVISIONIST GENRES

The general assumptions about history and the particular assumptions about the history of education that authors make may be used to distinguish traditional from revisionist authors.

General Assumptions About History

While these assumptions may be categorized in many ways, one way to distinguish traditional from revisionist authors is by comparing their assumptions about people and the societies in which they live, assumptions about the nature of history, assumptions about historians, and assumptions about historiography.

Assumptions About People and the Societies in Which They Live

Among the more important assumptions that traditional authors make about people and the societies in which they live are:

@ the universal man assumption, according to which human nature is assumed to be the same in all places and at all times (Carr 23-24).

@ the conscious motivation assumption, according to which people are assumed to act only from conscious and rational motives (Carr 60).

@ the individualism assumption, according to which people are assumed to exist apart from the

societies in which they live and according to which people are neither molded nor limited by the societies in which they live (Carr 36-38).

@ the racial assumption, according to which race is defined as heredity and heredity is believed to be the primary determinant of human potential so that national differences, among other things, may be attributed to racial differences (Carr 38).

Revisionists, however, make different assumptions:

@ the multiple man assumption, according to which human nature varies with time and place (Carr 36-38).

@ the complex motivation assumption, according to which people act from a complex skein of conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational motives (Carr 60-64).

@ the environmental assumption, according to which people are molded and limited by the societies in which they live (Carr 36-38).

For these reasons, the revisionists assume that the traditional assumptions about people and the societies in which they live are unwarranted.

Assumptions About the Nature of History

Traditional authors make:

@ the progress assumption, according to

which history is the record of the inevitable evolution of civilization into a utopia (Carr 52, 146-150).

@ the assumption that progress is the result of individuals acting as individuals (Carr 39-40).

@ the universal law assumption, according to which human behavior is governed by immutable natural laws that can be discovered (Carr 70-73, 114).

By contrast, revisionists make:

@ the accretion of knowledge assumption, according to which the increase of knowledge and the transfer of experience from generation to generation makes people progressively better able to deal with the problems they face (Carr 150).

@ the interaction assumption, according to which people do not exist in isolation and change is the result of a complex process of interaction among individuals within a society (Carr 40).

Assumptions About Historians

Traditionalists assume that historians are unbiased and that the present concerns of historians affect neither their interests nor their perceptions of the past (Carr 6, 53-54). Revisionists assume the reverse (Carr 10-11, 23-24, 28, 42-43).

Assumptions About Historiography

Traditionalists and revisionists make conflicting assumptions about:

@ the purpose of history, which the traditionalists assume is to discover the universal laws governing human conduct so that people may act in accordance with those laws and hasten the advent of utopia (Carr 70-73, 114). Revisionists, however, assume that the purpose of studying the past is to propose tentative explanations of how present issues evolved from the past (Carr 69, 73-74).

@ The role of individuals, which the traditionalists assume is limited to great men who make history by imposing their wills upon events so that the great men are an elite and the rest of society are insignificant (Carr 55, 61, 67). Consequently, historians should focus on the great men of an era to determine what they did and to render a positive or negative moral judgement upon them for either advancing or retarding progress (Carr 41, 55, 97-98). Revisionists, however, assume that both leaders and followers are significant in part because leaders need followers to get results and in part because leadership is defined as the ability to canalize social forces, which can not be explained without considering the masses who make up a society Carr (54-59, 62, 68). Likewise, revisionists assume

that moral questions are irrelevant because morality is situational, and the frames of reference of people in the past are different from the frames of reference of contemporaries (Carr 108-109, 27).

@ facts: Traditionalists assume that history is scientific in that it is the "objective compilation of facts" (Carr 34). Therefore, a historian's task is to contribute to the compilation of a comprehensive corpus of ascertained facts that will, when complete, provide definitive answers to all questions (Carr 6-8, 77). These assumptions, however, depend on the assumptions that all facts are important, that all facts are ascertainable, and that all facts may be found in documents, which may be taken at face value (Carr 14, 11, 14-15).

Revisionists, however, assume that, while a given fact may be objectively ascertainable, deciding which facts are relevant and how facts should be interpreted requires subjective judgement (Carr 8-9, 22).

Likewise, all relevant facts may not be ascertainable either because they were never recorded or because the records have been lost (Carr 12-13). And facts that are relevant within one context may be irrelevant within another. Finally, revisionists assume that the fact that information is a matter of record is not conclusive evidence that the record is accurate

because those recording information may have been ignorant of or mistaken about relevant facts and may have intentionally omitted, distorted, or falsified information (Carr 16-19).

@ cause-effect relationships: While traditionalists believe in precisely defined cause-effect relationships that constitute immutable laws of history, revisionists believe that cause-effect explanations are tentative.

In many ways, the traditional authors have provided a point of departure for the revisionists:

When Bertrand Russell observed that "every advance in science takes us further away from the uniformities which are first observed into a greater differentiation of antecedent and consequent into a continually wider circle of antecedents recognized as relevant," he accurately described the situation in history.

(Carr 118)

Particular Assumptions About the History of Education

Traditional and revisionist assumptions about the history of education are different.

Traditional Assumptions About the History of Education

The traditional perception of the history of

education evolved between 1874 and 1919. In response to an 1874 NEA recommendation, the U.S. Commissioner of Education proposed using the 1876 Centennial to popularize the idea that the American form of government depended on education (Cremin 11). Accordingly, the 1875 commissioner's report contained an outline for a proposed history of American education based on the assumption that, although the particulars of each state's history might be different, each state's course of development was sufficiently similar so that the history of all could be told in the same way (Cremin 12).

Following the outline of 1875, there were three sections in each account (two for states of more recent vintage): one on the precursors of the public school, one on the genesis of the public school, and one on the fruition of the public school.

(Cremin 12)

In 1886, James P. Wickersham published A History of Education in Pennsylvania that conformed to the 1875 format (Cremin 12-13). Wickersham wrote to inspire as well as to inform and argued that education was an all purpose panacea (Cremin 13). In 1874, George H. Martin published The Evolution of the Massachusetts Public School System (Cremin 13). As

with Wickersham, "the leitmotif was the genesis, rise, and triumph of the public school" (Cremin 14). In 1893, the U.S. Commissioner of Education invited Reverend Amory D. Mayo to write a history of common schools (Cremin 15). Although Mayo never completed his history, he described his proposal in an essay published by the U.S. Bureau of Education (Cremin 15-16). Mayo argued that common schools were the greatest American invention, that the American form of government depended on common schools, and that not all foreign practices would improve U.S. schools (Cremin 16). Mayo believed his work was " 'a faithful narrative of the surprising work of God' " (Cremin 16). According to Mayo, the Puritans developed common schools in New England. The Land Ordinance of 1787 was evidence of greater things to come. Crusading reformers like Barnard and Mann rebuilt the common schools. The Civil War was a cataclysm the damage of which was repaired only when the South adopted the New England common school model. All of which proved that the history of education was the history of the common schools, which were the backbone of the American republic (Cremin 17).

The Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis became so popular that:

By 1918, the triumph of the public school

was no longer merely an article of popular or professional faith; it had become a canon of sound historical scholarship.

(Cremin 25-26)

In 1919, Cubberley published Public Education in the United States. While Cubberley may not have been an original thinker, his work became a traditional standard (Cremin 1-2). Cubberley accepted the Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis and his account of the history of public education is an elaboration of it (Cremin 37-41).

Thus, by 1919, the more important traditional assumptions about the history of education were that:

@ The history of education is the history of schools (Cremin 38).

@ The purpose of schools is to socialize students so that they will accept and be able to find a place in the existing socio-economic system (Cremin 38).

@ An ideal school model exists, and the history of education is the record of its discovery by a process of trial and error (Cremin 38-40).

@ The description of the formal structure of schools is an adequate description of schools as institutions (Cremin 50).

@ Although schools exist to solve social

problems, the history of education should be limited to descriptions of the structural changes in schools from which inferences about the desirability and effectiveness of school practices may be made (Cremin 38-40).

@ The Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis is valid.

Revisionist Assumptions About the History of Education

The revisionists perception of the history of education began as a criticism of the traditional perception (Bailyn 3-15). As an alternative, Bailyn proposes expanding the focus of the history of education to include "the entire process by which a culture transmits itself across the generations" (Bailyn 14). Cremin is consistent with Bailyn (Cremin 47). However, Cremin's focus is tighter:

Certainly the question of how the public school came to be would remain central ... but to avoid distortion it must be raised as a part of a much broader inquiry into the nature and uses of education at different times ... What agencies, formal and informal, have shaped American thought, character and sensibility over the years, and what have been the significant relationships between these agencies and

the society that has sanctioned them? To ask the question thus is to project our concerns beyond the schools to a host of other institutions that educate.

(Cremin 48)

In addition to an expanded focus, Cremin advocates drawing on alternative explanatory models and methodologies from other areas of historical inquiry and the social sciences (Cremin 49-50). Nonetheless, the expanded focus is the principal difference between the traditional and the revisionist perceptions of the history of education.

Traditionalists focus on the formal structure of schools while revisionists focus on how people acquire beliefs and other knowledge; traditionalists assume that laws and regulations describe conditions that exist while they are in force, while revisionists look for other evidence; traditionalists "emphasized the growing unity of the teaching profession," while revisionists emphasize its fragmentation; and traditionalists assume that schools have become apolitical, revisionists assume they have not (Cremin 50).

Consequently, according to the revisionists, the colonists left a "homogeneous, slowly changing rural society" in which culture was transmitted from

generation to generation by the mutually reinforcing and complementary experiences provided children by the institutions of family, church, and community and in which schools were state regulated enterprises that provided specialized learning (Bailyn 15-21). However, the pressure of colonial life destroyed the extended family, and the colonists attempted to use schools to fill the void the absence of extended families created (Bailyn 21-29). Closely related to the destruction of the extended family was the change in the nature of the institution of apprenticeship, which evolved from a means of incorporating an apprentice into his master's family to an on-the-job training arrangement (Bailyn 29-36). The role of the church also changed. At first, churches supported missionary efforts to convert the Indians, in part by providing schools for them; however, as the colonists became multi-denomenational, churches began using schools to propagate their particular faiths (Bailyn 36-41). Just as social, economic, and demographic changes enlarged the role of schools in society, the absence of feasible alternatives forced communities to use tax revenues to operate schools, which caused schools to become perpetually dependent on the communities they served and to become hypersensitive to public opinion (Bailyn 39-45). Ironically,

however, the Revolution did not immediately materially affect schools (Bailyn 45-47). By the 19th century, the role of schools had changed dramatically: schools became agencies of social change but, in turn, changed in response to pressures within the communities they served (Bailyn 47-49).

Thus, the more important revisionist assumptions about the history of education are:

@ Education includes all of the means by which people acquire values, information, and skills; consequently, the history of education includes the history of schools and other institutions that affect people's acquisition of values, information, and skills.

@ Social forces determine the roles educational institutions play within a society; consequently, the history of education not only consists of descriptions of educational institutions but also explanations of how these institutions interact with the societies of which they are a part.

@ Educational institutions change as the societies within which they exist change; therefore, adequately explaining how educational institutions change requires reconstructing the past to learn how social change affected educational institutions instead of the present.

@ Educational institutions are complex entities, and explaining them requires an analysis of their formal and informal structures.

@ Since educational institutions are important socializing agencies, they can not escape politics; therefore, the history of education includes the history of school related politics.

Criteria for Distinguishing Traditional From Revisionist Authors

Although traditional and revisionist authors may be distinguished in many ways, the greater differences are in their assumptions about universal law, progress, individualism, morality, the definition of and the purpose for education, and the definition of the history of education.

Assumptions About Universal Law

Traditionalists assume that human nature is immutable; therefore, all people will always act the same way in the same circumstances. Consequently, historians may discover the laws of human behavior just as a physicist may discover the laws of motion. Accordingly, these laws may be used to predict accurately the future consequences of a given act or to explain the cause of a given circumstance in the past. Revisionists, however, assume that human nature is not immutable: therefore, all people will not

always act the same way in the same circumstances. And revisionists assume that, while the circumstances of the past may be analogous to the circumstances of the present, they are not sufficiently identical to support the assumption that the past may be used as a precedent for explaining the present or predicting the future. Instead, revisionists assume that the present has evolved from changes that have occurred in the past; therefore, defining past changes helps to explain how the present has evolved from the past, and thereby helps to define the present more accurately.

Assumptions About Progress

Traditional authors assume that society is evolving into a utopia. Revisionists, however, argue that the future is uncertain and that the best that can be assumed is that, as human knowledge increases, people become better able to solve problems, which does not mean either that they will solve all problems they encounter or that they will not encounter problems they can not solve.

Assumptions About Individualism

Traditionalists assume that the social context within which individuals exist does not limit them; therefore, individuals are free agents with unlimited potential. Thus, the study of history is the study of the great men who have imposed their wills upon

society. Revisionists, however, argue that the relationship between individuals and the social context within which they exist is reciprocal so that individual potential is limited.

Assumptions About Morality

Traditionalists assume a universal morality and an obligation to pass moral judgement on the people of the past. Revisionists assume that the moral standards of one group may be different from the moral standards of another; therefore, while it may enhance understanding to define differences in morality, the study of history is amoral, and moral judgements serve no useful purpose.

Assumptions About the Definition of and Purpose for Education

Traditionalists assume that "education" is limited to formal schooling and that the purpose of education is to perpetuate a set of values as well as to enable people to learn skills so that they may become employable. Revisionists, however, assume that "education" includes all of the means by which people acquire values, information, and skills and that the purpose for education is not only to socialize people by inculcating values but also to respond to changes in social conditions by reflecting such change in the values they inculcate.

Assumptions About the Definition of the History of
Education

Traditionalists define the history of education as the change in the formal structure of schools by a process of trial and error by which schools evolved into what Tyack calls "the one best system." Revisionists, however, define the history of education as the change in the means by which people acquire values, information, and skills as the result of changes in the social context within which that learning takes place. Thus traditionalists accept the Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis, while the revisionists reject it as too restrictive.

CHAPTER 3: THE EXTENT TO WHICH HINSDALE MAY BE
CONSIDERED TRADITIONAL AND MESSERLI REVISIONIST

The Extent to Which Hinsdale May be Considered

Traditional*

The Hinsdale Argument

Although assuming that "the history of great educators is a history of education" (v), Hinsdale argues that Mann's career as a school reform advocate can not be understood fully without a knowledge of the development of common schools before 1837 (1).

According to Hinsdale, the New England Puritans were a chosen people who valued education as much as religion and who established schools as quickly as possible after settlement (1-2). In a series of laws enacted between 1642 and 1647, the Massachusetts legislature created a school system (2-5). As a result, Massachusetts had an effective system of public elementary and secondary schools (5-7). Originally, these schools charged tuition; however, schools became tax supported to prevent "odious" discrimination against the poor, which the democratic colonists would not tolerate (8). Nonetheless, by 1700, schools began to deteriorate (9). While social,

*(All parenthetical notes in this section refer to Hinsdale's Horace Mann unless otherwise specified.)

economic, and demographic changes contributed to this deterioration, the local district system exacerbated it because the local district schools were decentralized and politicized (9-13). By 1789, the standards that the Puritans had established had eroded (13). And, by 1827, the Massachusetts schools had almost abandoned the curriculum and other standards that had made them superior (13-17). To complicate matters, as the public schools declined, academies prospered, which accelerated the deterioration of public schools while creating a gulf between those who could afford academy tuition and those who could not (17-19).

This crisis did not escape notice. Beginning in 1789, a growing chorus of critics castigated an apathetic public and complained about incompetent teachers (46-71). However, despite proposals for normal schools, studies of and reports about European schools, the formation of professional associations, and the publication of professional journals, schools continued to deteriorate (46-71). The reports of Timothy Dwight and James G. Carter dramatize the problem that confronted school reform advocates. According to Dwight's 1823 report, New England schools provided an adequate basic education for all and were one of the greater accomplishments of American society

(27-28). However, according to Carter's 1825 report, these schools had become obsolete (29). Consequently, the public, which had been lulled into a false sense of security by the previous accomplishments of its schools, failed to perceive the need for change. However, technological, demographic, and economic change created an urgent need for change while an age of optimism and high ideals created a climate conducive to change so that by the time Mann became a school reform advocate he had a receptive public (71-74).

Mann was born at Franklin, Massachusetts, on 4 May 1796. His family had been in Massachusetts for six generations (75). Although one of his ancestors had graduated from Harvard in 1665 and had been a rural preacher and teacher, most of his ancestors had "belonged to the plain people of the Commonwealth" (75). His father was a small farmer who died of tuberculosis when Mann was 13 (75). Nonetheless, Mann's parents provided him with a common school education and an example of the traditional values they inculcated in him (75-76). While Mann learned little from the inadequate common school he attended, he learned about nature first hand by living on a Massachusetts farm (79-81). Mann's parents infused him with a respect for and love of learning (79). And

Mann exhausted the resources of the small, archaic town library (81). Mann's family believed in regular church attendance, and Mann was an apt pupil (82-83). However, Mann could not accept his pastor's description of God as a hanging judge, and, his pastor preached a funeral sermon for Mann's brother "on the danger of dying unconverted," Mann averted a nervous breakdown by making a more humane, individual arrangement with God (83-84). "While sombre and, to a degree depressing, the typical New England child-life was not without great compensations" (85). Mann acquired the Puritan work ethic from farming; he learned discipline and obedience from his parents; the New England schools provided an avenue to higher education; "the civic life was a good political education;" and, the preaching of New England pastors not only provided lessons in logic but also inspired "moral earnestness;" consequently, for all its faults, the advantages of a New England childhood outweighed the disadvantages (85-86).

When he was 20, Mann crammed the classics with a tutor and qualified for admission to Brown as a sophomore in 1816 partly because of his brilliance and partly because of Brown's lax admission standards (86). Mann was a brilliant student (86-87). However, despite his earlier dreams of dedicating his life to

public service, Mann read law in Wrentham after graduating in 1819 (87). Shortly thereafter, Mann was "called back to the University," where he taught Latin and Greek, was librarian for two years, improved his knowledge of the classics, acquired an advanced knowledge of the natural sciences, and earned a reputation as a great teacher before leaving Brown in 1821 to go to law school (87-88). At Litchfield, Mann was a brilliant student who impressed one of his fellow students with his potential for greatness (88).

Mann was admitted to the bar in 1823 and practiced in Dedham until 1833, when he moved to Boston where he practiced law until 1837. Mann won 80% of his "contested cases" because he was an able lawyer who represented only those he believed were morally right (88-89).

Mann became active in "public affairs" shortly after opening his legal practice (89). In 1824, he gave a Fourth of July speech in Dedham that impressed J.Q. Adams with his potential, and, in 1826, he delivered an Adams-Jefferson eulogy that also impressed J.Q. Adams (89). Mann took public affairs seriously and was respected for his character (89). In 1827, he was elected to the lower house of the Massachusetts legislature and re-elected annually until 1833, when he was "transferred" to the state

senate where he served until 1837 and was president during his last two years (89). Mann was a "laborious and influential" legislator whose primary interest was in issues of philanthropy and public morality (89-90). He helped to establish the Worcester mental hospital and became the chairman of its board of trustees (90). He helped pass the law establishing the Massachusetts Board of Education (90). And he helped revise the Massachusetts legal code (90).

Mann may best be judged by his friends (90). He sought the company of clergymen like Channing and Taylor, the phrenologist Combe, the reformer Howe, and the radical Republican Sumner, all of whom shared his commitment to "ameliorating the evils of society" (90).

In 1831, Mann married Dr. Messer's daughter, of whom he had become enamoured while a student at Brown (90). However, his wife died after two years, and Mann was emotionally devastated (91-92). At the behest of his friends, Mann moved to Boston to rebuild his life (92). Unfortunately, Mann's mother, Dr. Messer, and others close to Mann died (92). Also, Mann impoverished himself because he felt morally obligated to repay his bankrupt brother's creditors (92). Fortunately, the inertia of Mann's habitual hard work kept him going until he could recover his

emotional balance, and his suffering may have been a moral prerequisite for "the great work that lay before him" (92-93).

Mann may have suffered greatly. Nonetheless, he was an engaging companion and brilliant conversationalist (993-94).

As a result of his interest in philosophy, Mann became fascinated with Combe's theory of phrenology. However, neither Combe nor Mann should be dismissed as quacks or frauds. Phrenology was a dramatic improvement over previous attempts to explain human nature, contained some elements of truth, and was the predecessor of modern psychology (94-102).

Thus, by nature, education, experience, and commitment to humanitarian reform, Mann was ideally suited to become a school reform advocate (102-104).

After the American Institute of Instruction lobbied for a superintendent and the governor recommended a board, the legislature created the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837 (105-106). The Board was authorized to collect and publicize information about schools (106). However, even this modest reform had barely squeaked through the legislature (106-107). Therefore, clearly, it was the best reform possible at the time (107-108). And it was beneficial in that it was appointed not elected,

represented a cross-section of influential interests, was generally respected, and established normal schools (108-109).

Although James G. Carter was an education expert who had negotiated the Board bill through the legislature and was generally considered the leading candidate to become secretary, Edmund Dwight lobbied for Mann, whom he believed would be a better advocate (109-110). Although Mann was ignorant of school issues, his ignorance guaranteed an open mind, which made him an ideal choice because one of history's greatest lessons is that "reforms in society come almost uniformly from abroad" (110-111). After thinking it over, Mann decided to accept his nomination to become secretary in part because he had no interest in practicing law and in part because he believed it was his best opportunity to ameliorate society's evils (111-114).

When Mann became Secretary in 1837, the public needed to be made aware of the need for school reform; "the public schools needed to be democratized;" new schools had to be built; obsolete instructional practices had to be changed; the school code needed revision; and schools needed more money (115-116). Although Mann was not an education expert, he immersed himself in educational literature before taking his

case to the public (117-118). Mann took his case to the people by riding annual circuits and through his annual reports, which were buttressed by the statistics he gleaned from his annual surveys. He improved instruction by publishing The Common School Journal, founding normal schools, and establishing teacher institutes (118-140).

Mann was totally committed to the cause of school reform. He routinely worked 16 hours a day, handled official correspondence personally, and impoverished himself to publish The Common School Journal and help pay normal school and other official expenses (140-144). However, such personal sacrifice was necessary so that his enemies could not use the charge of empire building against him (144).

Although American school reform advocates had proposed teacher training schools for years, Americans did not learn about the European normal schools until the mid-1830's, at which time the idea became so popular that, when Edmund Dwight offered to donate \$10,000 for the improvement of teacher training if the state would match it, the legislature accepted (145-148). However, the Board was uncertain about what to do (148). Eventually, the Board decided to establish three normal schools that would offer a bare

bones course intended to enable prospective teachers to learn what to teach, how to teach, and how to run a school. Mann recruited normal school teachers who were both competent and politically acceptable. And although their beginnings were shaky, the normal schools succeeded quickly. Despite their success, however, normal schools aroused the opposition of vested interests and religious fanatics. In 1842, however, Mann won a critical battle to get full state funding for the normal schools, and by 1845, the normal schools had become unassailable (149-161).

In the midst of the battle to establish normal schools, Mann was attacked by an administration that "had come into office on a wave of political revolution" (128). In 1840, a bill was introduced to abolish the Board and the normal schools; but it was defeated by a 182-245 vote (128-129). Even though the leader of the 1840 attack was not re-elected, a bill was introduced at the next session of the legislature to destroy the Board by reorganizing it; this bill lost by a 114-151 vote, which was "the end of [Mann's] practical opposition" (129-130).

In 1843, Mann married Mary Peabody and went to Europe for six months to study European schools (138-139). When he returned, he published his findings in his Seventh Report (139). This report

triggered his 1844-1845 dispute with the Boston schoolmasters (184). Traditionally, Boston schools had been the best in Massachusetts, but they had become obsolete (181-184). While other schools improved, Boston schools stagnated, and the Boston schoolmasters resisted change (181-184). Consequently, the schoolmasters and Mann were natural enemies (182-183). The schoolmasters considered Mann's praise of European schools in his Seventh Report implicit criticism of Boston schools (184). An exchange of pamphlets ensued in which the schoolmasters and Mann excoriated each other. While Mann's invective is excusable, the schoolmasters' is not because they attacked him unfairly. Nonetheless, in the portions of the pamphlets concerning pedagogical issues that were then unresolved, Mann was right even though he could not prove it at the time (185-209). Mann won a decisive victory as a result of which pro-reform candidates were elected to the Boston school committee and broke the schoolmasters control of the schools and instituted substantive reforms (199-201).

Throughout Mann's years as secretary, he was involved in disputes with religious sectarians who attacked him from a variety of motives (212-214). Although Massachusetts schools had been created to

help propagate religion, they had become nonsectarian by 1827 (210-212). However, the secularization had been so gradual that many people did not realize it had happened, which created an opportunity for Mann's opponents (212-213).

Mann ignored most of the attacks of the religious sectarians; nonetheless, he chose to respond in the case of those who demanded the Board include the American Sunday School Library in common schools, Edward Newton's 1844 attack, and Reverend Mathew Hale Smith's 1846 attack (215-222). Mann argued that the attacks were unwarranted because independent school committees controlled local schools, not the Board; clergymen representing the predominant denomination dominated the Board; the Board acted unanimously; and the Bible was generally read in schools (222-225). Mann enjoyed such overwhelming public support that he won these battles easily (229). Nonetheless, he could not have avoided them without risking the nonsectarian consensus on which common schools depended (231-232).

Although Mann tried to use the ideas of others to develop a philosophy to guide him, he was an activist and not a theorist (266-268). While Mann had a fanatical commitment to humanitarian reform, he was a practical politician who was willing to compromise

to gain marginal improvement that would make subsequent battles easier to win (268-270). If Mann had no sense of humor to give him emotional balance, he benefitted from the unrestrained passion that drove his reform advocacy (270). While Mann did not envision the one best system, he had good ideas for improving curriculum and learning. But his greatest contributions were "in the field of institutions, organization, administration, legislation, and public opinion" (272-273).

While measuring Mann's accomplishments quantitatively is impossible, even acknowledging that he had the good fortune to become a school reform advocate at a propitious moment, it is clear that: he popularized the cause of school reform; he established the status of the Board; he founded school district libraries, teachers institutes, and normal schools; school appropriations doubled while he was secretary, school construction increased; curriculum, instruction, and supervision improved as did teacher salaries; the length of the school year increased; the ratio of private to public school spending decreased by almost half; and progress continued after he left office (275-277). Finally, Mann acquired an international reputation and remains an inspiration to all who are concerned about the

cause of public education (277-280).

Analysis of the Hinsdale Argument

Assumptions About Universal Law

Hinsdale clearly accepts the concept of universal law. In explaining the wisdom of Dwight's decision to lobby for Mann's appointment as secretary, Hinsdale argues that Dwight's decision was consistent with "one of the great lessons of history" (110-111). In explaining the reasons for the deterioration of schools, Hinsdale cites the generalization that "it is always harder, other things being equal, to hold a large and somewhat heterogeneous community up to a high standard than a small and select one" (10). And in explaining why "the logic of events led straight to free schools," Hinsdale argues "private benevolence is commonly slow when the public authority can touch the lever of public taxation" (8). Likewise, in discussing the benefits of a New England childhood, Hinsdale makes the assumption that, given causes produce predictable given results (84-86).

Assumptions About Progress

Hinsdale seems to share the traditional belief that civilization is evolving into a utopia. In his description of the technological, demographic, and economic change that produced conditions compelling

change, Hinsdale clearly implies that these changes are part of a trend resulting in the improvement of society (71-72). Likewise, Hinsdale's argument that social reform generally became popular is consistent with the concept of perpetual improvement (73-74). Even in criticizing Mann's faith in schools as a panacea, Hinsdale specifically argues that Mann expected too much from schools, not that the ideal of progress was a fiction (103-104). And in his evaluation of Mann's accomplishments and the continuation of school reform after 1848, Hinsdale argues on the basis of an assumption of progress toward a utopian ideal (274-310). Finally, the traditional ideal of progress envisions both movement toward political democracy and material improvement; Hinsdale lauds the democratic ideal and argues throughout his biography in terms of the magnitude of material growth.

Assumptions About Individualism

Hinsdale shares the traditional belief in individualism. He specifically accepts the great man theory (v). He describes Mann as someone who imposes his will on society, in contrast with his "forerunners" like Barnard and Carter who were less able. And Hinsdale describes people working in isolation. Edmund Dwight lobbied for Mann's

appointment as secretary and donated the seed money for the normal schools and teachers institutes, but Hinsdale does not describe any working relationship between Mann and Dwight, creating the impression by default that there was no such relationship. Likewise, even Pierce and May, whom Mann selected and with whom Mann worked are described as if they operated almost independently.

Assumptions About Morality

Hinsdale's biography is a story of virtue rewarded. As a child, Mann acquired traditional values from his virtuous parents. He was a brilliant student. He succeeded as a lawyer because he was both brilliant and virtuous. He was elected to the state legislature within which he rose to eminence because both the public and his fellow legislators recognized his virtue. As a legislator, he devoted himself to matters of philanthropy and public morals instead of partisan politics. He sought the company of those who were as virtuous as he. He sacrificed himself to pay his brother's debts. He worked to the point of exhaustion. He labored heroically as a public servant without regard to his financial welfare. And Dwight and others sponsored him because they recognized both his brilliance and his high virtue. Finally, in explaining how Mann overcame his adversaries, Hinsdale

argues that Mann was morally right while they were wrong.

Assumptions About the Definition of and the Purpose
for Education

Hinsdale's history of common schools is consistent with the traditional assumption that "education" may be defined as formal schooling; however, in describing Mann's "schools and schoolmasters," Hinsdale devotes little space to Mann's common school experience and concentrates on the gamut of institutional experiences that formed Mann's character. However, Hinsdale's moralizing and tendency to generalize from a traditional opinion of the experiences of others to Mann's experience in the absence of evidence that Hinsdale's perception of those experiences is accurate or that Mann had such experiences or that those experiences affected Mann as they did others separates Hinsdale from the revisionists. Likewise, Hinsdale is consistent with the traditional assumption that schools should socialize students so that they might fit into rather than significantly change the prevailing socio-economic system, which may be the reason that Hinsdale repeatedly emphasizes the need to "democratize" schools.

Assumptions About the History of Education

Hinsdale's history of the development of the common schools is consistent with the Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis. Likewise, Hinsdale's description of schools in terms of their formal structure and assumption of the one best system model as a standard by which to judge the quality of schools is evidence that Hinsdale shares the traditional assumptions about the definition of the history of education.

In a sense, a genre consists of the works of authors which are similar because the authors have common assumptions. However, it is important to note that "similar" is not "identical" and that, while authors may share common assumptions, there will, nonetheless, be individual differences among them. Thus, in the sense that Hinsdale shares the significant traditional assumptions he may be fairly considered as being representative of the traditional genre of educational historiography.

The Extent to Which Messerli May Be Considered a
Revisionist*

The Messerli Argument

Messerli argues that Mann's career can not be

*(All parenthetical notes in this section refer to Messerli's Horace Mann unless otherwise specified.)

fully understood without understanding how Mann's formative experiences before 1837 affected what he did afterwards (xii).

According to Messerli, Mann's family came to Massachusetts in 1633 (5). Although one of Mann's ancestors was a 1665 Harvard graduate who became a rural teacher and preacher, Mann's family became locally prominent subsistence farmers (5). Mann's family was an independent economic unit in which the survival of all depended on the labor of each and which provided security but not luxury or leisure (6-7).

Mann's father expected his children to live as he had (16). However, between 1800 and 1820, Franklin developed a cottage industry and a cash economy, which altered the economic roles family members and their interpersonal relationships (16-24). Also Mann's family's commitment to the church diminished so that Mann perceived it as a hostile, coercive institution (18). Nonetheless, he learned the tenets of his faith and made an effort to believe, but he could not accept his pastor's description of God as a hanging judge and made his own, more convenient arrangement with God in 1808 (19). However, when Mann's father died in 1809 and Mann's brother drowned in 1810, Mann almost had a nervous breakdown because he believed he had become

the object of divine retribution for abandoning the orthodox church (20-23). Mann's father's death removed a restraint that made it easier for Mann and his older brother Stanley to escape the poverty, drudgery, and boredom of farming, which they hated (23-24).

While Stanley sought to make his fortune in textile manufacturing, Mann decided college offered the best escape route (24). Mann crammed math and classics with the help of tutors before applying for admission to Brown (25-27). Brown was popular with people in Franklin because it was relatively close, cheap, and theologically safe (29-30). Partly because of Mann's preparation and partly because of Brown's need for tuition paying students, Mann was admitted as a sophomore, which was important because he depended on his small inheritance to pay his way (30-31).

The Brown curriculum and the marginally relevant rote learning provided an incentive for students to become proficient at cheating (31-32). Mann, however, was a good student who learned the art of grandiloquence without learning to use evidence to support an argument or examine the logical assumptions on which an argument depended (32-35).

Mann joined the United Brothers, a student debating society, rose through the ranks, and held its

highest offices (41-47). While Mann learned to speak extemporaneously, like Brown, the United Brothers did not teach him to use evidence or question assumptions (48).

Mann worked hard to become prominent in the United Brothers and became valedictorian so that he would have a reputation and contacts to exploit after graduation (48-52).

[By 1819, Mann and his fellow students thought] of the world as the setting for a great morality play and themselves as its leading actors, whose foreordained triumph over ignorance, poverty, and greed seemed just beyond their outstretched grasp.

(53)

After graduation, Mann read law with a former United Brothers member in Wrentham (54-55). However, the drudgery of being a law clerk was disillusioning, and Mann developed a contempt for people involved in business (55-57). He decided to continue studying law at Litchfield but was diverted by Messer's offer to teach the classics at Brown (57-58). This was not a prestigious position, but Mann accepted it (58). However, his students rebelled because he was too demanding; his additional duties were aggravatingly tedious; and his fellow faculty members were

unpleasantly self-centered, bickering, and petty (59). Mann became disillusioned and depressed, so he quit and went to Litchfield where he enjoyed an active social life spiced by the girls from a nearby finishing school, distinguished himself as a student, and made useful friends (64-72). Thus, Mann acquired "a superior professional education" that enabled him to "capitalize" on his energy and talent (73).

Since Mann felt obligated to his mother and sister, he opened a practice in Dedham, the Norfolk County court seat (74). However, not only were lawyers considered licensed extortioners, but he had substantial established competition as well (74-75). Mann had no local connections but was able to establish a practice by specializing in debt collection and aggressively soliciting business (77-78). Mann worked hard, did well, prospered from referrals from friends he had made at Brown and Litchfield, and became a corporation lawyer (84-86).

Mann benefitted from general economic growth, which created more legal work. He was able to make interest bearing bridge loans to his clients by 1829 (84-86). However, his most ambitious commercial venture was a partnership with Stanley in which they pyramided previously pledged assets to acquire two textile mills (87-88).

As the most recent college graduate to move to Dedham, Mann was invited to give the 1823 Fourth of July speech (78). His grandiloquent patriotic gasconade was well received (80). And in 1826, he was invited to give the Dedham Adams-Jefferson eulogy, which J.Q. Adams attended (82-84).

Mann had political ambitions (88). He served as town meeting moderator and became a Norfolk County justice of the peace in 1828 (89). Mann was Republican in a Republican district (89-90). Although he campaigned for J.Q. Adams and Levi Lincoln, he avoided contesting issues and concentrated on party administration, becoming the county party secretary in 1827 (89-90). Mann was elected Dedham's second General Court representative in 1826, but did not serve because the town did not appropriate expense money for him (90). In 1827, he was elected again and, because of the Warren Bridge controversy, the town appropriated expense money to send him to Boston (91). Thus, by 1828, "twelve years of education, effort, and luck had transformed the son of a yeoman from Franklin into a Republican aristocrat" (91).

Since Governor Lincoln prorogued the legislature to prevent passage of the Warren Bridge bill, Mann was left sitting comfortably on the fence (96). While he was in Boston, his Litchfield classmate, Edward

Loring, who was closely allied to Mayor Quincy and Edmund Dwight, became Mann's social and political mentor (96).

During his second session, Mann argued that the Blandford petition would create an illegal perpetually in favor of a religious sect; however, although eloquent, there is no evidence that his speech caused the petition's defeat, and Mann may have been motivated more by anti-orthodox bias than commitment to the ideal of religious freedom (97-101).

When the Warren Bridge bill came up again, Lincoln withdrew his opposition, and the bill passed. Mann, however, voted against it, which pleased his Boston friends but displeased some of his constituents (101-103).

Mann believed internal improvements would benefit everyone and became a railroad expert and advocate, which benefitted his influential friends who promoted his legislative career (103-107). Mann learned to support his grandiloquent appeals with facts (107). He was ambitious and became the ally of powerful Boston businessmen (110). His work brought him in contact with a cross-section of issues (110). Mann was dedicated to "the doctrine of the perfectibility of individuals and institutions" (110). And grappling with complex political issues

had made Mann sophisticated (110-112).

Although Mann desired material success, he believed that individual interests should be subordinated to the common interest because no one could have security unless everyone had it (113-114). As a result of his belief in social responsibility, Mann became involved in temperance work and came to believe reform could be accomplished by:

a voluntary association of principled men who would rise above sectarian biases and influence both the legislature and their immediate communities.

(119)

Mann believed that intemperance caused all social problems, but he was not a radical reform advocate. He continued drinking socially and believed intemperance could be eliminated by working within established institutions instead of by restructuring society. Consequently, he sponsored a bill to limit access to alcohol by closing grog shops (115-122).

In 1828, the practice of incarcerating the insane became a public issue (122-123). In 1829, Mann assumed management of a bill involving the treatment of the insane, persuaded the legislature to authorize a survey of incarcerated mental cases, and went to Connecticut to study Todd's mental hospital (125). A

Prison Discipline Society report kept the issue alive, and Mann used the statistics from his survey to prove a need for reform, his recently acquired expertise to prove cases could be cured, and an eloquent appeal to support his proposal for a state mental hospital (125-126). The legislature accepted his argument that the state had become responsible for the care of the insane by default and authorized a state mental hospital (126). Governor Lincoln appointed a member of his council, the house speaker, and Mann commissioners to oversee the construction of the hospital (128-129). The commissioners located the hospital near Lincoln's home town (129). In addition to helping oversee construction, Mann also researched classification criteria for patient admission and helped select a superintendent (128-135).

Although Mann exercised initiative to get control of the issue, develop expertise, and formulate a feasible proposal, he benefitted from publicity that created a demand for reform, the absence of vested interests opposed to reform, and Lincoln's support (125). Mann may have been naive, but he believed that those who benefitted from the socio-economic system were obligated to care for those who did not and that social engineering could perfect society (136-137).

Mann was a successful lawyer, legislator, and

entrepreneur, but he was lonely in spite of an active social life (138-141). Consequently, he married Charlotte Messer and enjoyed an idyllic marriage until she died in 1832 (141-160). Grief almost paralyzed Mann who was also guilt ridden because he believed he was the victim of a malicious God (273-274). To compound his misfortune, he became liable for the debts when his partnership with Stanley failed (165). Consequently, Mann moved to Boston to rebuild his life and make money (165).

Although Mann wanted to become a grieving recluse, he was involved in humanitarian causes, and his associates would not let him quit (181). Mann's principal cause was temperance, and he became a temperance society celebrity by developing the argument that retailers could increase their profits if they stopped selling alcohol because sober customers would work harder and have more money to spend on other products (182-187).

In 1834, the Whigs were desperate for candidates, and Mann reluctantly agreed to run for the state senate when his friends asked him (194-195). Ironically, despite campaign rhetoric about ethical government, the Whigs won by a landslide because of anti-Jackson prejudice (195-199). Since the senators could not agree on a candidate for senate president,

Mann became a compromise candidate and was elected after 18 ballots (206-207). As president, Mann used his tie-breaking vote to resolve disputed elections in favor of Whigs (207). Mann was a moral absolutist who argued against imprisonment for debt and used his influence in support of temperance (201-206). However, although Mann was involved in the revision of the state legal code from first proposal to final printing, he was not responsible for major revisions (203-206).

While Mann believed abolitionists were troublemakers and that slaves should be freed as a result of educating slave owners about the evils of slavery, he became a prohibitionist (211-213). When issues involved a latent or pre-existing consensus, as was the case when Mann proposed the Worcester mental hospital, Mann's moral absolutism clarified matters and was an asset (215). However, when such consensus was absent, as was the case in the issue of imprisonment for debt or in the issue of licensing corporations:

his contributions were limited by his compulsion to conceive of the issues of moral absolutes rather than working for an understanding of the indigenous forces which were creating them.

Mann believed that families could not exist without private property and that it provided an incentive without which people would not work (215). However, while private property was a necessary good, Mann could not figure out how to prevent corporations from using private property rights to exploit the general public (215). Nonetheless, Mann remained a partisan Whig and railroad advocate (207). Mann, however, was not a legislative czar. When Massachusetts received federal compensation for use of its militia in the War of 1812, Mann and others who proposed using it to match locally appropriated school funds were out voted by those who wanted to use it in lieu of local operating funds and for public works (223-227).

Before 1837, Mann was not involved in school reform (230). However, in 1837 he worked with those who wanted to create a state board of education (234-241). Although Carter was the logical candidate to become Secretary, Edmund Dwight believed Mann would be a more effective advocate and lobbied for his appointment as Secretary (241-242). Mann envied those like Howe and Taylor who could devote their lives to reform work, and he despised those who were consumed by material greed (233-236). Since Mann was able to

pay the last of his partnership debts, he was free to indulge in his desire to become a professional reform advocate and, after some characteristic indecision, accepted his appointment as Secretary (242-250).

Mann did not understand the process of social change, but he realized that social change accompanied demographic and economic change (219, 248). And although he knew almost nothing about educational theory or Massachusetts schools, he believed school reform could reform society (251,249). Mann read school related literature extensively, but that only confirmed his suspicion that schools needed to be reformed without helping him solve his biggest problem, which was convincing the public of the need for school reform (251-253).

This problem was compounded by the absence of "a priestly class upon which to build" his new secular religion of schooling as a panacea (253). Teachers were generally considered otherwise unemployable incompetents, and their professional organizations had no significant influence (254-255). Therefore, Mann had to take his case to the people personally, for which purpose he organized a statewide circuit of meetings (260-275).

Mann's first circuit was a success, but Mann became a fanatic (280-282). Nonetheless, he knew he

had to provide more than grandiloquent inspiration (284). Consequently, he used his school survey statistics to find evidence with which to support his case (284). He concluded that Massachusetts schools were too diverse to constitute a system and that the only thing they had in common was inadequate financing that resulted in multiple shortcomings (284-285). Mann stated his case in his First Report, arguing that school buildings needed improvement, school committees were too important to be unpaid, public apathy was crippling, and teaching needed improvement (289-291). After the Board accepted his report, Mann effectively lobbied the legislature for reform (292).

In 1838, Edmund Dwight, after consulting with Mann and others, offered to donate \$10,000 to improve teaching if the legislature would match it (298-299). Mann organized an aggressive lobbying effort, and the legislature accepted Dwight's offer (299-301). Mann succeeded in part because he had not made a specific proposal that would have given his opponents a clear target to shoot at (300). This ambiguity, however, was as much a consequence of smart politics as it was of ignorance of how to improve teacher training (301).

Although Dwight had donated \$10,000 that the legislature had matched, there was never enough money to operate the normal schools properly during their

three year experimental period; but, Mann managed to raise enough money from other sources to keep the schools open. Since normal schools were an innovation, recruiting faculty and students was difficult. However, although his first choices declined, Mann was able to find teachers who were politically acceptable, competent, dedicated, and willing to take risks. Finding students was equally difficult, and keeping them was even more difficult because many dropped out to get jobs. Nonetheless, Mann was able to hold faculty and students together long enough for the schools to become popular enough to get full state funding (316-325). In 1842, the legislature provided full funding for normal schools. Although the normal schools were opposed by those who wanted to use the appropriation for other purposes, the appropriation bill passed easily because of Mann's lobbying and legislators who assured it a friendly hearing (364-365). Ironically, the normal school trials and tribulations continued. Mann had to replace faculty members who died or quit; the bugs had to be worked out of the curriculum; and "town-gown" relationships needed improvement. These problems, however, were the signs of growth and were solved in due course (366-371).

By the time Mann concluded his second circuit of

statewide meetings, he had gained public support (302-303). Although academies and other institutions existed, Mann argued for schools that would both inculcate values of which he approved and provide the basic education students would need to become employable (304-307). While other alternatives existed, only tax supported public schools could reach and socialize the masses (307). Mann's success aroused opposition (308).

Mann encountered virulent opposition from religious sectarians and from politicians like Marcus Morton (325-332). However, although these opponents could create widely publicized controversy, they represented splinter groups while Mann represented the popular consensus; therefore, they never had enough support to become a serious threat (332-333). Nevertheless, Mann acted as if his adversaries were formidable, partly because he was a fanatic and partly because he needed a perceived threat to maintain the enthusiasm of his supporters (333-335).

After Mann married Mary Peabody in 1843, they went to Europe where he studied schools (385). As a result of his tour, he became even more firmly convinced that the survival of republican government depended on schools that would properly educate succeeding generations of students (399).

Mann proposed to expand the scope of training and schooling, with its potential for control, orderliness, and predictability, so that it would encompass almost all the ends achieved by the far broader process of formal and informal socialization.

(443)

Mann was a dogmatic activist, not a philosopher (336-338). And this perception of the world in terms of moral absolutes was his fatal flaw because his ability to persuade others depended upon common values to which he could appeal; consequently, when he encountered others with different values, he could not communicate effectively because he insisted that they accept his values (432).

Although Mann was not fully aware of it, he had won his battle to establish a commanding school reform consensus by 1845 (422). And as early as 1841, friends like Dwight had begun pressuring Mann to re-enter elective politics (380-381). Consequently, when J.Q. Adams died in 1848, Mann decided to run for his congressional seat (452-457).

Analysis of the Messerli Argument

Assumptions About Universal Law

While the fact that Messerli never cites universal law as an explanation of the past or prediction of the future is not affirmative evidence that Messerli rejects the concept of universal law, that fact is consistent with the possibility that he does. Furthermore, Messerli criticizes Mann's acceptance of the concept of universal law, which is evidence that Messerli does not accept the concept of universal law. Likewise, Messerli assumes that Mann and his contemporaries were shaped by a unique set of circumstances and cannot be understood without understanding how those circumstances shaped them, which is evidence that Messerli rejects the universal man assumption upon which the universal law assumption depends. And, Messerli makes no attempt to use the past to predict the future; instead, he concentrates on describing the past so that a reader may better understand how the present evolved from the past. Thus, Messerli appears to reject traditional assumptions about universal law while sharing revisionist assumptions.

Assumptions About Progress

The manner in which Messerli argues that Mann never desired nor designed the the one best system is evidence that Messerli rejects the traditional assumptions about progress. Likewise, the way in

which he criticizes Mann and others who believed social engineering would, of itself, ultimately create a utopia is further evidence that Messerli does not share the traditional assumption about progress. However, while there is no evidence that Messerli shares the traditional assumptions about progress, there is also no convincing evidence that Messerli shares Carr's assumption that as human knowledge increases people become better able to cope with the problems they encounter. Nevertheless, to the extent that Messerli shares the assumption that the future is uncertain, Messerli may be considered a revisionist.

Assumptions About Individualism

Messerli clearly rejects the great man theory. His description of how socio-economic change affected Mann's family while he was growing up, how Mann was a compromise candidate for state senate president and congress, how Mann seemed to follow the path of least resistance before becoming a school reform advocate, and how Mann benefitted from demographic and economic changes between 1833 and 1837 are evidence that individual and environment interact. Likewise, the manner in which Messerli describes Mann's working relationship with others like Dwight and Loring is evidence that Messerli assumes no one can effect social change without help and that a leader's

relationship with his followers is reciprocal, which is inconsistent with traditional but consistent with revisionist assumptions. Finally, where traditionalists argue that great men impose their will on a passive society, Messerli argues that Mann succeeded because he articulated a pre-existing if latent consensus, which is also inconsistent with traditional but consistent with revisionist assumptions. Finally, Messerli's extensive psychological commentary is evidence that he rejects simplistic traditional assumptions about conscious human motivation and accepts the more complex revisionist assumptions. Therefore, Messerli's assumptions about individualism seem clearly consistent with revisionist assumptions.

Assumptions About Morality

Messerli's efforts to describe the different standards of morality Mann encountered and Mann's efforts to define his moral universe as well as Messerli's analysis of the political consequences of Mann's moral absolutism and the absence of an explicit moral judgement of Mann or an explanation of his success in terms of his moral conduct are clear evidence that Messerli rejects the traditional assumption of universal morality and is consistent with revisionist assumptions about morality.

Assumptions About the Definition of and Purpose for
Education

Messerli's description of Mann between 1796 and 1823 is clear evidence that he accepts the revisionist definition of education. His analysis of the consequences of Mann's efforts to use schools to control the socialization of the masses is evidence that he accepts the assumption that socialization in schools should be determined by the interaction of social forces rather than an attempt to prevent social change. Therefore, Messerli is clearly revisionist in this regard.

Assumptions About the History of Education

Messerli's argument that Mann neither desired nor envisioned the one best system is inconsistent with the Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis according to which Mann was one of the founders of the one best system. Likewise, Messerli's extensive description of the political aspects of school reform and social changes that affected school reform are inconsistent with the traditional concept of educational history as the history of the changes in the formal structure of schools. And Messerli's analysis of the educational role of the United Brothers is evidence that Messerli considers a broad definition of the history of education consistent with revisionist assumptions.

For these reasons, Messerli may be fairly considered a revisionist.

CHAPTER 4: A COMPARISON OF THE HINSDALE AND THE
MESSERLI BIOGRAPHIES

Hinsdale wrote more than 70 years before Messerli. However, the differences between the Hinsdale and the Messerli biographies are too great to be accounted for solely by the accretion of source material between 1898 and 1972.

These differences become apparent when the following points of comparison are considered:

The Purpose and Narrative Structure of Each Author

Hinsdale wrote to inspire his readers and to describe Mann as a school reform advocate who materially affected the course of school reform. By contrast, Messerli wrote to explain how the formative influences of Mann's life affected him.

Hinsdale uses a history of common schools as a framing device. While Hinsdale argues that a reader must understand the history of common schools to understand Mann's role as a school reform advocate, Hinsdale uses his description of the pre-Mann post-Mann common schools to dramatize the magnitude of the change that he attributes to Mann's efforts. Thus, instead of using this history to explain the historical context within which Mann worked, Hinsdale uses this history as evidence of the greatness of Mann's achievements.

Messerli virtually ignores the history of common schools, except in so far as it directly relates to Mann's involvement in school reform. And instead of trying to describe Mann as a transitional figure who changed the course of school development, Messerli describes Mann's efforts as a response to conditions of the times and Mann's desire to change them.

Thus, the difference between Hinsdale's and Messerli's use of the history of the common schools is that Hinsdale describes Mann as a messiah, while Messerli describes Mann as an influential reform advocate whose reforms affected the schools of his era without creating a system that would endure into the next century.

Hinsdale sketches Mann's life before 1837, describes the law creating the Board of Education and Mann's appointment as its Secretary, outlines Mann's accomplishments as Secretary, and then devotes individual chapters to Mann's reports, the normal schools, Mann's dispute with the Boston schoolmasters, and Mann's disputes with the religious sectarians concluding his sketch of Mann's life and providing an assessment of Mann's personality and effectiveness as a reform advocate. Messerli, by contrast, uses an integrated narrative to sketch Mann's life from birth to death.

Hinsdale's narrative structure isolates facets of Mann's life, which makes it difficult for a reader to appreciate the interrelationships among these facets. Messerli's narrative structure interweaves the facets of Mann's life, which makes it difficult for a reader to disentangle these facets.

Mann's Ancestors

Neither Hinsdale nor Messerli devotes much space to Mann's ancestors, and although Messerli is more detailed, there is no significant difference in the factual material each cites. However, there is a significant difference in the impression each author creates. Hinsdale dismisses Mann's paternal ancestors as "plain people of the Commonwealth" (75). Messerli, however, describes them as locally prominent subsistence farmers. While each author makes Mann's ancestors seem poor but respectable, Messerli makes them seem cash poor but otherwise well off in comparison with their neighbors.

Mann's Parents

Hinsdale describes Mann's parents as poor and relatively uneducated but virtuous farmers who were models of the traditional values they inculcated in Mann (75-76). Messerli, however, makes no such claims. Although Messerli describes Mann's father's expectations for his children, Messerli describes

Mann's parents primarily in terms of their economic roles within the family (3-8). The most striking illustration of this difference is the way that each author portrays Mann's mother. Hinsdale emphasizes her role in inculcating moral values. Messerli makes no mention of her impact on Mann. The significance of these differences is that Hinsdale focuses on their role in developing Mann's values by transferring their values to Mann. Messerli, however, focuses on the economic and interpersonal roles Mann's parents played that created pressures that molded Mann's personality. Thus, Hinsdale seems to argue that Mann's parents were important because they provided both an example of and instruction in good morals. Messerli, however, seems to argue that Mann's parents were important because their economic circumstances and interpersonal relationships affected the formation of Mann's frame of reference.

The Town of Franklin

Hinsdale describes Franklin as "second among the towns of the vicinity for intelligence, morality, and worth" (76). And Hinsdale conveys the impression that it was bucolic and static. Messerli, however, emphasizes the changes that took place while Mann was growing up. Unlike Messerli, Hinsdale makes no mention of how Franklin grew into a mill town

(Messerli 23). And in a single sentence, Hinsdale mentions that Mann braided straw to earn money for books to show that Mann had internalized the Protestant work ethic, valued books, and revered learning (79). Messerli, however, discusses the subject of braiding straw as an example of the development of a cottage industry that changed the local economy from subsistence to cash and materially affected the interpersonal relationships among the members of Mann's family by changing their economic roles (15-18).

Hinsdale's description of Franklin is consistent with a static conception of history in which change is explained as the product of conscious individual decisions. Messerli's description, however, is consistent with a dynamic conception of history in which change is explained as the product of social forces over which individuals generally have little control.

The District School

Hinsdale describes the school that Mann attended, compares it to the standards of the one best system, and condemns its shortcomings (78-79). Then he explains that Mann got his love of learning from his parents, a first hand knowledge of nature from growing up on a farm, and the opportunity to read at

the town library (79-81). Messerli mentions neither Mann's parents infusing him with their love of learning nor the town library. However, Messerli describes the school and explains how it functioned as a complementary part of the socialization process (12-15).

Mann's Early Religious Experience

Hinsdale's and Messerli's descriptions of Mann's pastor, Emmons, are similar. However, in describing the church Mann attended, Hinsdale dwells at length on its theology without commenting on its sociological role (82). Messerli, however, concentrates on the sociological role of the church (8-11). Also Hinsdale argues that Mann's parents believed in regular church attendance (82). Messerli, however, argues that the role of the church in the community generally and the lives of Mann's family in particular was diminishing (18-19).

Hinsdale's description of the role of the church is consistent with both a static conception of history and a moralistic focus. Messerli's description, however, is consistent with both a dynamic conception of history and a sociological focus.

Mann's Crisis of Conscience

Both Hinsdale and Messerli describe Mann's childhood crisis of conscience as a reaction to

Emmons's description of God as a hanging judge.

Hinsdale's account, however, is telescoped creating the impression that this crisis was a reaction to Emmons's funeral sermon for Mann's drowned brother (82-84).

Messerli's description is more detailed. According to Messerli, Mann made a more convenient arrangement with God in 1808; Mann's father died in 1809; and Mann's brother drowned in 1810. Thus, according to Hinsdale, Mann's crisis of conscience consisted of one incident. However, according to Messerli, it consisted of three: the break with the church, the death of Mann's father and brother, and Mann's development of guilt as a result of believing that he was the object of divine retribution for breaking with the church.

Thus, Hinsdale focuses on the theology of Mann's crisis of conscience. Messerli, however, focuses on its psychology.

Each Author's Perception of Mann's Childhood

Hinsdale concludes his account of Mann's childhood with a defense of the virtues of a 19th century New England childhood and argues that the experiences of such a childhood were so valuable that they justified its miseries (85-86). Messerli, however, offers no such assessment and merges his description of Mann's childhood with his description of Mann's preparation for Brown. Thus, Hinsdale

creates the impression that Mann's childhood was spent in a static moral incubator, while Messerli creates the impression that social and economic changes affected Mann's family as did the death of Mann's father. Consequently, Hinsdale seems to perceive of Mann's childhood as a process by which Mann acquired the traditional values of his parents by growing up in a static, cohesive society in which family, church, school, and community were mutually reinforcing. Messerli, however, seems to perceive of Mann's childhood as a process by which Mann acquired values that were different from those of his parents because of the effects of social and economic change on Mann's family and the social institutions of the society in which he grew up.

Mann as a Student at Brown

Hinsdale makes no attempt to explain either why Mann decided to go to college or why he selected Brown and thus creates the impression that these decisions were somehow part of an inexorably preordained series of events. Messerli, however, argues that Mann decided to go to college to escape farming, which he hated, and that Mann chose Brown because it was close, cheap, and theologically safe (29-30). Hinsdale describes Mann's cramming for admission without going into great detail (86). Messerli, however, goes into

greater detail, explaining the less genteel aspects of Mann's tutors (24-27).

Both Hinsdale and Messerli agree that Mann was a brilliant student. However, Hinsdale says virtually nothing about what Mann studied or how Brown affected him, creating the impression that Mann's accomplishments at Brown were the first in a series of ever greater triumphs (86-87). Messerli, however, goes into extensive detail about the nature of Mann's education and extracurricular activities and offers an explanation of how Brown affected Mann (30-53).

Mann's Legal Career

Hinsdale makes only passing mention of Mann's reading law in Wrentham in 1819 (87). Messerli mentions that Mann made arrangements to read law in the office of a former United Brothers member and describes Mann's disillusionment with being a law clerk and with people who seemed to be preoccupied with business (54-57). Thus, Hinsdale presents Mann's brief stay in Wrentham as an interlude in Mann's career, while Messerli presents it as a turning point. This difference in perception is important because it reflects Hinsdale's tendency to select details that will make Mann look like a Horatio Alger hero, while Messerli attempts to select details that will enable a reader to understand how Mann's experiences affected

him.

Hinsdale argues that Mann was a brilliant and respected teacher who perfected his knowledge of classical literature, mastered the natural sciences, and served as librarian before leaving for Litchfield in 1821 (87-88). Messerli, however, argues that Mann was so demanding that his students rebelled, that he found the faculty repellent, and that his non-instructional duties aggravated him with the result that Mann became disillusioned and depressed and fled to Litchfield (57-62). Some aspects of these descriptions are complementary but others are contradictory. The question of which description is the more factually accurate is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What is significant, however, is that these descriptions are examples of Hinsdale's tendency to select details flattering to Mann at the expense of those that are not, while Messerli seems willing to provide greater detail so that a reader can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how experience molded Mann.

Hinsdale describes Mann as a brilliant student who impressed others with his potential for greatness (88). Messerli, however, although he agrees that Mann was a brilliant student, argues that the course work was not as demanding as contemporary law schools and

that Mann enjoyed an active social life, making influential friends in the process (64-72). Again, these descriptions are evidence of Hinsdale's selection of flattering details and Messerli's attempt to explain how experience affected Mann.

Hinsdale gives the dates and places of Mann's law practice, mentions that Mann won 80% of his "contested cases," and concludes that the reason Mann succeeded was that Mann was both able and honorable (88-89). Messerli, however, provides the details of Mann's practice, arguing that Mann benefitted from general growth in the area and a referral network to which he had access because of his friends from Brown and Litchfield. And Messerli argues that, while Mann worked hard and was an able attorney, he was an aggressive mercenary who began by specializing in debt collection and upgraded his practice to become a corporate lawyer (75-86). Again Hinsdale has selected flattering details, while Messerli has provided details for a more comprehensive explanation.

Mann's Business Ventures

Hinsdale makes no mention of Mann's practice of making interest bearing bridge loans to clients he was representing and his involvement in a partnership with Stanley (86-88). These differences are a dramatic example of Hinsdale's tendency to select flattering

details and Messerli's tendency to select details to provide a comprehensive description.

Mann's Political Career

Hinsdale argues that Mann gave a Fourth of July speech in 1824 and an Adams-Jefferson eulogy in 1826, which with his reputation for good character and judgement were the reasons he was elected to the lower house of the Massachusetts legislature in 1827 and elected to the state senate in 1834, where respect for his character and achievements resulted in his election as senate president during his last two years (89-90). Messerli, however, provides more detail. Messerli describes Mann's involvement in party politics as well as the circumstances that made Mann a candidate of last resort in 1834 and a compromise candidate for senate president (82-83, 89-91, 194-198, 206-207). Likewise, Hinsdale argues that Mann was not a partisan politician (89-90), while Messerli argues that Mann was a partisan politician (207). Hinsdale, however, provides no evidence to support his contention while Messerli cites Mann's use of his tie-breaking vote in the senate to rule in favor of Whig candidates in disputed elections.

Mann's Accomplishments as a State Legislator

Hinsdale briefly sketches Mann's involvement in the establishment and operation of the Worcester

hospital, citing Mann's involvement as an example of his interest in good causes (90). Messerli, however, goes into greater detail about Mann's involvement, using his involvement not only as an example of Mann's interests but also as an example of how Mann pursued the goal of reform (122-137).

Hinsdale rarely mentions Mann's involvement in temperance reform work and does not mention Mann's efforts as a legislator to further the cause of temperance. Messerli, however, goes into great detail about Mann's career as a temperance reform advocate and specifically discusses Mann's licensing bill (114-122). Hinsdale cites Mann's first speech in the legislature as an example of the causes that interested Mann. Messerli, however, describes the context within which Mann's speech against the Blandford petition was delivered (97-101). Hinsdale mentions that one of Mann's speeches on railroads was the first speech of its kind printed in the U.S. (89). Messerli, however, explains that Mann became an ally of big business because he believed not only in railroads but in all such internal improvements that would help everyone by improving the economy generally (103-106, 110). Hinsdale cites Mann's involvement in the revision of the Massachusetts legal code as a measure of the respect in which Mann was held by his

fellow legislators (90). Messerli, however, points out that, while Mann was involved in the process of revising the legal code, Mann had little influence on its final form and that working on the revision involved drudgery that many wished to avoid (203-206). Finally, while Hinsdale alludes to Mann's participation in the passage of the bill establishing the Board of Education (90), Messerli describes this process in greater detail (239-240). In each case, Hinsdale offers an idealized portrait of Mann, while Messerli offers a more realistic portrait.

Mann's Choice of Friends

Hinsdale argues that Mann's choice of virtuous friends is evidence that Mann was virtuous (90). Messerli concurs, but adds that, while Mann had virtuous friends, Mann also had friends who were more influential than virtuous whom he cultivated assiduously and who were instrumental in advancing Mann's career (96, 103, 110).

Both Hinsdale and Messerli discuss Mann's relationship with Combe. Hinsdale describes Mann's involvement with Combe and his acceptance of Combe's phrenology but provides Mann an alibi (94-102). Messerli, however, although he describes Combe's phrenology and Mann's involvement with Combe, simply mentions the relationship between Mann and Combe in

passing and makes no effort to provide Mann an alibi (350-363).

Mann's First Marriage and Other Misfortunes

Hinsdale describes Mann's first marriage as a brief idyll that ended with Charlotte Messer's death, which devastated Mann emotionally (90-93). Messerli, however, provides an elaborate and extensive description of Mann's first marriage, which is consistent with Hinsdale's account (138-162). Nonetheless, where Hinsdale treats Mann's first marriage as a discrete event, Messerli argues that the effects of Charlotte's death plagued Mann for years (169, 179).

Hinsdale telescopes the deaths of others who were close to Mann and the failure of Mann's partnership with Stanley, which Hinsdale represents as Stanley's failures, and concludes that this suffering was a trial that may have better fitted Mann for his work in later years (92-93). Messerli, however, places the deaths and the partnership failure in perspective by providing adequate detail and maintaining the chronology of these events (165-168, 174-176). But Messerli concludes that Mann may have been an emotional masochist (174-175, 179-180).

Mann's Appointment as School Board Secretary

Hinsdale describes Mann as an ideal candidate to

become secretary in 1837 because of Mann's character, intelligence, eloquence, and experience (102-104). Although Messerli argues that Mann's years as secretary were important, unlike Hinsdale, he does not consider those years as the focal point of Mann's life. Consequently, while Messerli comments on Mann's character and accomplishments during the course of his narrative, he makes no such sweeping interim assessment.

Hinsdale cites the act establishing the Board and describes the act as the best reform available at the time before describing how Dwight lobbied for Mann and Mann's decision to accept the appointment (109-114). Messerli goes into great detail, but does not defend the act, and Messerli creates the impression that one of the reasons that Mann became secretary was that his political career was in a shambles as a result of his acrimonious last session in the state senate, something that Hinsdale does not mention (240-250).

Mann's Agenda and Tactics

In describing what he believed Mann needed to do as Secretary, Hinsdale creates the impression that Mann had a defined agenda when he became Secretary (115-116). Messerli, by contrast, emphasizes Mann's desire to arouse the public (250-251). Both Hinsdale

and Messerli argue that Mann knew little about schools and less about educational theory, for which reason Mann read such professional literature as was available at the time (Hinsdale 117-118, Messerli 251-252). Although Hinsdale makes no mention of teachers at this point, Messerli argues that one of Mann's problems was that the public had no confidence in teachers and therefore Mann could not use them as a "priestly class" to arouse the public (252). Both Hinsdale and Messerli describe Mann's statewide circuits, although Messerli goes into greater detail and adds the insight that one of the reasons that Mann did not use town meetings or other previously established forums was that he wanted total control over the agenda and conduct of the meeting (Hinsdale 118-122, Messerli 260-275, 303). Hinsdale argues that one of Mann's major achievements was establishing The Common School Journal (124-125). Messerli, however, only mentions it in passing (289-290). Hinsdale devotes a chapter to Mann's annual reports and argues that Mann was a pioneer whose arguments are still compelling (162-180). Messerli, however, does not devote much space to Mann's reports, mentioning only the first and seventh in any detail.

The Normal Schools

Hinsdale begins his account of the normal

schools with history of the evolution of the concept of the normal school in Europe and Brooks's discovery of the normal schools in the mid-1830's (145-147). And Hinsdale argues that Brooks was responsible for favorably disposing the legislature so that, when Dwight made his offer, the legislature accepted it immediately (147). Although Messerli mentions Brooks, he makes no mention of the development of the normal school idea before 1838 (298). And Messerli argues that Dwight discussed his gift with Mann before making a formal offer and that Mann aggressively lobbied the legislature, which accepted Dwight's offer in part because Mann had not provided his enemies a clearly defined target (301). Although Messerli is more detailed, the Hinsdale and Messerli accounts of the normal schools are otherwise consistent except for two particulars. Hinsdale argues that the 1842 vote that provided full state funding for normal schools was a contested issue (150-151), while Messerli argues that it was never seriously in doubt (364-365). Also Hinsdale and Messerli present radically different descriptions of S. J. May. Hinsdale describes May as a simpering, beatific clergyman (152-153), while Messerli describes May as a strong-willed, brass knuckled abolitionist (366-371).

Teachers Institutes

Hinsdale describes the institutes in greater detail than Messerli (Hinsdale 137-138, Messerli 353).

Mann's Disputes

Although Hinsdale does not mention Marcus Morton by name and provides only a cursory sketch of the sequence of events involved in the 1840 and 1841 attacks on the Board and the normal schools, Hinsdale creates the impression that the object of "the wave of reform" that swept the Morton administration into office was the destruction of the Board and the normal schools. Likewise, by describing what happened without explaining how it happened, Hinsdale creates the impression that Mann was no more than a spectator during the critical battles. And by arguing that Mann was confident that his enemies would lose but was disturbed because he would have to spend time repairing the damage the controversy did to the consensus on which Mann depended, Hinsdale seems to argue that a critical battle was not critical, which is confusing (128-130). Messerli, however, goes into greater detail to show that the Board and the normal schools were not the central issue of the Morton administration and that the 1840 and 1841 attacks were not a threat to either the Board or the normal schools because Morton and his allies in the legislature never had enough votes to win. Likewise, where Hinsdale is

silent about Mann's role. Messerli describes his initial overconfidence and subsequent lobbying efforts to defeat the 1840 and 1841 attacks (326-331).

Both Hinsdale and Messerli describe Mann's disputes with Packard, Newton, and Smith (Hinsdale 210-232, Messerli 309-315, 409, 432-436). Hinsdale, however, describes these disputes in terms of the arguments that each used and renders a judgement in favor of Mann. Messerli, however, while describing the arguments involved, also makes the point that Mann found these disputes useful because they created the illusion of a serious battle, thereby keeping Mann's supporters excited (335).

Hinsdale describes Mann's dispute with the Boston schoolmasters the same way he describes Mann's disputes with the religious sectarians (181-209). Messerli, however, although he describes the nature of the argument in a manner consistent with Hinsdale, describes Mann's efforts to attack the schoolmasters on their home ground by organizing a pro-Mann anti-schoolmaster slate of candidates for the Boston school committee (412-421). Thus, Hinsdale's description creates the impression that Mann's arguments inspired reform, while Messerli's description creates the impression that Mann both inspired and organized a reform party.

Mann's Second Marriage and 1843 European Tour

Hinsdale mentions Mary Peabody in passing (138). Messerli, however, gives an extensive account of the relationship between Mann and Mary Peabody in scattered references throughout his biography.

Hinsdale concentrates on Mann's tour of European schools and belief that the Prussian school system had much to recommend it (138-139). Messerli, however, describes Mann's entire European tour in much greater detail and attempts to explain how what Mann saw affected his frame of reference as well as his opinions of the best methods of school administration (385-400).

Mann's Strategy

Hinsdale argues that Mann's genius lay in his ability to build a nonsectarian consensus using the idea that Bible reading without comment was nonsectarian (232). Messerli, however, argues that Mann based his consensus on secular grounds as well, using the idea that schools could solve social problems (253).

The Hinsdale Thesis

Hinsdale argues that the Puritans envisioned superior common schools that would educate all to the extent of their ability. However, the Puritan ideal was debased and schools deteriorated. By 1837, the

situation had become critical. The schools were hopelessly obsolete, but the public was apathetic, and academies threatened to complete the destruction of public secondary education.

As Secretary, Mann aroused the public, which demanded substantive school reform. As a result of this demand and Mann's leadership, the Massachusetts schools were rebuilt and provided a means of inculcating the values as well as the knowledge that students needed to become responsible citizens of a republic.

Mann became an effective school reform advocate because of his character, education, and experience. He had acquired traditional values from his parents and a first hand knowledge of nature from growing up on a Massachusetts farm. Although his village school was a typically inadequate district school, Mann supplemented his education by reading at the town library and was able to qualify for admission to Brown by cramming with the help of a tutor. At Brown he was a brilliant student and instructor. At Litchfield, he was also a brilliant student. And even after completing his formal studies, he continued to read extensively. As an attorney and legislator, he exhibited skill and principle and was highly respected. While he was not well versed in school

matters, his ignorance of school matters was an asset because it meant that he brought an open mind to the subject of school reform proposals.

As a school reform advocate, he was successful in part because others had educated the public, which was thus receptive to his call for reform. But he was also successful in part because of economic and demographic change that created conditions in which reform was the only alternative to disaster. Nonetheless, without Mann's efforts, the modern public school system would not exist.

While Mann was an activist and not a philosopher, he used the ideas of others to form a coherent philosophy to guide him. Not only was Mann able to convince the public of the need for reform, but he was able to create and preserve a nonsectarian consensus, without which schools could not have been reformed.

Likewise, although Mann had good ideas about how curriculum and instruction should be improved, he was primarily an instructional leader. Not only did he offer inspiration to those who taught and were involved in educational reform, but he also founded the normal schools, teacher institutes, and The Common School Journal, without which teaching could not have become a profession and without which, therefore,

schools could not have been reformed because they would not have had an adequate supply of competent teachers.

The Messerli Thesis

Mann was a complex person who became a school reform advocate almost by default and who was successful not only because of his fanatical commitment but also because of his skill as a politician.

Although Mann acquired values from his parents, he hated the poverty and the drudgery of farming. Consequently, he took advantage of the opportunity that his father's death created and went to Brown. When he graduated, he felt that the only opportunity open to him was law. However, he became disillusioned reading law and accepted Messer's invitation to teach at Brown as an escape. Teaching, however, was also disillusioning, so he returned to the practice of law as the lesser of available evils. Mann was an aggressive and mercenary attorney who prospered by becoming part of the legal establishment. While he was building his practice, Mann also built influence within the locally predominant political party by becoming an appartchick. When Mann became a legislator, he allied himself with powerful businessmen who helped advance his career.

However, Mann was restrained by a sense of social responsibility that enabled him to compensate for accumulated, self-imposed guilt. When he had abandoned the orthodox faith and his father and brother had died, he felt that he was the object of divine retribution. Likewise, when his first wife died, her death exacerbated his feelings of guilt.

Thus, Mann was caught between the manner of his ambition and the anvil of his morality, which was the means by which he dealt with his feelings of guilt. Initially, Mann was able to reconcile his ambition and his morality by considering himself an advocate of internal improvements from which all would benefit. However, by 1837, he began to realize that his political commitments were becoming inconsistent with his moral obligations. Consequently, the opportunity to become Secretary provided an alluring opportunity to escape.

Initially, Mann had proved useful to powerful businessmen like Dwight. However, by 1837, Mann's political career was in a shambles. Thus, the appointment as Secretary was both a means of taking care of Mann and a means of rehabilitating him for future use.

While Mann's appointment as secretary may have served a number of personal and political purposes,

the fact remains that he was an able reformer. His guilt induced sense of moral absolutism made Mann a fanatic; however, his political experience had tempered his fanaticism so that he was able to work within the system. Thus, he was an effective school reform advocate because he had the commitment without which he could not have made the herculean effort that reform work required and because he had the political ability to forge a reform coalition that enabled him to become both a powerful and skilful school reform lobbyist.

While Mann may have been able to influence the course of school reform by articulating inchoate public opinion and keeping the issue of school reform alive by engaging in press wars with his opponents, he was not solely responsible for the changes that occurred in schools between 1837 and 1848. Therefore, he cannot be considered a mastermind who conceived and executed a grand reform design.

Likewise, although Mann had definite ideas about the role of schools in society and influenced the development of schools, he did not envision the one best system schools that were developed between 1865 and 1920. Thus, while others may have taken over where Mann left off, Mann can neither be praised nor blamed for the contemporary American public schools,

because there were too many intervening variables that affected the course of development of those schools.

CHAPTER 5: THE BETTER BIOGRAPHYHinsdale's Use of Argument and Evidence

Hinsdale's argument is riddled with violations of Fischer's rules of evidence, including but not limited to:

@ by concentrating on administrative changes in 17th and 18th century schools, Hinsdale creates a tunnel history. The problem is not so much his focus but his failure to consider in a rational manner how the institutions of schools interacted with other institutions and how it was affected by issues other than disputes over its administration and structure.

@ Hinsdale's history of the evolution of the common schools follows the Wickersham-Martin-Mayo thesis and, therefore, is an example of the aesthetic fallacy.

@ Hinsdale's summation of Mann's childhood is as much a defense of the conditions under which he grew up as it is an explanation of how those conditions affected Mann. Thus, Hinsdale combines moralizing, hypostatized proof, and substantive distraction.

@ Hinsdale's character sketch of Mann in 1837 is an example of his ability to combine many fallacies. Hinsdale's introduction concludes with a

potentially verifiable question in that he alleges that Mann was "admirably equipped for this work, so far as equipment could be determined without actual trial and testing." Hinsdale's characterization of the effect of being "reared on a Massachusetts farm" is moralizing. His summation consists of more moralizing. And his alibi of Mann's idealistic faults is both moralizing and the culmination of an aesthetic character sketch, which also is an example of substantive distraction because it fails to explain how Mann was able to progress from an orphan of a poor farmer to an influential legislator.

Far more serious than arguments with which Hinsdale builds his case are the logical errors Hinsdale makes that virtually destroy his case.

Hinsdale argues that Mann was responsible for school reform because he aroused the public. However, although Hinsdale explains what Mann did to arouse the public and alleges that the public in fact became aroused, Hinsdale neither shows how what Mann did aroused the public nor how the aroused public instituted reform.

Hinsdale's history of the common schools dramatizes the differences between common schools before Mann and common schools after Mann. However, Hinsdale's assumption that Mann was responsible for these changes

without providing explanation or evidence is an example of post hoc, propter hoc reasoning.

Hinsdale argues that measuring Mann's accomplishments quantitatively is impossible. Nonetheless, Hinsdale uses quantitative measures of change as evidence of Mann's accomplishments.

In his discussion of schools generally, but in his discussion of the district schools and of Mann's vision of schools in particular, Hinsdale compares schools as they were to schools as he believed they should be, which is an example of hypostatized proof.

Hinsdale argues that Mann's reputation is evidence of his accomplishments as a reform advocate. However, Hinsdale also argues that Mann's reputation rested in the public acceptance of his writings and the public perception of his role in school reform. Thus, Hinsdale's use of Mann's reputation as evidence is an argument ad verecundiam.

Hinsdale repeatedly asserts that Mann was an activist and not a theorist. However, this black-or-white distinction is an example of semantic distortion in that the distinction is arbitrary and serves no useful purpose.

Hinsdale argues that Mann was the right person, at the right and could not have succeeded without the efforts of others who preceded him and conducive

social and economic conditions. However, he buries this argument in a discussion of Mann's predecessors so that it is obscured, which is an example of accenting, which is a form of substantive distortion.

Hinsdale also assumes that structural changes produced results in outcome without providing either evidence or explanation to support his contention.

Finally, Hinsdale explains Mann's dispute with the Boston schoolmasters and the religious sectarians in terms of the arguments of each party and concludes that Mann's argument was the morally superior, which is an example of moralism but does little to explain how these disputes affected the course of school reform.

Since Hinsdale does not adequately support the generalizations upon which his case depends, it is evidence that the Hinsdale biography is little more than a morality tale.

In terms of the Neustadt and May criteria for placing people, Hinsdale's biography is defective.

Neustadt and May argue that a biography should provide an explanation of how the events of an era in which a person lived affected that person. To this end, Neustadt and May recommend beginning with an account of the lives of its subject's parents. Hinsdale's sketch of Mann's parents is so superficial

that it is impossible to determine how the events of the times in which they lived affected them, or how their formative experiences may have indirectly affected Mann. Neustadt and May recommend defining the major events that occurred during a person's life and attempting to explain how those events affected the subject of the biography. However, Hinsdale's biography is so severely limited in scope that, although it describes the details of Mann's life, it does not describe the events of the time in which Mann lived or how those events affected him before 1848. Neustadt and May also recommend specifying the details of the life and career of the subject of a biography. While Hinsdale offers a wealth of detail, generally his selection of detail is innocuous and serves as filler between moralistic generalizations than as evidence supporting those generalizations. An excellent example of this deficiency is Hinsdale's description of Edmund Dwight's role in Mann's life, which does not explain why Dwight was interested in Mann or what the nature of the working relationship between them was like.

The Hinsdale biography fails to describe Mann's objectives in detail so that a reader has difficulty trying to determine what Mann was attempting to accomplish, which makes it difficult to determine the

degree of his success. Hinsdale fails to describe in sufficient detail both Mann's working relationships with others and the general social, economic, and political content within which Mann worked, which makes it difficult to determine how Mann attempted to achieve his objectives. And Hinsdale fails to describe adequately the nature of Mann's opposition and other obstacles that he may have faced, which makes it difficult to determine how Mann attempted to achieve his objectives.

Messerli's Use of Argument and Evidence

Messerli's argument contains violations of Fischer's rules of evidence, including but not limited to:

@ in arguing that Mann and his associates who attempted to change schools could not have known that future generations would use schools in a manner that created instead of solved social problems, Messerli is indulging in irrelevant speculation.

@ in arguing that hard work and frugality had enabled the Mann family to become locally prominent, Messerli commits the fallacy of cum hoc, propter hoc.

@ In arguing that Mann's father must have been aware of signs of change, Messerli not only contradicts his assertion that Mann's father expected

his children to live the same kind of life he had, but Messerli also commits the historian's fallacy.

@ in describing Mann's crisis of conscience and in describing Mann's grief after his first wife's death, Messerli attempts to psychoanalyze Mann, which is an exercise in speculation.

@ not only in applying psychoanalytic theory to Mann but also in applying sociological theory to Mann's family and community, Messerli is using hypostatized proof.

@ in condemning the education that Mann received at Brown and the one best system that Mann's successors built, Messerli indulges in moralizing.

While Messerli's argument is not free from violations of Fischer's rules of evidence, the only violation that invalidates a substantive portion of Messerli's argument is his reliance of psychoanalytic theory to explain Mann's motivation.

Messerli's description of the lives of Mann's parents is fragmentary and explains neither how the events of the times in which they lived affected them nor how their experience may have indirectly affected Mann. Likewise, while Messerli offers some description of how international, national, and local events affected Mann, his focus is so restricted that it leaves many questions unanswered.

Principal among these unanswered questions are the questions of Mann's working relations with others and the nature of the institutions within which he worked. Mann was a party activist before he became a legislator. However, Messerli offers no detailed description of what Mann did or with whom he worked. Likewise, although Messerli provides tantalizing hints about those with whom Mann worked, he does not go into detail about them. This is especially true with Edward Loring, who became Mann's social and political mentor, and Edward Dwight, who became one of Mann's principal supporters and promoters. And Messerli provides little detail about the workings of the institutions with which Mann was involved.

Thus, Messerli's strength is that he describes the context within which Mann worked so that a reader is aware of the elements of that context even if not adequately informed about them. Conversely, Messerli's weakness is that he indulges in too much speculation about Mann's psychological development and too often indulges in trivia at the expense of more fully developing the important points about what Mann was trying to achieve, how he went about it, and what obstacles he had to overcome.

Determining the Better Biography

Assuming that one test of the value of a

biography is the consistency of its authors use of argument and evidence with Fischer's rules of evidence, Messerli's biography is superior to Hinsdale's. Messerli not only appears to have fewer violations of Fischer's rules but also, even if Messerli's psychological speculation is assumed invalid, the balance of Messerli's argument survives: Mann was effective because he advocated reforms for which there was popular support and Mann was able to both mobilize that popular support to create demand for reform and work within institutions like the state legislature to translate that support into action. Hinsdale's argument, however, seems to disintegrate so that all that remains is a series of generalizations unsupported by credible evidence.

Assuming that a biography should, as Neustadt and May argue, provide a hypothesis about its subject's frame of reference, what its subject attempted to do, how and with whom its subject worked, and the results thereby obtained, the Messerli biography is useful. Messerli establishes that Mann was in a position to know how the political system worked and, equally important, in a position to influence those who made public policy decisions. Likewise, Messerli clearly establishes some of the important limitations within which Mann worked.

Hinsdale's biography, however, is a morality tale in which the passionate pursuit of virtue is rewarded and the moral is that a reformer must be virtuous and persistent. Thus, the focus of the Hinsdale biography is only marginally relevant.

For these reasons, the Messerli biography provides the more logical use of relevant evidence to explain Mann's frame of reference, the means Mann used to attempt to achieve his ends, and the degree to which he was successful.

CHAPTER 6: INFERENCES ABOUT WHICH GENRE IS THE MORE
USEFUL

While the Hinsdale and the Messerli biographies may be representative of the traditional and the revisionist genres respectively, they may also constitute a sample that is too small to justify conclusive generalization. However, to the extent that these biographies are representative of the respective genre:

Usefulness as a Source of Information About the Events
of the Past

Both the Hinsdale and the Messerli biographies contain accounts of the same incidents. The difference between them is that Hinsdale frames his biography with a history of the development of common schools that contains a wealth of information that Messerli does not provide. While Hinsdale's interpretation of the events of the development of common schools may be questionable and while his account may be incomplete in many particulars, nonetheless, he provides a wealth of detail about the laws governing schools and the proposals that were made for reforming schools. Likewise, in his account of Mann's life, Hinsdale covers the major events. Thus, Hinsdale's biography provides a point of

departure because it identifies people and events about whom it would be useful to know more. While Messerli does not attempt to provide a history of common schools, he does provide clues about the relevant people, institutions, and with which Mann was involved and about which it would be useful to know more. Thus, as a point of departure both are useful. However, Messerli's biography is the more useful because it provides more relevant clues.

While both Hinsdale and Messerli leave something to be desired in their accounts of the past, Messerli's description focuses on more relevant concerns and is, therefore, the more useful.

Consequently, in the extent that inferences may be drawn about a genre from a single representative work, the revisionist genre to provide the more useful description of the past.

Usefulness as an Interpretation of the Past

Hinsdale appears to have sifted the past for evidence with which to confirm his prejudice about what schools should be like and the rewards of being virtuous. Messerli, however, seems to have attempted to reconstruct the context within which Mann worked so that others could understand both how he worked how the past is different from the present. Therefore, bearing in mind the danger of generalizing from a

small sample, the revisionists genre seems to provide the more useful description of the past.

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Abstract

HORACE MANN: A COMPARISON OF A TRADITIONAL AND A REVISIONIST BIOGRAPHY

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The purpose of this study was to compare a traditional biography, Burke A. Hinsdale's Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States (1900), and a revisionist biography, Jonathan Messerli's Horace Mann: a Biography (1972), within a "neutral" frame of reference to determine which author made the more logical use of evidence to support his argument.

David H. Fischer's Historians' Fallacies (1970) and Richard E. Neustadt & Ernest R. May's Thinking in Time (1986) were used to formulate a "neutral" frame of reference within which to analyze the two biographies.

Hinsdale's explanation was found to consist of a series of generalizations few of which were supported by credible relevant evidence. Thus, while Messerli's explanation in part relied on the assumption that such evidence as has survived is adequate to justify using psychological and sociological theory to explain the formation of Mann's personality, his explanation otherwise generally uses credible relevant evidence to support the generalizations he makes. Therefore, it was concluded that Messerli made the more logical use of evidence to support his argument.

Since making generalizations about the traditional and the revisionist genres based on a single sample of each is tenuous, additional studies are needed to justify extending the conclusions of this study to the genres.