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## The Social Construction of the Progressive Era: A Critical-Historiographical Case Study in Vocationalism

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DePaul University  
College of Education

**THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROGRESSIVE ERA:  
A CRITICAL-HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CASE STUDY IN VOCATIONALISM**

A Dissertation in Education  
with a Concentration in Educational Leadership

by

Brian D. Carlson

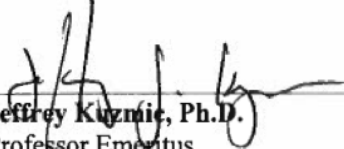
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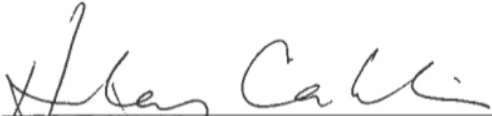
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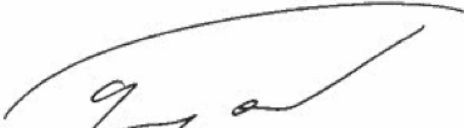
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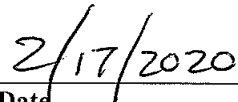
  
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**Certification of Authorship**

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## ABSTRACT

For centuries, schooling has served as the primary precursor to jobs and careers, and ultimately the window of opportunity toward economic mobility. Vocationalism describes the economic potential of education, represented by the synthesis of educational policy, curricula, and ideology. This study contends that vocationalism has conditioned the public toward the disposition of education as a social commodity for the development of human capital. In turn, this study explores the significance of vocationalism through a critical-historiographical case study of educational reforms within Milwaukee during the Progressive Era. This study asks the question, how has ideology contributed toward the establishment of vocationalism in Milwaukee? This exploration of Milwaukee's educational history provides an examination of the construction and promotion of vocationalism that has influenced the purpose of schooling within a community that has epitomized proletarianization. The findings of this study focus on inferences made by the review of primary archival materials and secondary sources from a historiographical, critical constructivist paradigm. The findings suggest that vocationalism in Milwaukee was socially constructed in response to four themes (a) emerging tensions between vocational schooling and academic education; (b) an ideology of altruism in response to an economic decline; (c) the discourse of grassroots reforms; and (d) the emergence of a democratic, egalitarian education that aimed to develop youth in preparation for work.

*Keywords:* vocationalism, vocational education, ideology, socialism, progressivism, manual training, industrial education, community college, Progressive Era

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**Dedication**

To Julia, Ava, and Henrik,

*May education open your mind, heart, and soul to unify the world.*

## Chapter 1

### Examining Vocationalism

American education resides at the intersection between the understanding of knowledge and the influence of power, two concepts that provide both tangible and intangible results. There is no denying the economic power of education and its pragmatic premise within society; however, we cannot ignore the inequities education possesses. For centuries, schooling has served as the primary precursor to jobs and careers, and ultimately the window of opportunity toward economic mobility. Within our capitalist society, the relationship between knowledge and power has developed a contractual exchange of “educational property” that positions citizens in competition against one another for social progression (Labaree, 1997, p. 27). In turn, the American psyche has been shaped by a structural pragmatism, which has led to an unequal distribution of wealth by separating the haves and the have-nots for class-based roles. As an outcome of capitalism, the American educational system serves as a precursor to the division of labor; requiring individuals to use the tools and opportunities available as a means of separation and power over the competition (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Doob, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Rury, 2013; Willis, 1977).

While education aims to ameliorate poverty, retrain dislocated workers, and promote economic equality, the outcomes of schooling for most Americans remain inconsistent across racial, ethnic, and class-based structures (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Kozol, 2005). Scholarly positions on the commodity of education and its unequal power within society highlight its capitalistic, vocational outcomes. Described by the term *vocationalism*, the economic potential of schooling represents the synthesis of educational policy, curricula, and ideology in support of its economic outcomes (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999;

Pfleger, 2013; Rury, 2013). The result is a curriculum that serves an economic goal, which prepares youth for current and future employment demands. Not to be confused with *vocational education*, vocationalism embodies the sum of these parts, while vocational education represents the specific curricula and skill-based educational programs designed to meet the needs of the workforce.

Historical examinations of vocationalism have expressed concern regarding its hegemony within the American capitalistic economic structure, as the result of anti-democratic education reforms (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Kozol, 2005). Serving as a foundational element of socioeconomics, vocationalism was most notably positioned to meet the hiring needs of industrialization, which aimed to increase the marketability of the student (Kett, 1982). The more schooling youth would receive, the better their economic outcome as they rise in employment status (Kett, 1982). In turn, education has sought to serve job and career interests, while vocational education has served as a formal method to deliver economic mobility for youth not deemed eligible for higher education. To this end, its promise to ameliorate economic inequality and poverty presents a romanticism of upward mobility that continues to this day. While I examine this theme, it is essential to note that scholars have argued that vocationalism has proven to yield educational stratification and social reproduction in response to the goal of human capital growth (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004).

Early support for the economic benefit of schooling begins with Horace Mann and his speech to the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1841 (Kantor & Lowe, 2011). In his Fifth Report of the Massachusetts Board (1841), Mann articulated the investment of education through a calculation of workplace productivity between literate and illiterate laborers (see Kantor & Lowe, 2011). This historic attempt to illustrate the value of education demonstrated a data-driven

response, which was supported by business and industry members throughout the state (Kantor & Lowe, 2011). In turn, the perceived productivity increase and potential for human capital gain was steep for board members to ignore (Kantor & Lowe, 2011). Since Mann's illumination of the concept of schooling for work, education has become a political pawn to improve economic wealth and status on an individual and global scale.

While the human capital goal argues that schooling precedes economic benefit, the fact remains that the premise of vocationalism supports an almost daily preservation of economic inequality based on the societal demand of economic capitalism (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Katz, 2001). As Ryan Pflieger (2016) argues, the actual economic power of education is limited, as unemployment and marginalization increase nationwide. Furthermore, political and social support for the economic value of education, and more specifically, college, continues to dominate headlines as a contributing factor toward the production of a thriving economy and the growth of nationwide earnings (Lazerson & Pflieger, 2015). Moreover, a recent Brookings Institution report by Hershbein, Kearney, and Summers (2015) contends that the economic outcomes of schooling continue to limit economic inequality at the expense of human capital gain (see also Lazerson & Pflieger, 2015).

In their report for the Hamilton Project, *Increasing Education: What it Will and Will Not Do for Earnings and Earnings Inequality*, Hershbein, Kearney, and Summers (2015) argue that access to higher education provides a direct link toward social mobility and overall earnings for individuals. They suggest that the “nation should aim to increase the educational attainment and, more generally, the skills of less-educated and lower-income individuals...[is] the most effective and direct way to increase their economic security, reduce poverty, and expand upward mobility” (p. 5). While this perception has often been reality for political and educational pundits, it

provides an overly simplistic response that generalizes American education. In turn, scholars must identify the economic and social challenges within specific states and communities, as the inconsistencies across these educational borders have been widely studied and publicized (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kozol, 2005).

In response to the findings of the Hamilton Project report, Lazerson and Pflieger (2015) identify the omission of categorical conclusions related to race, age, gender, ethnicity, field of study, labor market conditions, institutional quality, and reputation (p. 5). It remains evident that these critical factors, among others, carry widely different results across communities (Kozol, 2005). Moreover, Corak (2013) found that generational mobility in the United States is lower than any other country because marginalized populations are in the least possible position for upward mobility. Corak's (2013) study concludes that in the United States, children of high-earning parents are more likely to earn more than their parents, thus creating less overall upward mobility across generations. While the college graduation rate continues to rise, Bailey and Dynarski (2011) (as cited in Corak, 2013), reveal that among low-income children born in the early 1980s, the college graduation rate in 2011 increased by only four percentage points. However, during this same period, children born into high-income households increased college graduation by twenty percentage points (Bailey & Dynarski, 2011; as cited in Corak, 2013). These findings suggest that the outcomes of social reproduction vary based on socioeconomic status, and play an essential role in the more recent human capital arguments made by think tanks, politicians, and scholars.

Historical analyses on educational reforms, centered within the concept of human capital theory, highlight the federal push for vocationalism through policies such as the Smith-Hughes Vocational Education Act of 1917, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, the No

Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, and the more recent Race to the Top grant funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Kantor & Lowe, 2011). In review of these reforms, Kantor and Lowe (2011) lament how these programs have rarely produced the economic benefits promised, but instead have positioned schooling as the scapegoat for labor market concerns, as well as national and global economic woes. While industrialization demands initially drove the concept of vocationalism, the introduction of modern reforms by Silicon Valley CEOs, such as Apple's Tim Cook, has framed the discourse around the goal for youth to possess the technical skills necessary to compete for twenty-first-century careers (Cuban, 2017). In some ways, this new form of vocationalism aims to serve a greater breadth of students than previous reforms, as high schools and community colleges attempt to ensure that their students are "college and career ready" for emerging jobs and careers (Bragg, 2001).

While it is clear that school-based preparation for work is here to stay, we must continue efforts to increase its economic and educational outcomes of equality by identifying the educational imbalance across states, cities, and communities. By examining the social construction of vocationalism within communities, we may better understand the shortcomings of previous research, while identifying how we may be able to transform communities of individuals based on their unique skills and schooling needs.

### **The Setting: Milwaukee**

This dissertation explores the significance of vocationalism within our country and how vocational education has impacted a once industrial giant. In turn, this study examines vocationalism concerning its interconnectedness towards the cultural, political, and economic foundations of society (Beyer & Apple, 1988). Milwaukee's industrial growth, coupled with its early preparation and response to manual training presents an ideal example of how the country



began its ironclad embrace of vocationalism during the late nineteenth century (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 1993). While many scholars have identified the period during the Progressive Era to be the most influential in terms of its educational reforms (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002; Rury & Cassell, 1993), Milwaukee's adoption of manual training, industrial education, and vocational schooling captures a significant relationship between knowledge and power, and the acceptance of social efficiency as a progressive model to produce human capital and economic growth (Callaway & Baruch, 1993). Well before the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the educational decisions of Milwaukee's officials served as a template for politicians to take formal methods of vocational education to the federal level (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013; Rury & Cassell, 1993). Beginning in Milwaukee and extending across the Badger State, Wisconsin's legislatively backed vocational post-secondary education system has demonstrated the state's early commitment to human capital as a means to educate and train youth, the unemployed, and more recently, those needing remediation for skill-based occupations (Paris, 1985; Rury & Cassell, 1993).

During the Progressive Era, the shift towards training communities of people for emerging industries provided an opportunity to engage youth in education when most would leave schooling for the labor force (Kett, 1982). Grubb and Lazerson (2004) argue that ever since vocational education began in a formal capacity within public schools, education has never been the same. As parents sought education as a means to prepare their children for a career, vocationalism became the widely accepted solution for poverty and economic inequality as citizens made contributions toward societal aims. While industrial education reforms were widely embraced during the Progressive Era, perhaps no community has embodied its premise more than Milwaukee. To some, what makes Milwaukee most intriguing is its historical position

of support for both Progressive and Socialist political ideology, which presented separate positions on many important issues during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While both political movements supported separate ideologies nationwide, Milwaukee took a unique political position during this time; leaning more Socialist than the rest of the Progressively governed state. This dissertation examines the ways that these ideologies have constructed the Cream City's overwhelming support for vocationalism, historically.

To adequately explore Milwaukee's vocational beginnings from a historical perspective, this study examines a wealth of primary and secondary archival sources drawing on case study methods. Beginning in 1893 and ending in 1920, I juxtapose the Progressive and Socialist ideologies that were present during this time to examine the relationship between knowledge and power that vocationalism employed to address inequality and poverty within the Cream City. While Wisconsin's Progressives aimed to improve economic capitalism through methods of social efficiency, Milwaukee's most influential Democratic Socialists held a Marxist view that capitalism was the root of political concern. As Governor Robert La Follette and his Progressive machine held a political stronghold in the state, the city of Milwaukee was served by a Socialist leader for 26 years during the first half of the twentieth century (Reese, 2002). Led by Victor Berger, Milwaukee's "Sewer Socialists" developed their unique blend of Democratic Socialism, which came in contrast to the national position of the party (Reese, 2002). With a Marxist ideology in support of the proletariat, Milwaukee's Socialist movement gained notable support from prominent labor unions (Reese, 1981), which represented a unique political position of support that William Reese (1981) describes as being "more influential...than perhaps anywhere else in the nation" (p. 10). In turn, the success of Milwaukee's Socialist movement presents a

cultural perspective in which to examine a city and state that continues to advance the vocationalism goal (Reese, 1981).

### **Social Construction Defined**

From a sociological perspective, I define *social construction* as the historical development of knowledge and reality within a society (Berger & Luckmann 1966). As members of society develop individual perspectives based on “reality,” the construction of their interpretations derives from the social relativity of the society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Defined by the different social constructs, we acknowledge that what may be the knowledge and reality of one person may not be the same for another. Put another way, the social perspective of a white working-class individual will be inherently different than that of a black working-class individual (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The social reality of society is the historical development of ideology, either in part or as a whole, and the knowledge it represents. World-renowned philosopher, Michel Foucault (1972), describes how the possession of knowledge creates an attribute of power, and that knowledge influences the overall impact that the power holds. In turn, the relationship between knowledge and power can be defined by an individual society and the ideology it represents (Foucault, 1972). These ideological perspectives provide differing levels of influence for members of society, depending on their level of knowledge within their community (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; see also Mannheim, 1936, 1952, 1953, 1956). By studying the relationship between knowledge and power within society, we may best understand the political and economic outcome of what Foucault (1972) positions as the “production of truth” (p. 133). In this regard, this dissertation examines ways that the relationship between knowledge and power form educational ideologies,

centered on the vocationalism goal, which was socially constructed within a particular community.

The social construction of reality is determined by two key concepts of socialization: primary and secondary socialization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Primary socialization is defined as the initial information that a child encompasses, as they become a member of society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Secondary socialization then becomes the result of the subgroup that the individual encompasses as a form of institutionalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In turn, education and the concept of vocationalism serves as a primary illustration of secondary socialization, which challenges youth to perceive education as preparation for work and the reality of the discipline in which they are positioned. A conclusion of the second-order effects of primary socialization, secondary socialization serves as the reality of the limitations of youth based on their institutional context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Within vocationalism, this reality serves as the presupposition for the economic, labor, and educational ceiling that is attainable for youth. By examining education and the position of vocationalism further, we may identify the ideological, social structure that serves as secondary socialization barriers for youth.

Well known for his social understanding of individuals through social classes, Pierre Bourdieu (1989) examines how social classifications are, what he describes as, the *habitus* of an individual, or the combination of knowledge and power within their given space in society. As a result of habitus, an institutionalization forms its position within a social class as it perpetuates within society (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Bourdieu, 1989). Furthermore, the examination of vocationalism as a historical construction of reality describes what Berger and Luckmann (1966) identify as “habitualization” (p. 53). From an economic perspective, habitualization “implies that the action in question may be performed again in the future in the same manner and with the

same economical effort” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 53). For this study, vocationalism serves as an ideal example of habitualization and the development of institutionalization since its first introduction as a key factor toward the skill development of individuals and the amelioration of poverty.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

While many historians have examined the relationship between economic capitalism and education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Kozol, 2005; Labaree, 1997a, 2004; Lazerson & Grubb, 1974), limited research exists on the development and support for vocationalism and its ideology within society (Pfleger, 2016). By examining the historical outcomes of vocationalism within a specific community, we may better understand the ideologies, policies, and reforms that comprise the underpinnings of the social construction of education for citizens.

Since the reforms of the Progressive Era, vocationalism has possessed a pedagogical stronghold within schools across the nation (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kozol, 2005). While many scholars have examined the influence of business and industry within schooling, the ethnographic perspective of Jonathan Kozol (2005) in *The Shame of the Nation* presents an example of the disparities vocationalism currently presents between inner city and suburban schooling. In his study, Kozol (2005) argues that the integration of business and industry, within schooling, has produced a narrow perspective of education through the discourse, curriculum, and, ultimately, the vision students have for their education based on perceived levels of academic ability and social mobility.

As recent as 2016, then State Superintendent, Tony Evers, and the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) introduced a plan for districts to implement a process of

Academic and Career Planning (ACP) for students (“ACP in Wisconsin,” 2016). In turn, Wisconsin schools are required to incorporate career planning within all stages of K-12 education and specifically, middle school career exploration, career planning, and career management (“ACP in Wisconsin,” 2016). Information packets distributed to school districts and families made direct inferences toward preparing students for the “global economy” by introducing students to “Advanced knowledge, technical skills, education and training [that is] required for an increasing proportion of American job openings” (“ACP in Wisconsin,” p. 11).

While it may be considered simplistic to speculate on the level of influence business and industry has had on academic reforms such as Wisconsin’s Academic and Career Planning initiative, Kozol (2005) presents a compelling argument that:

At the same time, it is impossible to overlook the fact that the most potent advocacy for these programs has been coming not from educational progressives but from business leaders and political conservatives who have, in general, been silent, if not hostile, on the subjects of desegregation and equality of funding in our public schools and whose stated views are often redolent of social Darwinist ideas that cannot by the furthest stretches of imagination be regarded as egalitarian. (p.104)

Although I examine the ideology of social Darwinism and its connection to Progressive Era reforms in greater detail within this study, it is evident that business and industry leaders have their economic goals in mind when asserting their influence with educational administrators and politicians (Kozol, 2005). Ryan Pflieger’s (2016) dissertation on the social construction of vocationalism within media discourse presents a convincing argument that the economic reasoning of schooling, presented within vocationalism, has produced hegemony and has

contributed toward the abatement of democratic outcomes within education. Pflieger (2016) argues:

What people know is a product-process of an ongoing process of creation or construction, in that people cannot step outside of their language, culture, and past meaningfully and purposively. Thus, vocationalism (and its understanding) is both a product and a process that is contingent historically. (p. 10)

This study argues that vocationalism has conditioned the public toward the disposition of education as a social commodity within the human capital goal versus engaging and empowering citizens. While historical examinations of social mobility, social efficiency, and social reproduction have produced a limited argument in relation to current forms of vocationalism (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Kliebard, 1999; see also Pflieger, 2016), I argue that we must examine the political and social connection to business and industry historically in order to understand how vocationalism was constructed and how it has been disseminated through ideology and discourse. Delving into the history of Milwaukee's educational roots provides an opportunity to review the labor history and demands of industrialization that drove education towards vocational means. Additionally, a juxtaposition of Socialist and Progressive ideology within Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin provides further examination into educational reforms from the engagement of critical political and educational pundits who helped shape the Cream City and the Badger State.

With these themes in mind, this study was designed as a critical historiographical analysis to develop further inquiry and a call to the development of educational reforms that aim to provide democratic practices from the position of vocational education. In turn, this research answers the following central research question: How has ideology shaped education within the

context of vocationalism in Milwaukee? This study seeks answers to questions surrounding the historical outcomes of vocationalism for Milwaukee's citizens. Moreover, this study aims to identify the efforts toward the social construction of vocationalism for Milwaukeean, and how its position toward education, training, and labor has shaped a once industrial Midwestern community.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This dissertation explores vocationalism through a critical, social scientific approach, incorporating case study methods of historical inquiry. With an interpretation of primary archival documents and secondary historical literature, my study engages an understanding and meaning for the events that have supported vocationalism within Milwaukee's community (Creswell, 2014; Rury, 2006; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In turn, I explore the evolution of the ideals of vocationalism within the philosophy, ideology, and politics that existed during a period when manual training, industrial education, and vocational education gained widespread support in similar communities nationwide (Kincheloe, 1991; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

From a critical historiographical perspective, this study investigates the construction of vocationalism through a broad narrative, examining how the past has been interpreted and influenced by Milwaukee's residents (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In turn, this dissertation identifies and articulates specific historical events and influential figures, which have made contributions towards the birth and support for vocationalism between 1893 and 1920. This date range was selected in an effort to examine Milwaukee's vast economic shift during this time, its political structure and rise of Progressivism, the counter position of Socialism, and its early support for formal methods of vocational education, which served as both direct and indirect methods of support for education during this period (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002;



Thelen, 1972). Through an examination of historical themes and social movements, this dissertation engages evidence-based inferences and interpretations through a reconstruction of Milwaukee's educational and industrial past (Rury, 2006).

It is important to note that several scholars have examined the historical constructs of vocationalism (Gordon, 2014; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999; Pflieger, 2016), with few studies on vocationalism in Milwaukee specifically. Although similar, Rury and Cassell's (1993) work in *Seeds of Crisis: Public Schooling in Milwaukee since 1920* specifically examined the construction of Milwaukee's K-12 schooling through the socio-economic and political challenges that plagued Milwaukee for decades. In yet another similar study, William Reese's (2002) historical examination of Progressive Era reforms in Kansas City, Milwaukee, Rochester, and Toledo, made essential contributions to the research that juxtapose the educational reforms of four industrial cities in an illumination of educational and industrial change during a period of historical significance.

My dissertation differs from these works in that I examine the political and social factors that have contributed towards vocationalism from both secondary and post-secondary perspectives. Missing from both Reese (2002) and Rury and Cassell's (1993) studies is an examination of Charles McCarthy and his contributions toward the development of "The Wisconsin Idea," which produced a Legislative Reference Library that served as a repository of research for the advancement of a philosophy steeped in a democratic ideology toward economic prosperity (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Hoeveler, 1976). McCarthy's leadership at the Legislative Reference Library positioned him as the prime architect for the design of a system of vocational continuation schools, and eventually a State Board of Vocational Education (Kliebard, 1999; Paris, 1985; Tarbell, 1958). Recognized as a notable engineer of vocational schooling, McCarthy

believed that education should not be restricted in any way for Wisconsin residents (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). Gaining legislative support from Governor Robert La Follette and other Progressive Wisconsin politicians during this period provided a link to state funding for vocational training, including the passing of the Continuation School Laws of 1911, requiring a local board of industrial education for every city with a population greater than 5,000 residents to train youth for skill-based work and education (Kliebard, 1999; Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985).

Examining political figures such as McCarthy, La Follette, and others illuminate the outcomes of vocationalism that made unique contributions toward Milwaukee's social and economic growth as it rose to prominence as a leader in industrialism. One of the most momentous periods of change for Milwaukeeans was the economic depression of 1893 (Thelen, 1972). During the late nineteenth century, Milwaukee experienced a significant change in ideology, economic management, and educational reform that can be traced to an influence of Progressive and Socialist politics, which served in response to the economic decline and its impact on citizens (Thelen, 1972). This study examines the constructs of economic inequality and poverty and its impact on social-class structures. In turn, this dissertation illustrates the power of vocationalism concerning its economic promise.

In many ways, the central theme of this study is akin to Harvey Kantor's (1988) historiographical examination of vocational reforms in California from 1880-1930 in *Learning to Earn*. Similarly, this examination of Milwaukee determines how vocationalism served as a response to the labor market changes over time (Kantor, 1988). This study analyzes critical political decisions, which made historical contributions toward the development of educational policy and the growth of a statewide vocational system of education. Furthermore, I present what Kincheloe (2006) describes as an obligation "to understand hegemonic, ideological, discursive,

disciplinary, and regulatory modes of power and the ways they affect human efforts to shape their own lives” (p. 321). While it would be an oversimplification to associate the reforms and impact of vocational education in California, which was displayed within Kantor’s (1988) work, similarly within Milwaukee, the parallels of vocational schooling in both states serve as an ideal example of how states prepared youth for the workplace during this time (Kantor, 1988).

### **Rationale and Significance**

Though previous studies have argued that the reforms of the Progressive Era have made long-lasting contributions toward current forms of education that exist today (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rury, 1993, 2013), my exploration into Milwaukee’s educational history provides an examination of the construction and promotion of vocationalism that has influenced the economy and labor force within a community that has epitomized proletarianization. Many scholarly positions have explained the rise of vocationalism in America; however, Rodgers and Tyack (1982) synthesize the arguments that have appeared throughout the literature into three significant categories. While their writings on these positions are several decades removed from modern studies on vocationalism, it remains evident that these same arguments persist today (Rury, 2013).

The first argument is that early forms of schooling were not positioned to support the working-class demands of the labor force and society. Industrialization required an increased workforce, and child labor served the demands for entry-level jobs during this time. While youth often left schooling by the age of fourteen for work, they would remain in dead-end jobs with little to no room for increased wages and skills (Kantor & Tyack, 1982; Kliebard, 1999). Education became the means to provide formal training for youth to ensure that they would become productive contributors toward society.

While education began to provide labor market support to meet industrial demands, it presented the need for philanthropists, politicians, and scholars to hold education responsible for the path to employment for youth and a formal means to educate citizens (Kantor & Tyack, 1982). The result was increased attendance in schooling for youth and the development of continuation schools, which required education for working youth (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). Consequently, the role of high school significantly changed during this period, as it transformed into a formal means of mass education toward human capital gain (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982).

The second position argues that the economic structure of the country during the Progressive Era demanded social structure change, which stratified the labor force due to a need for various forms of skilled labor (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). In modern terms, this position on the development of human capital is rooted in neoliberalism, which argues that educational equality exists, and it is the expectation that youth will invest in education only to then be rewarded by its outcomes through upward mobility and economic gain (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982; Rury, 2013). By gaining efficiency and productivity, schooling aimed to meet labor and economic demands (Rury, 2013). The result was schooling that supported human capital growth while providing tangible economic outcomes for the taxpayer.

The final position considers the role of social efficiency by identifying youth for the workforce, which they were deemed best suited based on human ability and business needs (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). In turn, this led to separate forms of education while providing economic gains for businesses, the economy, and the employee. The response was to evaluate youth based on methods of testing to ensure that those at the top of the educational scale rose to prominence and received elite opportunities for post-secondary and higher education. In turn, social efficiency ensured that schooling mimicked the outcomes of labor and that youth would

quickly fall into their destined role within society. Rodgers and Tyack (1982) argue that if the ideology of social efficiency possessed such a key influence on education as some scholars contend, then no other position would hold relevance. Quite simply, if the ideologies of the Progressive Era did form a hegemonic stronghold on reform, the development of a vocational curriculum would have been inevitable (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982).

Many historians have examined the constructs of vocationalism and vocational education (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kantor & Tyack, 1982, Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999; Lazerson & Grubb, 1974; Pflieger, 2016; Reese, 2002; Rury, 2013); however, recent outcomes of capitalist education that have been dubbed “new vocationalism” represent the development of a more egalitarian form of schooling, which provides a wide range of services and career pathways (Bragg, 2001; Grubb, 1996). These modern forms of vocationalism integrate aspects of both academic and vocational education within schooling for youth (Grubb, 1996). In turn, new vocationalism has attempted to serve a global role in workforce preparation within a broad spectrum of employment demands versus a narrow scope of manufacturing and industrial labor (Lynch, 2000).

Although this dissertation examines the historical constructs of vocationalism, the central theme that schooling predicates employment continues to this day. Though vocationalism no longer exists within the context it did during the Progressive Era; the community college has since served the role of meeting local business needs based on a well-established educational hierarchy, which began over a century ago (Bragg, 2001; Grubb, 1996). To meet local needs, community colleges have functioned as dynamic institutions that provide training for dislocated workers, high school remediation, workforce development, and four-year transfer among traditional post-secondary matriculation (Bragg, 2001).

This examination of Milwaukee's educational reform and ideology provides an ideal example for the illumination of egalitarian forms of education. The successes of Milwaukee's Continuation School, which began in 1912 with its secondary vocational programs, have provided politicians with the fuel needed to take vocational education to the national stage (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013). Modeled after these successes, the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 shifted the national discourse on education toward vocationalism, as federal funding for education and training became available for industrial cities (Kliebard, 1999). As Wisconsin's vocational model continued its success, state support for a legislative system of technical and vocational adult education grew into a mission to support the most significant economic communities within the state (Paris, 1985). To this day, this formal system of vocationalism continues to provide a unique perspective into the ideology and economic mission of schooling and work for the Badger State.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to best analyze the construction of vocationalism and its social and political state, I employed a critical-historiographical perspective to examine the power structures and hegemonic dominance, which previous scholars have linked to the concept of vocationalism (Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). While not to be confused with critical social theory, this study investigates issues of power, ideology, and equity in accordance with critical research characteristics in relation to race, gender, socioeconomic status, and social class (Creswell, 2014; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006; Ravich & Carl, 2016). Channeling Paulo Freire's (1970) influential research in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, my study identifies the ideological and social factors that have contributed toward vocationalism as a means to understand its social outcomes (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

By examining the connections between ideology, social class, and politics through critical theory, this study determines how these constructs have shaped vocationalism within an accurate representation of Kincheloe's (2006) definition of a critical historical context (see also Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). As Kincheloe (2006) describes, a critical historical context provides a captious lens for viewing the phenomenon of vocationalism and the determination of its origins. In turn, this dissertation serves as a realistic view of history while determining the cause and impact of the present and future (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

The selection of a critical framework allows for an appropriate examination of vocationalism and its contributions toward educational change (Kincheloe, 1991). Freire (1970) describes the importance of understanding reality through critical analysis as having a "total vision of the context" (p. 104). Through examination of the dominance vocationalism possesses, this study was positioned to identify how its power has impacted the distribution of knowledge for Milwaukee's citizens (Kincheloe, 2005a).

Historical inquiry asks the researcher to interpret data from the past to make evidence-based inferences (Rury, 2006). Through a critical lens, my study provides interpretations regarding the construction of vocationalism in Milwaukee within a capitalist economic society. In this regard, my historiographical analysis utilizes research paradigms that have guided my research. Berry (2006) describes how paradigms represent perspectives of belief in response to ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions, which guide the researcher through methods of inquiry. By utilizing paradigms, my study examines different perspectives and interpretations throughout the research process (Berry, 2006).

While Guba (1990) defines a paradigm as broad as “as a set of beliefs that guide action,” he also leaves individual interpretation of this definition up to the researcher, as the conceptual use of the paradigm is solely based on the beliefs of the researcher (p. 17). I begin by identifying my selection and use of paradigms within this study.

The concept of paradigms originated with Thomas Kuhn (1970) and his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn (1970) describes how theory encapsulates the foundation of research through the beliefs of the researcher (Crotty, 1998). In turn, paradigms are developed within the context of the researcher as the culmination of their perspectives within ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Crotty, 1998). While the paradigms that are selected for the study display the reality studied through the research methodology, they also offer a foundation and framework for the perspective in which the research is conducted, analyzed, and reported (Crotty, 1998).

When determining the characterization of the paradigm that would serve as the framework for my study, I examined the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions that Guba (1990) identified within his description of paradigms. Through the reflection of reality, paradigms serve as an interpretive lens of the values and beliefs of the researcher (Guba, 1990). Consequently, the selection of paradigms is paramount, as it sets the parameters of research and inquiry for the study (Crotty, 1998). It is in this regard that I define my researcher paradigm as a critical constructivist (Kincheloe, 2005a).

Joe Kincheloe (2005a) describes how critical constructivism positions knowledge through the social construction of culture and history. To this end, the perspectives gained through economic, social, and political contexts shape our view of the community, which we reside (Kincheloe, 2005a). Since vocationalism serves to shape the social and economic



perspectives of individuals, this paradigm served as the ideal design for my study. Framed within the foundation of constructionism, which establishes the engagement of individuals within their interpretations (Crotty, 1998), critical constructivism examines the world through the “social, political, economic, cultural, psychological, and pedagogical” production of knowledge (Kincheloe, 2005a, p. 3). Similar to previous questions examined by historians, Kincheloe (2005a) describes how the lens of critical constructivism positions the researcher to examine important questions such as: “What is the purpose of schooling? How should instruction be organized? What is the curriculum, and how do we conceptualize it? How do we understand the relationship between schooling and society?” (p. 5).

### **Summary and Chapter Outline**

While this chapter has provided examples of the historical dominance of vocationalism in America, it has summarized some of its failures and successes to provide a contextual background for readers. While brief, this summary suggests that a historiographical analysis of the social construction of vocationalism will provide further contribution toward educational research by illuminating Milwaukee’s journey to develop an industrial community.

In many ways, Milwaukee provides an ideal example for analysis, as much of the legislation within Wisconsin during the twentieth century, including models of vocational education, served a pioneering role for the rest of the country (Kaufman, 2018, Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013). As an early “laboratory of democracy,” this examination of key figures such as La Follette, McCarthy, Cooley, Berger, and others demonstrates the egalitarian methods taken to develop the citizens and state of Wisconsin and their impact on Milwaukee, specifically (Kaufman, 2018, p. 6). Ever since, the conservative transition to a hegemonic political structure, as eloquently examined by Dan Kaufman (2018), has decimated this premise. Instead, political

leaders have since appealed to the ideologies of efficiency, stratification, and human capital power, which have severely limited marginalized populations of citizens within the most diverse metropolis in the state.

The chapters that follow illustrate Milwaukee's early egalitarian forms of vocationalism in an effort to understand their original premise and construction within the social landscape of the Cream City. Similar to Pflieger (2016), my aim is not to provide an alternative to vocationalism, as I believe its original form offers an important egalitarian value within our capitalistic society. Instead, I offer an analysis of how vocationalism has provided economic advancement for a community through educational attainment and the promise of economic mobility.

Divided into eight chapters, this historiographical dissertation begins with this introductory chapter, which has provided an overview of vocationalism, the setting of Milwaukee, my perspective on the analysis of social construction, my research question, an overview of my historiographical research methods, a rationale and significance for the study, my critical theoretical framework, and this summary and chapter outline.

Chapter two provides some context to the components of vocationalism: capital, economics, and the premise of schooling. It is here that I examine the constructs of the human capital argument that promises social mobility; however, as some scholars contend, serves social reproduction and a neoliberal mission. This chapter concludes with a synthesis regarding the pedagogy of education and its outcomes concerning the vocationalism goal, which serves modern reasoning for schooling and preparation for work.

Chapter three details my historiographical research methods, selection of critical constructivism, and overview of my data collection methods and analysis. In addition, this

chapter provides further detail regarding the selection of Milwaukee, the period examined, and the populations detailed within the study. I conclude this chapter with an explanation of the issues of trustworthiness that have been addressed within the study, as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study.

Chapter four provides context to the origins of vocational education in America for the reader. In this synthesis, I examine the ideologies of the Progressive Era that aimed to support social control during a period of immigration and post-Civil War industrialism. Highlighting the ideologies of social efficiency, eugenics, and social Darwinism, I explain the origins of manual training and the development of vocationalism to control populations of individuals in response to xenophobic belief and fear of job loss. This chapter concludes with a synthesis on the development of a formal curricula and the support for “scientific” management as a means to streamline the path between labor and schooling.

Chapters five through seven of this study articulate my analysis of Milwaukee’s historical construction of vocationalism. Specifically, chapter five examines the city and people of Milwaukee that comprised the primary methods of labor during the late 1800s to the 1910s. This section examines the Germans, Poles, and African American populations within the city and their various classifications of working-class labor in relation to education during this period. I specifically highlight the depression of 1893 and the shift in ideology within the Cream City, as the city focused its efforts to ameliorate poverty and ensure that future depressions were less detrimental to the community. In this chapter, I examine the social impact of poverty, which served as the driving force for economic and social change within the communities of Milwaukee’s citizens.

Chapter six examines the origins of two of Milwaukee's most influential political positions during this time: Social Progressivism and Social Democracy. This section explores the machine progressive politics of Robert La Follette and its juxtaposition with Victor Berger's Sewer Socialism, which uniquely served Milwaukee's citizens for decades during the 1900s. Also explored are Wisconsin's progressive roots, first laid by the Mugwumps. Detailed further is an examination of the political perspectives on education and the influence of concepts such as manual training, vacation schooling, and industrial education, which served Milwaukee's citizens.

Chapter seven examines Milwaukee's link between labor and schooling. Specifically explored is the development of *The Wisconsin Idea* (1912) and formal methods of vocational schooling, supported by Progressive leaders. This chapter details the development of Milwaukee's first public trade school, leading to the development of a system of formal trade schooling within the city. Also examined is the development of the Milwaukee Vocational School and its role as a continuation school for Milwaukee's youth. A review of its leader, Robert L. Cooley, is presented along with an overview of the school's service to the community during this period.

This study concludes with chapter eight, which provides a summary of the findings and analysis examined throughout the study. Highlighted are my inferences, assumptions, and limitations in relation to Milwaukee's vocational past. Included are recommendations, based on the outcomes of these findings in relation to modern vocationalism and Milwaukee's current landscape.

## Chapter 2

### Contextualizing Capital, Economics, and the Purpose of Schooling

Scholarship on the vocational purpose of education has long considered functionalist perspectives steeped in Marxist tradition (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985). This chapter contextualizes the functionalist themes of capitalism and the purpose of schooling to synthesize the Marxist argument; further illustrating the connection between education and work. As a result, I aim to provide an understanding of the relationship between vocationalism, the influence of capitalism, and outcomes to set the stage for the economic debate of vocationalism. While Pflieger (2016) argues that these scholarly positions on vocationalism are rife with incomplete evidence, failing to include discourse analysis methods, I argue that a historiographical analysis of the social construction of the educational and economic reforms of the Progressive Era provides strong support for these historical Marxist arguments.

Examination of the economic outcome of schooling arrives at the scholarly position of human capital and the development of an educated, skilled workforce. While limited to the commercial purpose of education, this perspective argues that it is the employer, as a result of capitalist production, which controls the level of profit, production, and intensity of the labor force through the development of human capital (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985). In turn, the investment and development of the individual becomes a critical factor toward economic success, as its outcome aims to produce individuals who can carry out the appropriate workplace skills to increase production and profits (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). While in many ways, these arguments provide a limited examination of vocationalism (Pflieger, 2016), they provide further context toward its overall economic power and success through the development of the individual.

This study would be incomplete if it did not include the voice of the critical theorist. Often examined from historical perspectives, investigations of social class and schooling have arrived at forms of social reproduction theory and upward mobility, which have attempted to address the economic outcomes of schooling from the perspective of vocationalism (Grubb & Lazerson, 1999; Kantor & Tyack, 1982; Kliebard, 1999; Labaree, 1999; Rury, 2013). While functionalist and critical positions provide an investigation into the vocationalism goal, this chapter concludes with an examination into the pedagogy of education as an alternate means of vocationalism. From a democratic perspective, this position presents an interesting examination into reforms that may have been easily confused with traditional perspectives in vocationalism. In turn, examination of the pedagogy of education importantly addresses the perspectives of Wisconsin reformers, which led to egalitarian methods of education during the Progressive Era.

### **The Constructs of Human Capital**

At its core definition, *human capital* highlights the level of success for individuals associated with their acquired knowledge and skills (Becker, 1964; Doob, 2013; Kantor & Tyack, 1982; Rury, 2013). As an outcome of education and skill-based learning, human capital describes the commodity of the degree or diploma as a tangible support toward economic advancement (Labaree, 1999; Rury, 2013). Consequently, human capital theory has served as one of the underpinning functionalist perspectives for vocationalism and the relationship between education and work (Kantor & Tyack, 1982).

One of the central arguments during the Progressive Era focused on education and its lack of support and continued isolation from business and industry (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rodgers & Tyack, 1982; Rury, 2013). However, Rodgers and Tyack (1982) argue that schooling had always served as preparation of youth for the workforce. Most of the skills taught before the

introduction of formal vocational education supported workplace practices of punctuality, behavior, and communication (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). During this time, apprenticeships were considered to be ineffective at meeting industrial needs, and by having formal vocational schools train youth, education could serve a functional role. In turn, educational reforms would become more supportive and productive towards a capitalist economy (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004).

For Americans, human capital presents a promise of individual achievement and upward mobility through initiative, hard work, and an intuitive use of available resources (Doob, 2013; Willis, 1977). While human capital promises a romanticism of absolute wealth, its outcomes have proven to perpetuate a glass ceiling at the expense of the working class; providing further limitation on freedom and mobility (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Willis, 1977). In turn, the working class has essentially become enslaved within a division of labor for their mental and physical capacities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Willis, 1977). While education preaches the open-ended promise of upward mobility, the reality is that the working class product of labor continues to be controlled by the elite (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985). Consequently, this labor power has supported the development of the proletariat disproportionately within ethnic and immigrant communities for the benefit of the elite upper class (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Doob, 2013; Labaree, 1997).

Through the promotion of school enrollment, education has embraced the goal of capitalism, as employment continues to demonstrate the individual economic successes of workers (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). While schooling began to make rapid contributions towards the economic growth of the country during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, skilled youth living in rural areas began to move to cities for the promise of work (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). In turn, the ideological premise of schooling introduced a doctrine of values for

youth that made contributions toward the economic successes and perceived social and economic mobility for individuals through the development of character, persistence, skill, and employee relations (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982). As a result, youth were perceived as serving their country through an idealization of citizenship that portrayed them as true Americans (Rodgers & Tyack, 1982).

While Progressive Era reforms provided growth to cities, youth possessed a newfound autonomy during a period of rapid social change (Rury, 2013). As economic growth soared, so did the population of citizens, as cities nearly doubled in population between 1870 and 1910, resulting in a period of differentiation that supported the development of various occupations to meet social and cultural needs (Rury, 2013). While youth entering cities achieved opportunities for labor, the social factors once taken for granted began to change, as American life experienced solitude amidst immense population growth (Rury, 2013).

The economic growth of this era demonstrates America's response to labor and social changes during this time (Rury, 2013). While the population of the country increased, additional schools were needed to educate and train the growing workforce, in addition to the successors of the current labor market (Rury, 2013). As schooling has evolved to support economic growth, it has required a shift in outcomes towards various levels of education to meet social and economic needs (Rury, 2013). Quite simply, if education had failed to support the vocational growth of the country, it is possible that America would not have witnessed the rapid economic development and social urbanization during this time (Goldin & Katz, 2008).

While the link between schooling and work may have been inevitable, the strength of its connection and power within society remain vital questions that often arrive at differing results. During the mid-twentieth century the economic tensions of schooling were well underway upon



the conclusion of World War II. In turn, the training of soldiers presented one of the most significant forms of economic mobility for citizens due to the vocationalism goal (Kliebard, 1999). While the success of the community college in this capacity has been often argued (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Labaree, 2004), what remains is a model of mobility that has presented an avenue for community growth.

### **Social Mobility: A Model of Social Control**

Social mobility positions education as the primary means for progression within society (Labaree, 1997). It is within this structure that the movement of citizens up and down the ladder of social classes supports individual achievement in the form of economic and social wealth (Doob, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Thernstrom, 1964). For students, the return on investment is the diploma, which produces a commodity upon completion that can be used to leverage success (Labaree, 1997). A natural form of competition is the result, which supports a merit-based social order (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Labaree, 1997; Thernstrom, 1964). Scholars argue that for more than a century, the conclusion of educational attainment has produced or reduced social mobility within internal labor markets and stratified the workforce (Grubb & Lazerson, 1982). Consequently, the institution of education today reinforces compliance over practice, as education has become an “exchange value” outcome (Labaree, 1997, p. 54).

Critical theorists argue that the outcomes of social mobility present a progressive approach to produce “winners” within society (Labaree, 1997, p. 43). However, most commonly, it remains that the amounts of schooling youth receive, and the outcome is a direct result of the socioeconomic status of their parents (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Doob, 2013, Haveman & Smeeding, 2006). Those who have been deemed successful within society earn more, have more possessions and are often well educated. In turn, the theory of social mobility argues that schools

should teach students the curriculum and provide a diploma that validates what they have demonstrated and learned throughout schooling as a means to move upward within society or to preserve their current position (Labaree, 1997). The result is a goal of social mobility that concentrates on the economic outcome and status of the individual (Labaree, 1997).

In her well-known ethnography of elementary school students, *Home Advantage: Social Class and Parental Intervention in Elementary Education*, Annette Lareau (2000) identifies the impact of schooling on social mobility within the working-class and middle-class schools she studies. Lareau (2000) illustrates how class structures limit education for generations as those with a limited perspective on education lack the knowledge, information, and skills to progress within the institution of schooling. Bourdieu (1986) describes this as the “institutionalized state,” which capitalism promotes (p. 243). The consumption of education presents a Darwinian approach as the only possibility for mobility within the working class (Bourdieu, 1986; Labaree, 1997). In this form, the separation of students occurs in order for schooling to validate its performance and the performance of its students (Bourdieu, 1986; Labaree, 1997). This stratification comes in the form of grades, tracking, and credentials such as advanced degrees; which often mirror the division of labor (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Labaree, 1997). As a result, education serves as an exchange value, which directs the student to follow specific expectations in order to achieve the outcome of the credential desired (Labaree, 1997). In this critical lens, schooling functions similar to a job in that the outcome, profits, and wage become the focal interest for both the employee and the employer (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Labaree, 1997).

Several scholars have identified how the objectives of social mobility serve as a level of social control over its promise of upward progression within the social ladder (Labaree, 1997; Thernstrom, 1964; Willis, 1977). As an example, youth born into the upper class often do not

become more upwardly mobile throughout their lives based on their position at the top of the social class structure (Doob, 2013). In response, Christopher Doob (2013) stresses the importance of referring to social mobility as the movement of individuals both upward and downward within the social structure. In this context, the academic achievements of the individual become tangible means of division from others and can produce both positive and negative consequences towards outcomes of social mobility (Doob, 2013; Labaree, 1997).

The success of social mobility is determined by the progression of individuals from blue-collar positions within manual labor to more white-collar roles considered to be “professional” or that include supervision (Thernstrom, 1964, p. 68). During the late nineteenth century, citizenship was the goal of reformers, and by training for workforce production, education aimed to serve a pragmatic, vocational role of upward mobility for the working class citizens (Labaree, 1997). During the same period, educators and scholars argued that if everyone were a college graduate, the labor needs of society would go unfulfilled (Kliebard, 1999; Null, 2004). Vocational education would serve the working class needs of communities through a form of occupational efficiency, which would produce the primary means of economic development for society (Ravitch, 2000). As parents of middle-class youth would seek a career for their child, youth within working-class households sought positions of manual labor (Tyack, 1979). Through the reproduction of individuals to meet the economic demands of the community in which youth reside, several scholars argue that these vocational outcomes have directly contributed towards a stratification that continues to perpetuate the existing social order (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Kliebard, 1990; Tyack, 1979).

During the nineteenth century, the annual income of a white-collar employee was more than twice that of a working-class employee (Thernstrom, 1964). For working-class employees,

the gritty and dangerous manual tasks of the job produced a masculinity that formed high levels of self-esteem for individuals (Willis, 1977). As a result, masculinity produced a sense of purpose for the working class, which became an intangible aspect of cultural capital for the workforce (Willis, 1977). Moreover, Willis (1977) describes that even though immigrant groups were often reduced to the menial and rigorous jobs, these individuals were perceived as more hardened and masculine than their white-collar counterparts. While the middle and upper class deemed these forms of labor as beneath them, it came with respect that these workers were best suited to utilize their physical strength for skills that may be unsustainable or nontransferable over future years.

In his cultural study of a small, working-class community in Massachusetts during the late nineteenth century, Stephan Thernstrom (1964) describes the classification and impact of social mobility within the working class. Skilled occupations, semi-skilled occupations, and unskilled occupations served as the three distinctions between working-class individuals during this time (Thernstrom, 1964). Of the highest levels of mobility within skilled occupations, machinists, blacksmiths, and carpenters were all deemed as “vocations” which were far superior to other forms of manual labor and produced the highest earnings (Thernstrom, 1964, p. 92). It is here that self-esteem was identified by those upwardly mobile laborers within the working class, as being able to support their family and not having to rely on supplemental income (Thernstrom, 1964). In similar respects, this perspective is similar to those of the white-collar positions based on the gap in income between working-class jobs.

In a similar study of post-industrial New York City, Roger Waldinger (1996) provides a critical examination of the link between education and social reproduction in *Still the Promised City?* In his study, Waldinger (1996) examines the impact of social mobility on populations of

immigrants as the number of jobs requiring a minimum of a high school diploma during this time declined by nearly 60 percent. As a result, blacks, with limited access to schooling, became ineligible for the increased number of available white-collar positions (Waldinger, 1996). In turn, Waldinger (1996) discusses how the development of social and cultural capital provided black workers with high-quality blue-collar jobs within the public sector during this time due to municipal compliance with anti-discrimination policies. The result was a public sector of employment, which served as a primary means for upward mobility into the middle class (Waldinger, 1996). By 1990, the concentration of black civil service workers among other ethnicities was still the majority, and even as opportunities for schooling had increased for blacks by this time, black workers within municipal positions possessed more education than private-sector employees with a similar job classification (Waldinger, 1996).

Historical researchers Grubb and Lazerson (1982) argue that the selection of educational attainment, as a verifiable form of persistence and ability, became a dominant principle of social mobility during the late nineteenth century. The growth of large corporations produced the need for formalized hiring practices and, in turn, opportunities for upward mobility within businesses (Grubb & Lazerson, 1982). As a result, Grubb and Lazerson (1982), contend that the development of internal, corporate labor markets became a primary factor toward the acceptance and reinforcement of the vocationalism of schooling. In this example, the natural competition for work shifted towards employees seeking work with specific employers that would, in turn, provide the opportunity for upward mobility and a sustainable career.

Poverty often serves as the driving force behind educational and social reforms that aim to increase economic mobility. Grubb and Lazerson (2004) argue that these reforms provide an empty promise for many who enroll in higher education each semester. Moreover, they argue it

is the social policies that keep those in poverty within a continuous spiral of oppression (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). The result is a social structure that preaches the opportunities of education as gospel, perceiving education as truly egalitarian from intake to graduation for all. Expediently and comprehensively, Grubb and Lazerson (2004) outline the social and economic policies that play a role in retaining those in poverty and without social capital to gain the mobility promised through education: “Inadequate health policies, inadequate housing policies, the absence of urban redevelopment policies, failed desegregation policies, lack of cost-effective childcare, low wages, inadequate financial aid policies for education, continued racist practices, and inequality and hostility towards welfare” (pp. 153-154). Consequently, as they contend, “the American approach to vocationalism is embedded in a weak welfare state, where noneducation policies are inadequate, and efforts to intervene directly in labor markets are largely untested” (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004, p. 154).

It is without question that the mobility argument is invalid; however, Americans continue to embrace the promise of economic mobility through education as a doctrine of society. Although there have been historical periods of postsecondary educational expansion and enrollment growth, these educational shifts have often led to an oversaturated market of graduates overqualified for the jobs they were able to attain (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). As I examine in the next section, the more recent theory of social reproduction plays a role in the lack of employment and upward mobility that vocationalism promises (Labaree, 2004).

### **Social Reproduction: The Promise of Economic Mobility**

While many critical and historical theorists argue that education serves as a means of upward mobility, analysis of social reproduction within schooling have identified that historical forms of education have reproduced inequality and stratification for youth (Carnoy & Levin,

1985; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kantor, 1982; Labaree, 2004; Rury, 2013). Social reproduction theory emphasizes the role of education within the forms of capital as a means to promote social inequality (Doob, 2013; Labaree, 1997; Martin, 2010). By competing with others, citizens within society receive particular jobs, careers, and outcomes concerning how they perform within a series of expectations driven by education and social positions (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Doob, 2013; Labaree, 1997). Bowles and Gintis (1976) contend that this social stratification perpetuates class structures, cultures, and individuals within society and the economic landscape. As a result, privilege and power reign supreme, with those on the low end of the mobility scale continuously dominated in a Darwinian fashion (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Labaree, 1997). Social reproduction scholars argue that it is the perpetual social system, which continues to reproduce based on its needs and the willingness, or lack of options, for those to meet the needs of society through confirmation of defeat within the economic sphere (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Through an educational system rife with inequality, individuals seek what is perceived as available or possible to them through their perceptions of their individual, cognitive, and personal abilities as identified within the grades, credits, and credentials earned throughout the educational process (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Labaree, 1997). The result is a form of hegemonic capitalism that ensures that even the most dangerous, dirty, and mundane tasks are completed within society (Labaree, 1997).

In their defining text, *Schooling in Capitalist America*, Bowles and Gintis (1976) describe how stratification affects the position of the working class. Dreams and hopes are adjusted exclusively toward the perceptions of citizens (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). The working class is perpetuated by groups of citizens who “channel the development of their personal powers – cognitive, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and spiritual – in directions where they will have an

opportunity to exercise them” (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 128). As a result, youth begin to associate the jobs, services, homes, and lifestyles that are available to them within their socioeconomic status (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Many scholars have perceived this functionalist perspective as being limited in scope, as Bowles and Gintis (1976) fail to address the political and policy-related implications of vocationalism (Pfleger, 2016). However, more importantly, this research illuminates the socialist ideology to which Bowles and Gintis (1976) embrace as an answer to economic democracy. In turn, they assert that socialism provides an opportunity to develop individuals through economic altruism. This widely publicized view produces a lens with which to examine Milwaukee’s political history; further illuminating the need for critical-historical analyses of vocationalism beyond one-sided ideological perspectives. In addition, it is the process of vocational guidance and choice that Bowles and Gintis fail to examine, as vocationalism has possessed structures of economic stratification beyond the division of labor within racial, ethnic, and class-based structures, differentiated by community (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Kozol, 2005; Lazerson & Pfleger, 2015).

In his examination of cultural capital production, *Learning to Labor*, Paul Willis (1977) argues that it is the social class structures, brought by social reproduction, which draws youth to the working class over formal methods of education. For youth, the working class was a perceived avenue toward social mobility during this time, which became evident in the limited number of students entering high school before the early twentieth century (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kett, 1982; Rury, 2013). Employment in many communities across the nation during this time provided “little to no opportunity for improvement” (Kantor, 1982, p. 31). While poverty-stricken communities spread throughout cities within the United States, parents often blamed



schooling for its impractical curriculum, which failed to meet the needs of the working class (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kantor, 1982). America aimed to develop the industrial proletariat, and the promise of social mobility became the primary means to vocationalize communities ready for work.

The similarities between the world of work and education are identified within the many forms of vocationalism during the Progressive Era. Education has perpetuated inequality through social reproduction and has exemplified the division of labor within its support of human capital and labor demands. While brief, this section contends that previous research has underscored the connection between schooling and social reproduction, which goes beyond economic forces (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Pflieger, 2016; Willis, 1977). In turn, these studies leave the door open to additional critical-based research that examines the historical construction of social reproduction, which exists today.

### **The Pedagogy of Education and Vocational Schooling**

The pedagogy of education argues that schooling should validate the learning youth demonstrate as a means to move upward within society or to preserve their current economic position (Labaree, 1997). The result is a goal that concentrates on the economic outcome and status of the individual (Labaree, 1997). This connection between democratic ideals and the pedagogy of education highlights what Giroux (2010) describes as “the relation between knowledge and power, learning and experience, [and] education and social change” (p. 193). In turn, the power that education possesses within a democratic society produces a direct connection to the creation of an educational ideology within the community (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2010). From a critical lens, social reproduction serves to identify educational and social inequality as a result of the well-distributed pedagogy of education (Collins, 2009).

James Collins (2009) synthesizes the social reproduction argument as a culmination of two central themes. The first theme identifies the importance of social and institutional structures that produce perspectives on economic and cultural ideology, and are disseminated within the lexicon of society (Collins, 2009). These structures can be considered as “heterarchical” in nature as they function neither from a top-down or bottom-up approach (Kontopoulos, 1993, as cited by Collins, 2009, p. 43). The result is a social construction of reality that produces societal implications over time that covertly result through the formation of processes and procedures (Collins, 2009).

The second theme describes the importance of social class within society; however, it identifies that many fail to examine the various relations within inequality, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and labor market, to name a few (Collins, 2009). The variables of social class vary by the specific community in which they reside and are often driven by ideological forces that determine their position within society (Collins, 2009). Consequently, the currency of the social reproduction argument provides essential relevance in the nation today, as the vocationalism goal continues to appear within political quagmires and discourse.

The idea that education serves a hegemonic stronghold of ideology was possibly best examined by Althusser (1971) in his writings on *Ideological State Apparatuses*. Since Althusser (1971) introduced his argument, the educational perpetuation of class-based structures has been examined by many scholars (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985). Vocationalism plays a vital role within this argument as socioeconomic status has a direct influence on the educational attainment and achievement of youth (Collins, 2009). The variables of gender, race, ethnicity, and labor market, as illustrated by Lazerson and Pflieger (2015), ask researchers to

examine the phenomenon of social class and its connection between education and the structures that produce inequality with utmost importance (Collins, 2009).

During the Progressive Era, the transformation of education reforms sought to teach youth citizenship and social responsibility (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002). In turn, education served as an investment of the taxpayer within the economic growth of the community. While the responsibility of education has evolved, the citizenship goal has strengthened, and as Joel Westheimer (2015) importantly illustrates, “There is nothing inherently *democratic* about the traits of a personally responsible citizen” (p. 45). The overt ideological interest of education throughout time has transformed youth into citizens that have prioritized the goal of economic capitalism.

The educational philosophy of Dr. Robert L. Cooley, director of the celebrated Milwaukee Vocational School, sought the development of citizenship at the demand of employers; couched in the democratic ideals of the students’ needs (Tarbell, 1958). Cooley’s famous words, “The needs of the students shall determine the curriculum” (Tarbell, 1958, p. 270) sought an altruistic premise that positioned the student “in pursuit of his own goals of achievement” (p. 271). In this example, the pedagogy of education surrounds itself with the hidden curriculum of vocationalism that seeks an outcome of job attainment that is not inherently democratic. This pedagogy is evident because job attainment is not guaranteed. Westheimer (2015) laments, “In too many classrooms, students are told what to think rather than how to think” (p. 100). The result has developed a hegemonic vocationalism that prioritizes economic capitalism over genuine democratic engagement.

Pedagogy scholars Joe Kincheloe (2005) and Paulo Freire (1970) illustrate the need for education to develop the student through critical analysis, interpretation, and action. Early

methods of instruction in the continuation schools had the power to produce adverse effects of complacency at the expense of skill mastery, as schools often failed to introduce multiple perspectives, focusing specifically on immediate industrial skills (Tarbell, 1958; see also Kincheloe, 2005; Labaree, 2004). This concept is evident in the faculty and instruction at the Milwaukee Vocational School, as teachers were recruited based on their industrial skill, operating in an efficient means to train youth for specific jobs in a timely manner (Tarbell, 1958).

### **Summary**

Since the development of initial plans for vocational schooling, its pedagogical structure has resulted in the development of a labor pipeline versus democratic engagement. Debates over the dedication to academic education and manual training have been occurring for decades, with early analysis provided by Dr. Charles McCarthy in his *University Extension and Vocational Training* plan proposed to the University of Wisconsin President Charles Van Hise in 1910 (Fitzpatrick, 1944). While the development of formal methods for vocational education would have been inevitable, what remains is that the establishment of Wisconsin's system of vocational education has served as an early pedagogical model for industrial training to establish a sustained economic condition for the state.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

In this chapter, I describe the methodological approach of this critical historiographical case study in vocationalism. This section begins with an overview of my decision to select historiographical methods for this study. Within this section, I explain what informed my methodological decisions, as well as the influence of critical constructivism within methods of data collection and analysis, which has informed my research. Also, I discuss my decision to select Milwaukee as my research setting, the decision to study the Progressive Era within my sample, and I provide a brief background on Milwaukee's unique approach to vocationalism as further context for the reader. Finally, I conclude this chapter by describing the issues of trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations that I have identified in this study.

Historical research aims to provide an understanding of the past through writings, documents, and artifacts to explain the past (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006; Rury, 2006). Through examination and analysis of the past, historical research provides an opportunity to determine how philosophy and ideology have influenced history and the politics of the period examined (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Often associated with qualitative research, historiographical methods position the researcher to examine how society has changed through an informative process (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). As the researcher within this study, it is my responsibility to make appropriate inferences through the selection of writings, archival documents, and other forms of evidence through the techniques of historical inquiry (Rury, 2006).

While this study does not attempt to repeat previous historical case studies of schooling in Milwaukee (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002; Rury & Cassell, 1993), my purpose is to illustrate the ideological and social factors that have made contributions toward the development and support for vocationalism in Milwaukee. The selection of critical theory adequately serves this study through an examination of the events that have supported and framed a perspective of vocationalism for Milwaukee's citizens through individuals, events, and reforms that encompass the history of the city. My primary research question is: How has Progressive and Socialist ideology in Milwaukee shaped education within the context of vocationalism? In addition, I employed the following sub-question to further address my inquiry: What were the historical outcomes of vocationalism for Milwaukee's citizens during the Progressive Era.

### **Research Design: Critical Constructivism**

To adequately select appropriate research methods for this study, I began by reviewing the literature, which I synthesized within chapters two and four. While my study centers on a historical context of vocationalism, I read studies by several scholars who employed historiographical methods with regard to capitalism and schooling, vocationalism, and school reform during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kantor, 1988; Reese, 2002; Rury, 2013). While reviewing these studies, I noticed that nearly all historians employed methods of critical inquiry as their research framework. In turn, I wanted to provide a similar articulation and understanding of the well-studied Progressive Era reforms. To separate my study from the others, I examine the evolution of the ideals of vocationalism within the ideologies of Progressivism and Socialism that existed with the Milwaukee community during this period (Kincheloe, 1991; Reese, 2002).

As a result, the selection of a critical constructivist approach offers an appropriate means to collect, analyze, and interpret historical data within the social sphere.

My selection of a critical constructivist paradigm aims to explore the construction of vocationalism to understand how it has contributed to the establishment and development of education and policy within Milwaukee. By employing a critical constructivist paradigm, my study explores the relationship between power and knowledge as a result of the vocationalism goal (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe, 2005a). Through this lens, critical constructivism serves an ideal role of interpretation as I examine how vocationalism has been established and supported within Milwaukee's community. The critical constructivist lens supports my attempt to understand the power of human experience through vocationalism as a means to improve the social and economic well being of Milwaukee's citizens from an inquiry of hermeneutics.

Within historical analysis, paradigms serve as the foundation of inquiry toward the construction of the past (Guba, 1990). While critical theory is the foundation for this study in the formation of my critical constructivist lens, my critical ontology serves this study appropriately through the examination of education within the role of power and knowledge (Kincheloe, 2005a). In turn, I was in a position to understand how a community has developed and supported its vocationalism through the "forces and assumptions that have operated to shape [it]" (Kincheloe, 2005a, p. 60). Through the examination of ideology, critical constructivism serves to determine the ideological forces from the perception of citizens within a community driven by vocationalism (Kincheloe, 2005a). As a result, this study utilizes a critical constructivist lens as a method to question the purpose of vocationalism within a community that embraced a unique ideological structure during the Progressive Era (Kincheloe, 2005a; Reese, 2002).

## **Paradigm Selection**

The selection of a research paradigm provides a lens of interpretation for the researcher that represents the perspective of the researcher and serves as a conceptual framework, further guiding the research (Berry, 2006). I chose a critical constructivist paradigm as a reflection of my values to examine the social construction of vocationalism in Milwaukee from a socioeconomic perspective. As I prepared for this research project, I presumed that the support and growth for vocationalism within education in Milwaukee was developed in response to the unique political and ideological positions of its citizens and leaders before and during the Progressive Era. While similar Midwestern cities supported forms of vocationalism, historians have argued that the social position of Milwaukeeans was incredibly unique (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002; Rury, 2013). Appropriately, the critical constructivist researcher serves to examine the various forms of power and knowledge that contribute to the development of society (Guba, 1990; Kincheloe, 2005a). To this end, the critical constructivist paradigm serves as an ideal method of interpretation for this study, as the power of vocationalism is examined within a case study of Milwaukee (Kincheloe, 2005a).

Comparing critical constructivist and positivist methods, Kincheloe (2005a), argues that the positivist demands the perspective of a realist, which “knowledge producers focus on understanding the objective world and its contents as isolated entities, things-in-themselves” (p. 103). While positivist methods aim to provide scientific meaning in connection to observations of sociology as truths, they also limit the examination to direct experience of scientific observation alone (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe, 2005a). The positivist method severely limits the interpretation and insight of the researcher, preventing the emergence of new explanations from the examination of the study (Kincheloe, 2005a). Alternatively, the methods of the critical



constructivist examine the connections between social contexts, rather than merely one-sided, scientific perceptions of meaning, providing for a more accurate representation of the group examined (Crotty, 1998; Kincheloe, 2005a).

### **Critical Historiography**

While historiographical research methods offer an invitation for the production of knowledge, its underpinnings center on the illumination of the past (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In turn, critical historiography takes a deep dive into the interpretations of key stakeholders during a period of analysis (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Critical historiography includes four core principles: criticality, an affirmative presentism, the bricolage, and multilogicality (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Developed by the Frankfurt School, each principle serves to provide an alternate examination from positivist research methods in the “approach to the social construction of the human experience” (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006, p. 318).

The first dimension, criticality, refers to the use of critical theory as an examination of the societal influences of power and privilege (Crotty, 1998; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Through examination of what may be possible, critical theorists present scholarly analyses within the forces of social, political, and economic phenomenon (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Within the context of educational reform, criticality examines the possibility of the reconstructed social experience from a more egalitarian and democratic utopian perspective (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In turn, this view positions historical research within the current discourse (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

The second dimension, affirmative presentism, presents an understanding of the historical context examined through the perspectives of those who experienced it during that period

(Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In turn, multiple perspectives are examined to provide the most accurate form of interpretation of the period and context examined. Villaverde, Kincheloe, and Helyar (2006) note that the researcher who connects the past to the present can misunderstand the principles of critical historiography. The principle of affirmative presentism recognizes the importance for the researcher to note the context of the period examined and to not examine history as a process that repeats itself (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

While a researcher cannot make interpretations that are one-sided or only arise through examination of documented sources, affirmative presentism also suggests that “we can never completely grasp a moment of the past in the way it was experienced by even one group of people because we know many things that happened in the following months, years, decades, and centuries” (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006, pp. 326-327). In turn, this presents a challenge for the researcher to understand the current context of the research examined in the most thorough way possible. The result should produce a rigorous method of research that examines the past, providing a better understanding of the present for current researchers (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

Bricolage, the third principle of critical historiography, examines the research through multiple resources and perspectives (Berry, 2006). Established by French anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1966), bricolage combines theory, methodology, and interpretation through narration as a means to illustrate the historical perspectives identified throughout the study (Berry, 2006; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Originating from the French verb *bricoler*, which translates to *tinker* (Kincheloe, 2005b), bricolage refers to using many different tools from multiple sources to examine hermeneutical concepts (Berry, 2006; Kincheloe, 2001). Bricolage asks the researcher to use multiple theories and methodologies to interpret the past and to

articulate the story (Berry, 2006; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). As I will discuss later in this section, by combining historiographical research with case study methods, I examine vocationalism using multiple disciplines in a bricolage approach to “collect, describe, construct, analyze, and interpret” vocationalism through this lens (Berry, 2006, p. 90; see also Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

A critical historiographical approach using bricolage serves as a realistic view of history while determining the cause and impact for the present and future (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). This approach to historiographical writing provides a tool to interpret the writings of historians, providing a broad approach and perspective for the researcher (Berry, 2006; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). A fitting example of bricolage, which provides direct application to my study, is William Reese’s (2002) writing in *Power and the Promise of School Reform: Grassroots Movements During the Progressive Era* (as cited in Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In his opening paragraphs, Reese (2002) describes a story of the Toledo harbor welcoming the arrival of a new school bell. As Villaverde, Kincheloe, and Helyar (2006) illustrate in their example, bricolage positions the researchers to examine the writing from a method of semiotics as they interpret the symbolism of the bell, the significance of its location, its sound, its shape, and who ultimately rings the bell. This example identifies that no two critical historians will likely share the same interpretations; however, the personal perspectives and nature of bricolage invite the conclusion of many questions and answers that continue the research once it is complete (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

The fourth and final principle of critical historiography, multilogicality, examines the value of historical perspectives, especially those whose voice may be less prevalent (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). The principle of multilogicality recognizes the diverse positions of

historians, which come from various contexts, causes, and processes (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Also, multilogicality encourages the historian to value under-represented perspectives from primary sources as a means to add contextual value to the study.

In this study of vocationalism in Milwaukee, multilogicality provides a vital structure to examine the perspective of marginalized populations of differing socioeconomic status to provide contextual value to their experiences concerning education and preparation for work. In turn, this presents an opportunity to use my researcher positionality to present the historical events examined from multiple perspectives; a method of historiographical cubism, similarly expressed by Reese (2002) in his illustration of the Toledo school bell (as cited in Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Coupled with a critical theoretical approach, the principle of multilogicality provides an ideal method to value the essential perspectives of the marginalized through the juxtaposition of schooling and the division of labor.

These principles of critical historiography provide the tools necessary to examine the social construction of vocationalism within hegemonic forms of education and social control. The use of these methods promotes diverse perspectives of critical examination, unique presentation, and context. In turn, I, as the researcher and historian, come best prepared to examine the various contributions that have shaped Milwaukee's educational, economic, and political history.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Critical historiography utilizes three research methods, critical interpretation, meta-analysis, and asking unique questions. Within this section, I describe each method in the context of critical historiography and explain how I integrated each into this study.

## **Critical Interpretation**

The first method, critical interpretation, incorporates a breadth of primary and secondary sources (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Similar to hermeneutics, which attempts to determine meaning within the analysis of sources, critical interpretation requires the researcher to produce their own perspective by “fill[ing] in the gaps” within an explanation of the research (Rury, 2006, p. 324; see also Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Rury (2006) argues that there are multiple ways for researchers to examine historical issues, leaving critical interpretation up to individual scholars to interpret and debate. In turn, this qualitative approach positioned me to gain alternate perspectives regarding the vocationalism that I gained through my collection of data (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

**Data Collection.** To utilize multiple sources of data for this study, and incorporate the perspectives of those living in Milwaukee during the Progressive Era between 1893 and 1920, primary and secondary archival sources constitute a vast majority of my data collection. Utilizing the archives from the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee, the Milwaukee County Historical Society, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin as primary locations for material, I examined local newspapers on specific subjects and events relating to education, labor, and politics. Public records such as meeting minutes, labor statistics, reports, and census records served as ideal primary sources in establishing the context of the period. Also, official documents such as local and state laws, legislative hearings, and civil codes were influential as I examined the reforms that have shaped this era (Presnell, 2013).

To provide a thorough understanding of the reforms of the Progressive Era within Milwaukee, as well as national trends, I examined secondary sources broadly to examine vocationalism, educational policy, economic reforms, and vocational education during this era.

To ensure validity within this case study, the collection of multiple sources of data are critical to compare information gathered with multiple perspectives (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Considered *triangulation* of data, I gathered data from multiple sources and list these sources by data source in my Resource section at the end of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

**Data Analysis.** Few examinations of vocationalism in Milwaukee exist; however, this research draws from historical case study methods to examine multiple sources of primary and secondary sources to interpret the Progressive Era discourse in Milwaukee. Traditionally considered a qualitative approach, this historical case study provides an in-depth review of Milwaukee's historical context between 1893 and 1920 through an analysis of "themes, patterns, and issues" (Merriam, 1998; as cited by Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 46). In turn, the historical case study method supports my critical lens, as interpretation is the goal of my research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

Reviewing multiple sources of primary and secondary research, I used an interpretative approach of triangulation "to ponder, to scrutinize, to interrogate, to experiment, to feel, to empathize, to sympathize, to speculate, to assess, to organize, to pattern, to categorize, to connect, to integrate, to synthesize, to reflect, to hypothesize, to assert, to conceptualize, to abstract, and...to theorize" (Saldana, 2013, as cited in Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 200). In turn, my analysis examined the power structures that have socially constructed vocationalism in Milwaukee and have served as a method of support towards its acceptance within a critical constructivist interpretation.

Included in my analysis were relevant documents of archival sources from newspapers, magazines, and historical documents of the period. In addition, legislative documents and reports were reviewed for contextual value of the period and confirmation of facts examined. While it

may be argued that some sources may produce particular results (e.g., newspaper political affiliation), I accessed reports and historical writings for additional perspectives. When possible, I attempted to account for triangulation in an effort to consider the data from multiple angles.

### **Meta-Analysis**

The second method of critical historiography, meta-analysis, is comprised of an examination of existing data sources to determine the discourse on the phenomenon studied (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). In chapter two, my meta-analysis consisted of observations concerning the primary constructs of vocationalism. From a critical historiographical perspective, this meta-analysis identified concepts that were excluded or missing from the research on vocationalism (e.g., the examination of ideology). This “insider’s perspective” also provides an opportunity to further analyze the key secondary sources within the final stage of the meta-analysis (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006, p. 315).

### **Asking Unique Questions**

Asking unique questions, the final method of critical historiography connects the researcher to their curiosity within this method of inquiry (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). The concept of asking unique questions poses the opportunity for me, as the researcher, to adequately examine the relationship between knowledge and power as it relates to the goal of vocationalism. This method asks to use an analytical perspective from a limitless approach to challenge the hegemony of vocationalism through an analysis of Milwaukee’s social structure (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

While historiography comes with a “narrative tradition” (Rury, 2006, p. 327), asking unique questions promotes my research findings to include thick, rich description when providing a “synthesis...to set events in a larger context of historical forces” (Rury, 2006, p. 328).

From the concept of narrative inquiry, I attempted to describe the lived experiences of Milwaukee's citizens during this period, from a broad perspective (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Through my case study of the subjects and events of the Progressive Era in Milwaukee, I believe that this narrative tradition has been met within a pragmatic approach, in conjunction with my critical constructivist lens, by determining how vocationalism has empowered and constrained social resources for citizens through economic capitalism (Chase, 2005; see also Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

As I have previously stated within this section, my purpose is to provide an interpretation of the Progressive Era reforms in Milwaukee that have made contributions toward the social construction of vocationalism for its citizens, which continues to this day. By employing a critical historiographical perspective, utilizing my critical constructivist paradigm, I was best positioned to examine this phenomenon. In turn, I challenged the historical context of vocationalism in Milwaukee by employing criticality, affirmative presentism, bricolage, and multilogicality as a means to establish my interpretation of the events, reforms, and ideology that made long-standing contributions during this era.

### **Research Setting and Sample**

My decision to approach this dissertation from a case study perspective enables the examination of social change within a city that has been identified in several studies for its disparities within education, labor, and economics (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002; Rury & Cassell, 1993; Trotter, 1985). I chose to examine the city of Milwaukee for a few reasons. First, Wisconsin's legislative-backed system of vocational, technical, and adult education serves as an excellent model of vocationalism, which has made significant contributions during Progressive Era vocational education reforms and beyond (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999; Paris, 1985, Rury,



1993). Vocationalism in Wisconsin has served as a primary means to train a workforce since it began within an organization of continuation schools in the early 1900s (Paris, 1985).

Consequently, Milwaukee's contribution to this legislatively backed initiative has, in many ways, validated its continued support and growth into a formal system of post-secondary technical colleges (Paris, 1985; Tarbell, 1958). Being the largest and most diverse economic region within the state has positioned Milwaukee to be an essential influence on the vocational goals of legislature derived from the development of the Wisconsin Idea (McCarthy, 1912; see also Hoeveler, Jr., 1976).

Second, Milwaukee's population growth in response to industrialization presents an adequate case study for further investigation of vocationalism. Between 1880 and 1900, Milwaukee's population rose 247 percent to meet the labor needs of the city. By the early 1900s, over eight hundred manufacturing facilities called the city of Milwaukee home (Reese, 2002). By 1910, Milwaukee's manufacturing labor force represented nearly 57 percent of its residents, which was second to the nation's largest, Detroit (Levine and Zipp, 1993; Simon, 1978). While Milwaukee's high proportion of laborers continued through 1960, it has consistently ranked among the top cities in manufacturing across the nation (Levine & Zipp, 1993; Reese, 2002). With vast industrialization and educational reforms taking place during the time period of 1893 and 1920, it is important that I examine this period to determine Milwaukee's unique approach to social change during this time.

Finally, Milwaukee's population has consistently ranked among the most segregated cities in the nation (Massey & Denton, 1993), and consistently ranks among the highest in poverty (Levine, 1998). While Milwaukee's residents remained primarily of European descent until the 1970s, its Socialist ideology has not saved this industrial city from inequality and

disparity. Between 1970 and 1980, many of Milwaukee's manufacturing jobs created during the Progressive Era disappeared, while black migration to the city grew. By 1985, Milwaukee's black community encompassed 25 percent of its residents (Levine, 1998). In turn, Milwaukee's "white flight" came much later than other Midwestern cities, and while manufacturing sharply declined in the city from 1967 to 1992, manufacturing in the suburbs grew by an unprecedented 12.4 percent between this period as the suburbs expanded (Levine, 1998). Consequently, Milwaukee's black unemployment rate doubled between 1970 and 1990, creating further disparities between black and white employment gaps within the city. Of 14 "Frostbelt cities" Milwaukee has ranked last in black unemployment, leaving many to seek methods of retraining during this time (Levine, 1998).

Examining the reforms of the Progressive Era provides an illustration of Milwaukee's unique political climate concerning educational politics and reforms centered on vocationalism. Juxtaposing Socialism with Progressivism during the early twentieth century presents an examination of what Milwaukee Socialist, Victor Berger, wrote as "two ideas...fighting for mastery in the educational world" (Berger, 1913 as cited in Reese, 2002, p. xix). While many Midwestern states developed formal methods of education as a means to educate their growing workforce, perhaps no state has promoted the goal of vocationalism more than Wisconsin; and its largest city, Milwaukee, is no exception (Paris, 1985; Rury, 1993). In constant competition with the nearby metropolis of Chicago, Milwaukee sought a means to train a labor force in response to an 88 percent growth in manufacturing as industries such as flour milling, meatpacking, tanning, brewing, and iron and steel manufacturing rose in an effort to meet nationwide demands (Kliebard, 1999, p. 57; see also Nelsen, 2015).

While Milwaukee's industrial development came rather late in comparison to nearby Chicago, its economic growth between 1899 and 1909 represented gains that nearly equaled the city's percentage of growth over the previous sixty years (Kliebard, 1999). Coupled with the promise of workplace efficiency and workforce effectiveness, socially efficient means of training and production presented a practical method of school management and curricular delivery for Milwaukee's administrative Progressives during this time (Callaway & Baruch, 1993). Also, examples of socially efficient methods of production and education as observed in nearby Midwestern cities provided an attractive method of schooling and training for Milwaukee's Progressive leaders (Reese, 2002; Rury & Cassell, 1993). This pragmatic approach came in contrast to Socialist support for the proletariat as a result of Milwaukee's vast German population; which sought an egalitarian way of life in response to Marxist ideals (Reese, 2002).

For Wisconsin, the commitment and support for vocationalism may have been the necessary means to not only attract workers to its largest city but to educate youth occupying dead-end jobs during this time. With a population significantly smaller than the Midwestern industrial cities of Chicago and Detroit, Milwaukee's Socialist ideology was a necessary means in order to maintain growth and establish itself as a manufacturing force (Reese, 2002). Governed by a majority Socialist mayoral leadership between 1910 and 1940 (Reese, 2002; Rury & Cassell, 1993), Milwaukee's Socialists often advocated for free school meals for youth and other social justice reforms in response to Wisconsin's Progressive machine, driven by the governorship of Robert La Follette (Reese, 2002).

Developing an egalitarian philosophy within the state, La Follette embraced the articulation of the "Wisconsin Idea" by notable academics John Bascom, Richard T. Ely, and John R. Commons (Hoeveler, 1976, p. 282; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944). By utilizing the academic

research arm of the University of Wisconsin, an administrative philosophy could be constructed to best serve his constituents through its largest institution of higher learning (Hoeveler, 1976). Dubbed “Agrarian Progressivism,” La Follette’s unique blend of interests established his variant of Progressive politics influenced by the Populist movement (Fulda, 2013, p. 37). In turn, La Follette’s Progressive machine would control the state; however, instituting power over the Social Democrats within its largest city, Milwaukee would prove a more significant task (Fulda, 2013).

The success of Milwaukee’s Socialist party can be attributed mainly to the support and collaboration with its strong local trade unions (Reese, 2002). As Reese (2002) contends, Milwaukee’s Socialist success rose to a higher level than other industrial cities, such as Toledo and Rochester, which supported Socialism during this time, due to the local reach of the trade unions. While the depression drew nearly forty percent of Milwaukee’s labor force out of work, the Socialists, led by Victor Berger, the Populist Party, and local trade union leadership forged to combine efforts and form a third party of political support for the proletariat (Reese, 2002). As I examine further within this study, this allegiance made long-standing contributions toward education and the goal of vocationalism for decades to follow, as Socialist and union leaders sought democratic reforms in response to La Follette’s Progressive machine (Reese, 2002; Rury and Cassell, 1993).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, issues of trustworthiness consist of three core criteria: credibility, dependability, and transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This section summarizes how I planned to establish support for each criterion within this qualitative, historical analysis.

## **Credibility**

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) describe credibility as the outcome of an accurate description and depiction of the participants within the study. Within critical historiography, this encompasses the inclusion of multiple primary and secondary sources; especially those marginalized voices that may have been overlooked by historians (Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006). Through the critical historical concept of multilogicality, I am positioned to use my researcher positionality to examine, describe, and interpret the influences, events, and figures who have impacted the social construction of vocationalism in Milwaukee (Rury, 2006; Villaverde, Kincheloe, & Helyar, 2006).

In order to conduct objective research, I must consciously recognize my bias and its potential influence on the results of the study (Creswell, 2014). My experience as an administrator of vocational education academic programs and career pathways for community college students in Milwaukee presents, in many ways, what Glesne and Peshkin (1992) have defined as “backyard” research (p. 188). In turn, I begin this study with a perspective on recent vocational reforms, ideology, and discourse of vocationalism in Milwaukee, which further increases my engagement and fascination to investigate the historical context of vocationalism within this city. While my positionality supports egalitarian reforms of vocationalism that produce equality within education, I hypothesize that Milwaukee’s Progressive and Socialist past has been influenced by ideologies of scientific management, Darwinism, eugenic themes, and social efficiency, similar to other manufacturing cities during this period (Kantor, 1988; Reese, 2002).

## **Dependability**

Within qualitative research, dependability consists of the review and tracking of the research process and procedures (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) adequately summarize this process as developing an “audit trail” to describe how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted (p. 163). Rury (2006) discusses how one of the most significant challenges of a historian is to confirm an interpretation, as these perspectives often come without confirmation. In turn, reconstructions of the past should include well-detailed explanations as a means to “fill in the gaps” (Rury, 2006, p. 324). In turn, my References section serves as this audit trail, as I list the primary and secondary source materials examined within this study by source classification.

## **Transferability**

Research transferability includes the process of having other researchers conduct a similar study within another similar context (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). While my study serves as a case study of the social construction of vocationalism in Milwaukee, it is important to note that case studies are typically limited in scope as the methodology requires the researcher to set boundaries when examining a specific case (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Kyburz-Graber, 2004; Lichtman, 2011). As a result, other historians may identify that the findings of my study may not be generalizable beyond Milwaukee; however, it is worth noting that my examination of vocationalism presents important factors from historical inquiry that identify gaps within vocationalism, which may be generalizable nationwide. In turn, this study was built upon the documented events and experiences of Milwaukee’s citizens from primary and secondary sources in collaboration with my interpretation and perspective in an effort to, as Rury

(2006) identifies, “to ‘hear’ the unexpected and to discover the unanticipated” by making interpretations of the data, backed by empirical research (p. 331).

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations are the boundaries and parameters that narrow the research study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). From the perspective of my research methodology, some researchers may identify that discourse analysis or content analysis may serve the research methods of this study to a greater extent than my selection of historical inquiry and case study methods. Discourse analysis and content analysis often share conflict within their traditional contexts (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). Within traditional forms, discourse analysis or content analysis may be identified to best serve this study through its epistemology of the construction of reality, qualitative methodology, and constructionist approach; however, it is vital to illustrate my rationale for the use of case study methods within this section (Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004).

Hardy, Harley, and Phillips (2004) identify a “discourse analytic approach” (p. 21), as a broad approach to content analysis methods utilizes “a sensitivity to the usage of words and the context in which they are used” (p. 20). As previously mentioned, interpretation serves an essential role within my critical constructivist lens and the employment of historical case study methods. Through the construction of meaning, I play a significant role in the interpretation and emergence of key concepts identified from primary and secondary source analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Hardy, Harley, & Phillips, 2004). In addition, my critical historiographical approach presents a unique lens of analysis and interpretation in narrative form (Rury, 2006). From this perspective, it is important that I utilized methods of interpretation as a means to “construct a coherent explanation” on my own (Rury, 2006, p. 324).

It was important that I reviewed the primary and secondary sources for patterns and themes that emerged throughout the analysis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Doing so provides for an objective approach to the social construction of vocationalism in Milwaukee. As a result, I was challenged with identifying a clear and identifiable understanding of the findings of the study from a factorial, plausible, basis. Within the narrative tradition of historical inquiry, primary and secondary source selection played an important role within my ability to accomplish this task and produce reliability and validity within my study (Rury, 2006).

Limitations serve as the characteristics that identify potential weaknesses within the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The limitation identified is the overall reliance on historical interpretation in the examination of the social construction of vocationalism in Milwaukee during the Progressive Era. While interviews of key participants, students, and parents from this time frame would produce a participant's perspective, the fact that many participants who lived during this time have since passed on leaves me to consider the interview approach to be even more limiting than a historiographical analysis. Rury (2006) discusses how there are multiple ways for historians to interpret historical data and findings. As a result, my study invites researcher analyses and debates concerning my interpretations and perspectives (Rury, 2006). Consequently, I aimed to develop a robust historical argument to provide a clear and concise explanation of the problem of vocationalism in Milwaukee and how I have reached my findings and conclusion (Rury, 2006).

### **Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview of the methods and procedures that I utilized for this historiographical research project. The decision to employ historiographical case study methods was made based on the examination of the social construction of vocationalism within



Milwaukee from a period in which qualitative interviews may provide research limitations due to the absence of living human subjects available. The selection of critical constructivism as the design of the study provided the ability to examine what Kincheloe (2005a) describes as “a thicker, more detailed, more complex understanding of the social, political, economic, cultural, psychological and pedagogical world” (p. 3). The research setting of Milwaukee presents a worthwhile examination into the political, economic, and educational decisions of the city and state of Wisconsin that have demonstrated a strong commitment toward the vocationalism goal.

The vocationalism goal was initially developed as a means to ameliorate poverty and inequality within Milwaukee, and has since failed the vast majority of its most marginalized citizens over the past century (Levine, 1998; see also Nelsen, 2015). Milwaukee’s unique political landscape, produced by the ideologies of the Progressive and Socialist parties, presents an intriguing examination into the social construction of vocationalism, as the vocational decisions within the city and state made contributions towards notable educational reforms on the national stage during this time (Kliebard, 1999). My role as the researcher of this study presents an insider perspective, as I admittedly have been influenced by the vocationalism goal within my position as a community college administrator. While many scholars have examined the educational reforms of the Progressive Era, further examination into the ideologies of this era in Milwaukee from a critical constructivist framework allows us to answer the important question that Kincheloe (2005a) has catechized: How do we understand the relationship between education and society?

## Chapter 4

### The Rise of American Vocational Education

Historical examinations of vocationalism have expressed concern regarding the hegemonic dominance that industrial education has presented within our capitalistic economic structure. At its core, vocationalism represents a promise of social and economic mobility for the success of skill-based programs of study, linked to business and industry needs (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013). The curricular and economic outcome serves to prepare youth for current and future employment demands within a growing economy. As a result, Americans have continuously asked what education can do for them. Over the past century, the vocationalism goal has contributed toward a pragmatic premise of job and career attainment specifically to meet social needs, while drastically limiting the democratic foundation of education (Labaree, 1997). At its core, vocationalism represents the synthesis of educational policy, curricula, and ideology in support of capitalist outcomes (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013). Not to be confused with “vocational education,” vocationalism embodies the sum of these parts, while vocational education represents the specific curricula and skill-based education designed to meet the needs of the workforce.

This review illuminates the historical roots of educational policy, curricula, and ideology that have made contributions toward the construction of vocationalism over the past century. As historian John Rury (2006) identifies, historians identify conclusions concerning the collection of historical events and artifacts as evidence. While this chapter principally serves as an extension of the introduction, this review examines the specific constructs that have advanced vocationalism for decades. First, I examine the ideologies of the Progressive Era as a means to identify the foundation of the birth of vocationalism through social efficiency and continued

support during the eugenic movement. Presented within an outcome of educational stratification, I illustrate that the influence of the Progressive Era theorists, John Franklin Bobbitt, Francis Galton, Benjamin Kidd, David Snedden, and Booker T. Washington, among others, made prominent contributions toward the development and support for manual training and vocational education; thus supporting a culture of vocationalism in our society. Next, I provide a historical examination of the development of the vocational curriculum to meet working-class labor needs. In this section, I identify the foundational aspects of manual training as established in response to the Civil War. In turn, I argue that forms of educational stratification, supported by scientific management and Social Darwinism, led to inevitable growth for manual training and vocationalism through formal curriculum and federal policy, as America sought to deliver an educational promise of opportunity to its citizens.

### **Social Control and the Ideologies of Labor**

From the context of social science, people perceive their place in society and the issues they face concerning their ideas and beliefs (Rury, 2013). Ideology serves as the collective ideas, beliefs, and values of specific groups as a means to interpret their perspective (Geertz, 1973; Rury, 2013; Winfield, 2007). Reviewing the ideological forces that have dominated educational history allow us to interpret the impact these perspectives have made on society and the lives of individuals. Many scholars have identified that support for vocationalism has derived from the ideologies of the Progressive Era, which impacted equity, social, and human capital through application of a formal education (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Kliebard, 1999; 2004; Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). This period between 1890 and 1920, known as the Progressive Era, highlights the educational reforms that presented a humanitarian position of social improvement for individuals (Rury, 2013). In turn, the ethos of elite politicians, philanthropists,

and scholars during this time made longstanding contributions toward educational and social reform.

This section has two parts. First, I synthesize how, arguably, one of the most impactful curricular reforms during this period was the development of vocational education; however, it was the concept of social efficiency that provided the justification and clarity that reformers needed to best prepare individuals for various occupational roles within society (Labaree, 1997; Rury, 2013). Second, I examine the underpinnings of the eugenics movement and its ideology of human worth and ability, as both a precursor and companion to the social efficiency goal (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007; Watkins, 2001). Specifically, this second section attempts to synthesize the historical connection between vocationalism and eugenic ideology, which influenced significant developments within curriculum and schooling during this time.

### **Social Efficiency: Management and Accountability**

Social differentiation through organization and maintenance of the social order became big business during the Progressive Era (Rury, 2013). To illustrate the perspective during this time, I provide a historical overview of the prominent forms of social efficiency since the early 1800s and its influence on methods of vocational education. The perspectives of notable theorists John Franklin Bobbitt, William C. Bagley, John Dewey, Benjamin Kidd, and David Snedden are identified in relation to their contributions regarding progressive education and support for forms of vocationalism. In conjunction with Labaree's (1997) framework, this section aims to demonstrate the concepts of social efficiency and its relationship to capitalist education as an exchange value for those seeking a degree or diploma.

Philipp Gonon (2009) defines the term *efficiency* as “the actual output proportional to the total input in any kind of system” (p. 77). Within the context of education, maximizing the

production of the student by training for practical, skill-based learning provides an efficient means of education and training, similar to industrial production (Gonon, 2009; Rury, 2013). Michael Knoll (2009) argues that the origins of social efficiency began with Benjamin Kidd, a UK government clerk, and his book *Social Evolution* (1894). Kidd, a supporter of Charles Darwin, imagined a model for citizen progression through social efficiency as a means to improve economic stability through the efforts of individuals within a competitive society. From Kidd's perspective, society served a democratic role to prepare citizens with the opportunity for success and growth, which would lead to stronger cities and ultimately, the country (Knoll, 2009). Kidd saw the world as a competition in which education could, and should, support specialized curricula in order to develop the student to be self-reliant and successful (Knoll, 2009).

By the time Kidd brought *Social Evolution* (1894) to the United States in 1898, his work was already familiar throughout the press within major metropolitan areas. It is at this time that educators began to take note. Kidd's writings sought to position the overall value of efficiency within society as a means of "practical value" and "significance" of the individual, while educators sought social efficiency as a perfect means for reform (Knoll, 2009, p. 371).

Charles R. Richards, who led the manual training department at Teachers College, Columbia University, became one of the early adopters of this new concept as a means of social service for the individual (Knoll, 2009). Richards would go on to adopt social efficiency within the Teachers College curricula as the official position of the institution (Knoll, 2009).

Subsequently, the influence of the curricular vision at Teachers College spread to other educators and one particular superintendent of public schools in California, David Snedden, who sought social efficiency as a means to prepare youth for the workforce (Knoll, 2009). Snedden's

practical approach and support for manual training sought education for the trades, and referenced Kidd's position of social efficiency in an essay aimed at schools nationwide (Knoll, 2009). In his address, Snedden supported vocational education as a means to train individuals and grow citizens to increase competition within the global marketplace (Knoll, 2009). Snedden's approach positioned social efficiency as a co-requisite of the individual instead of a method of survival (Knoll, 2009). This newfound approach was met without significant success as Snedden, unknown at the time, received little support beyond his school district. For Snedden, it would take several years and Richard's support to gain further traction towards a socially efficient curriculum (Knoll, 2009).

William C. Bagley, Professor of psychology and pedagogy at Montana State Normal College, became one of the first to discuss social efficiency and make connections to education on a national level (Null, 2004). Bagley's concept, "earning [a] livelihood," related social efficiency to an individual's place in society (Bagley, 1905, p. 64; see also Drost, 1977; Knoll, 2009, p. 375, Null, 2004). In his book, *The Educative Process*, Bagley (1905) opposed Kidd's stratification argument, describing social efficiency as a contributor to the "moral character" of students (Knoll, 2009; Null, 2004, p. 103). While his perspective aimed to legitimize the concept of social efficiency at the time, many educators seemed to develop their variation to the concept as they sought different means to include vocational education as its primary method of support (Knoll, 2009). For Bagley, he believed that it was irresponsible of educators to limit education merely toward a vocation (Kliebard, 1999; Null, 2004; Ravitch, 2000). Similar to Dewey, he argued that the more prolonged youth stay in school, the more experiences they would grasp (Ravitch, 2000). In Bagley's view, the educational experiences of social efficiency would contribute to the overall growth and development of an individual's character within a

democratic society as a method to teach social advancement (Knoll, 2009; Null, 2004; Ravitch, 2000). Bagley's outlook would become widely popular within the progressive movement as his second book, *Educational Values* (1911), was published. While his social efficiency beliefs continued to gain popularity within the decade that would follow, many other educators and advocates would take on a different perspective. One such advocate, David Snedden, would argue for a form of "occupational efficiency"; however, many would not know at the time that Snedden's concept would take the role of social efficiency to an entirely new level (Null, 2004).

While at Stanford University, Snedden was profoundly influenced by the work of Professor, Edward A. Ross. At the time, Ross would use his classroom as an opportunity to introduce his newfound perspective on social control (Drost, 1977). In Ross' view, education should provide direction to the individual through the curriculum as a means of social opportunity (Tanner & Tanner, 1990). Snedden's inspiration sparked an opportunity to make the curriculum more efficient for all men, and his speeches before groups of teachers in California proved his prowess (Kliebard, 1999). In one such speech as a faculty at Stanford, Snedden debated for two tracks of education, one for the "common man" and one for the "elite" (Drost, 1977, p. 23). It was within this argument that he argued for social control and a method to effectively train individuals through an efficient means to benefit all men, as well as the country (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999).

Snedden sought additional guidance while at Teachers College, Columbia University, gaining added influence from his professor, Franklin Giddings (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999). Giddings' focal interest was that of establishing the "ingredients of the good society" (Watkins, 2001, p. 62). In doing so, Giddings believed that evolution contributed to the development of three distinct classes of individuals: high, medium, and low (Watkins, 2001). For Giddings, these

hierarchical classes contributed to the level of civilization of the individual and their “social mind” (Watkins, 2001, p. 65). In turn, he sought education as a form of citizenship training for Americans based on their class structure (Watkins, 2001).

In his doctoral dissertation of juvenile reform schools, Snedden determined that reform schools were high-quality forms of education which provided the highest method of social control over the individual; establishing an extremely efficient means of education (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999). Within the curriculum that Snedden studied at the reform schools, traditional school subjects only contributed to four hours per day, while the remaining time was scheduled for vocational training (Kliebard, 1999). It is around this time that Snedden’s goal of vocationalism would become an apparent means of contribution toward the workforce.

Following completion of his doctoral degree, Snedden was assigned as Massachusetts Commissioner of Education (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999). This influential role gave Snedden the springboard he needed to carry out the concepts he commonly shared in his speeches. One of his first tasks was to appoint his colleague from Teachers College, Charles Prosser, as his deputy for vocational education (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999). Snedden and Prosser immediately began to implement what they deemed as “real vocational education,” which contributed toward training individuals for specific jobs (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999, p. 123).

For Snedden and Prosser, their curriculum focused on the civilization of the individual, and they began to position students into specific occupations at an early age (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999). This “division of function” as Snedden and Prosser called it, was supported by a curriculum that was delivered in “factory-like conditions” and provided a real-world experience to the student (Drost, 1977, p. 24). Snedden’s position was that this form of experience would make individuals into “efficient producer[s]” (Snedden, 1977, p. 48; see also Kliebard, 1999, p.



124). In this respect, the curriculum would contribute directly to an individual's future within society (Drost, 1977). Subsequently, Snedden (1977) described vocational education as designed to "equip a young person for a recognized calling" (p. 45). His belief that this "calling" makes an individual "vocationally efficient" relates to what he described as a sense of purpose for the individual (Snedden, 1977, p. 48). It was in this instance that Snedden connected his vision of vocational education to the self-efficacy of the individual based on their vocation. Snedden (1977) referred to this as "vocational competency," which he described, occurs between the ages of fourteen and twenty (p. 49). Snedden's concept of vocational competency is referenced in explicit detail within his writings in the *Socially Efficient Community* (1929), in which he outlined his vision for the socially efficient, utopian society. In his concept, it is within this community where the less intelligent are reduced to low-level occupations, while the intelligent, elite citizen receives opportunities for leadership and politics (Snedden, 1929). Consequently, it was this concept of educational stratification, which drew resistance from many scholars within the educational community, as contrasting views of social efficiency would begin to take form.

Opposition for Snedden's methods of social efficiency became public when Bagley debated Snedden at the 1914 meeting of the Superintendence of the National Education Association. Both proponents of their own beliefs regarding social efficiency, Bagley and Snedden discussed their role of vocational education within a socially productive society (Null, 2004). While Snedden argued for a stratified curriculum supported by vocational education, Bagley described a socially efficient social service education that produced broad understandings for culture and moral character (Null, 2004). Snedden's remarks focused on a scientific vocational efficiency method, as he advocated for a dual program of education, which would provide a completely separate vocational school (Null, 2004). While Bagley identified that

vocational and liberal arts education aimed to produce two different results, he argued that vocational education sought to meet the needs of the economy through the support of industrial growth (Null, 2004). From his perspective, liberal arts education provided a comprehensive approach, which was more broad and democratic (Null, 2004). Bagley went on to describe how a single model of vocational curriculum in all schools would intensify differences within social classes, severely limiting Americans to specific career paths and providing limited growth to society (Null, 2004). For Bagley, his method of social efficiency was an “ideal of social service,” which he believed, would democratically cultivate citizens (Null, 2004, p. 111).

Of those who objected to Snedden’s position on social efficiency and vocational education, John Dewey is arguably one of the most notable. In response to Snedden’s model, Dewey feared the development of vocational education into the traditional school curriculum as a means of industrial efficiency and limitation (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999; Ravitch, 2000; Tanner & Tanner, 1975). Dewey’s role at the University of Chicago, coupled with his development of the “laboratory school” presented the opportunity for timely research regarding popular methods of education within a controlled setting (Ravitch, 2000, p. 57). While Snedden’s social efficiency model grew in popularity across the country, Dewey’s pragmatic position sought for a well-rounded vocationalism that would promote academic growth while developing strong problem-solving skills (Dewey, 1966; Gonon, 2009; Ravitch, 2000; Tanner & Tanner, 1975; 1990). He feared that vocational education would divide the status of the educational curriculum, which conflicted with his position that education should guide students by developing their intelligence, rather than limiting their knowledge toward workplace demands at an early age (Drost, 1977; Gonon, 2009; Kliebard, 1999; Knoll, 2009; Ravitch, 2000; Tanner & Tanner, 1975; 1990). Dewey’s perspective pursued the development of the human being and

fought against limiting populations within the separate strands of education (Dewey, 1966; see also Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999; Ravitch, 2000). This development would lead to child-centered schooling, which concentrated on the interests of the student, rather than a vocational curriculum for a socially efficient society (Drost, 1977; Knoll, 2009; Ravitch, 2000).

Snedden's debate with Dewey sparked attention, which raised questions regarding his position on social efficiency, and deemed it as potentially anti-democratic (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999). His belief was that vocational education was efficient by nature, and that industry would continue to drive educational needs based on the necessity of a workforce (Kliebard, 1999). In *Schools of Tomorrow* (1962), Dewey emphasized William Wirt's Gary, Indiana example wherein the "whole environment" of the individual was displayed (Drost, 1977, p. 26). In this curriculum, boys and girls worked within a school "community," which provided various training opportunities for students as they rotated training positions throughout the year (Drost, 1977, p. 26). While both Dewey and Snedden would receive influence from Wirt's innovative example, Dewey's perspective provided an efficient means of vocational education centered on the democratic ideal.

The debate over the parameters of social efficiency continued throughout Snedden's career. For Snedden, a liberal arts education would only be available for those who are elite and by the age of fourteen, all youth should be directed into either the vocational or liberal track (Snedden, 1977). Snedden saw liberal arts education as an ambiguous solution for youth that could not guarantee a career or a practical use (Snedden, 1977). While his goal was never fully realized, his premise would go on to influence education for decades to follow (Kliebard, 1999).

In his renowned work on vocationalism, David Tyack summarizes the role of social efficiency over the years as schools "need[ing] to teach the young how to do everything [that

was] society approved” (Tyack, 1979, p. 46). Tyack discusses the social influence that high schools play by linking social efficiency theories of Snedden and others towards the role education has played for working-class and middle-class families (Tyack, 1979). Tyack makes a vital claim that during this time, middle-class families sought a “career” for their youth while working-class families sought a job in a factory, which often led to “dead-end occupations” as industries changed (Tyack, 1979, p. 49). Similar to Dewey and Bagley’s claims at the time, Tyack examines the role that race, gender, and social class played within education for decades since our country adopted social efficiency as education’s primary outcome (Kliebard, 1990; Tyack, 1979). Similarly, Herbert Kliebard argues that vocationalism has continued due to our consistent mission to be competitive within a global economy (Kliebard, 1990). Kliebard (1990) writes:

It may be humanly possible for us to choose to satisfy our wants and develop political loyalties on the basis of rational decision-making processes that involve invoking empirical evidence on one side or the other; but any satisfactory explanation of human action must also attend to the symbols that intervene between our world and our reactions to it. (p. 13)

While the demand for public schooling to embrace vocational education was present, it remained evident in the visions of scholars and reformers that the impetus for a socially efficient society was in the present status and not forward-thinking (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013; Spring, 1972). Kliebard (1990) describes how the perception that there was an “appearance of crisis” became evident to citizens through newspaper reports, the Douglas Commission Report of 1906, and the Cardinal Principles Report of 1918 regarding the role of education during this time (p. 14). These factors, coupled with differentiated schooling by class and ability, led to what Tyack

describes as the “capitalist class” (Tyack, 1979, p. 54). While the production of an efficient and productive workforce was deemed critical at the time, so was the importance of rewarding the worker for their efforts. Kliebard (1990) describes how the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education report (1918) used its extensive influence to support leisure as a goal of secondary education (Kliebard, 1990; 1999). While democratic education was a premise of the report, democracy was not without efficiency (Kliebard, 1999). As a result, work became a way of producing entitlement of the laborer to enjoy leisure “only when one has earned the right to enjoy it” (Kliebard, 1990, p. 23). In turn, this perspective produced a workforce, which gained dignity and confidence through acceptable means of recognition for their work (Kliebard, 1990). Supported by a dignified workforce, vocational education became even more widely accepted than its earlier iteration, as the desires of citizens were reformed through a newfound pride and acceptance for the reward of work during this time (Kliebard, 1990).

David Labaree (1997) contends that the goal of social efficiency made longstanding, credible contributions to the country during and following the Progressive Era. The impetus to make the country more efficient led to control and accountability during rapid industrial expansion. The failure to govern this era, beginning with education, may have led to dire consequences during a critical tipping point for the country. However, more recently, Pflieger (2016) argues that the goal of social efficiency perpetuates the social stratification and reproduction argument, in that the outcome has made prominent contributions toward the exclusive benefits of the powerful and elite.

As examined in the next section, in many ways, the ideology of the eugenic movement became historically ingrained within the fabric of the social efficiency goal as an interpretation of the race and ability of humans (Selden, 1999; see also Rury, 2013; Winfield, 2007). For

theorists, politicians, and elite philanthropists of the Progressive Era, the ideology of eugenics provided contributions for the doctrine of education at a time when the foundation of formal education was conceived (Winfield, 2007). By rationalizing an ideology toward difference, progressive leaders were equipped to employ solutions deemed as scientific and efficient for societal advancement (Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). While largely ignored within the examination of education and vocationalism (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007), my synthesis of the eugenic movement aims to illuminate the link between vocational ideals and the conception of curriculum during the evolution of formal education.

### **Eugenics: Support for Educational Stratification**

As social efficiency aimed to separate the “best and brightest” for elite forms of work, methods to administer psychological forms of testing became paramount (Rury, 2013).

*Psychometry* sought to measure the mental capacity of an individual and associated the results and conditions as hereditary, as a scientific form of measurement of the mind (Garrison, 2009; Rury, 2013; Winfield, 2007). In turn, psychometric testing provided a means of identification of the “feeble-minded,” as many considered those unlike their Northern European counterparts to be inferior (Rury, 2013, p. 155; Stoskopf, 2002, p. 127; Winfield, 2007, p. 117).

The standardization of psychometric testing became monumental to the identification of those deemed inferior due to their feeble-minded and deplorable conditions (Rury, 2013; Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007). In the early twentieth century, Alfred Binet, of the Sorbonne in Paris, developed the first Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test as a measurement of human intelligence (Garrison, 2009; Winfield, 2007). While Binet advised that his IQ test was not, in fact, an inherent measurement of intelligence, his test continued to be popularized as such (Garrison, 2009; Winfield, 2007). In turn, IQ and psychometric testing garnered financial and political

support, notably among eugenicists, as an accurate means of measurement for educators, healthcare practitioners, and social workers that diagnosed the intelligence of individuals (Winfield, 2007). In *A Measure of Failure*, Garrison (2009) acknowledges that while there was an inherent level of uncertainty regarding the measurement and accuracy of psychometric testing during this time, the fact that it gained unprecedented financial and authoritative support is “baffling and, in my view perversely irrational” (p. 30).

In the first examination of the impact of the eugenic movement on education, Selden’s (1999) text *Inheriting Shame: The Story of Eugenics and Racism in America* identifies how psychometric testing became an underpinning of the ideology through education. For eugenicists, to contend that intelligence was a characteristic of heredity brought significant benefits, as the scientific approach justified controlled breeding and separate forms of education (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007). In addition, the ability to administer a standardized testing measurement gave legitimacy to the feeble-mindedness argument (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007). Finally, by administering the test within schools, those delivering the test would receive increased professional status and clout (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007).

The origin of eugenic beliefs began with mathematician, Sir Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin (Selden, 1999; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). Galton, well versed in psychometric testing, was fascinated with the concept of heredity (Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). Galton claimed that human intelligence is the result of evolution, and the future of society is shaped through controlled breeding (Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). In Galton’s view, human ability differed among people and races (Watkins, 2001). Subsequently, he developed a system of ranking that began with the Greeks and Anglo-Saxons and concluded with Africans and Australian Aborigines (Watkins, 2001). In his form of justification, Galton used his expertise in

mathematics to identify what he deemed as statistically significant correlations between human characteristics, ability, and race (Watkins, 2001).

Of those influenced by Galton's quantitative research on heredity, Karl Pearson, is the most prominent (Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). Known for the birth of the Pearson Correlation statistic, Pearson's rhetoric supported Social Darwinism, as he contended the predetermined relationship between intelligence and temperament (Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). In Pearson's view, science could provide the answers that the efficiency goal sought, and while Galton's theory predated the introduction of Binet's IQ test, he began to link his quantitative research to the prediction of mental ability (Winfield, 2007).

While statistical references towards heredity, race, and breeding increased in popularity, racism, and anti-immigrant rhetoric gained traction throughout America (Selden, 1999; Watkins, 2001). Eugenicists believed that current institutions, such as schooling, were inept in their approach to control those deemed as inferior (Watkins, 2001). In turn, those deemed as the best should marry the best and procreate with the promise of superior offspring (Selden, 1999; 2000; Winfield, 2007). By creating strong decedents, those believed to be superior would contribute to the ultimate value of hereditary, further solidifying their descendants' place within the social class for generations to follow. For eugenicists, heredity predicted human performance, and categorizing blacks and immigrants as inferior based on ability and worth became an important measure to protect their role within society and the labor force (Selden, 1999; Winfield, 2007).

The dissemination of eugenic education became an important link, which garnered formal support and promotion from the American Eugenics Society in 1938 (Winfield, 2007). By infusing eugenic rhetoric within schooling, beliefs toward a stratified society would become curricular foundations of biology and science instruction (Winfield, 2007). While attention



toward the value of hereditary and ability grew in popularity, academic scholars began to take their position of support for inequality and stratification of education. Professor, scholar, and advocate for the education of the gifted child, Leta S. Hollingworth, was primarily concerned with the inherited ability of individuals and the potential impact on society (Selden, 2000; Winfield, 2007). Steeped in eugenic values and perspectives, Hollingworth was a strong advocate and influencer of vocational education and manual training during this time (Winfield, 2007). In her view, Hollingworth believed that separate forms of education would offer the most significant opportunity for learning and growth for those deemed gifted versus those categorized as non-gifted (Winfield, 2007). Consequently, those who succeeded within education gained financial worth and value through their inherited ability to succeed through the natural competition of society (Selden, 2000; Winfield, 2007). This belief aligned with Galton's theory of meritocracy and provided support for the social reproduction goal of influencing those deemed successful as eligible for procreation (Winfield, 2007).

Hollingworth's stance on inherited ability demonstrates support for a stratified system of education through the administration of intelligence testing (Selden, 2000). For Hollingworth and other notable scholars of this time, recent forms of schooling failed to recognize the social worth and ability in youth and often spent too much time aiding to those who would be considered the least successful contributors towards societal and economic advancement (Selden, 2000). In turn, eugenicists sought for education to meet economic labor needs through human capital gain (Selden, 1987; 2000; Winfield, 2007). Consequently, the ideology of eugenics indirectly fueled support for manual training and vocationalism as the ideal solution for the feebleminded and those with limited ability (Rury; 2013; Selden, 1987; 1999; 2000; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007).

While vocational education continued its expansion during this era, eugenicists began to correlate human ability with heredity; thus supporting the stratification of education beyond race, class, and labor (Winfield, 2007). Although the beliefs of scholars such as Galton, Pearson, Hollingworth, and other eugenicists are often not overtly demonstrated today, historians such as Rury (2013), Selden (1987; 1999; 2000), Watkins (2001), and Winfield (2007) contend that the underpinnings of the eugenic ideology have made long-lasting contributions which continue to support education stratification and vocationalism. Texts such as Herrnstein and Murray's *The Bell Curve* (1994) demonstrate a recent form of eugenics, which has attempted to further stratify and classify education among race and inherited ability (Selden, 2000). As I examine in the final section of this review, the underpinnings of the vocational curriculum were conceived at a time when social movements, comprised of eugenic and social efficiency beliefs, were led by a scientific theory aimed at a fear of the "Other" (Winfield, 2007, p. 100). Historians contend that it is not a coincidence that during this period, formal methods of curriculum development took shape as an educational hegemony sought to meet the practical needs of the labor force (Rury, 2013; Selden, 1987; 1999; 2000; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007).

### **The Vocationalization of the Curriculum**

In their unique perspective, prominent scholars Grubb and Lazerson (2004), present the dominance of vocationalism in what they define as an "Education Gospel"; how the premise of schooling is in a constant state of flux in response to the changing nature of work (pp. 1-2). Grubb and Lazerson (2004) outline how Americans must continuously adapt education and skill-based training needs to meet the social and economic demands of a nation at risk of becoming obsolete. Vocationalism presents the process to prepare for a career concerning social status and economic growth (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999). Advocates of vocationalism argue

that education has struggled to meet the economic and labor demands of communities from a practical perspective (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999). From this context, it is the social and economic position of vocationalism that establishes a capitalist economy for local and global success. Historical research suggests that this debate originates from ideology and industrialism, which has developed from the racial, economic, and educational position of influential leaders and scholars during the Progressive Era (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999).

In David Labaree's book *The Trouble with Ed Schools* (2004), he discusses how two forms of progressivism: one administrative and one pedagogical, saw education as an efficient means to meet economic and social requirements. For Labaree (2004), this meant shaping education to serve as the primary precursor to work and community contribution. Labaree (1997), among many scholars, argues that the creation of a hierarchical role of schooling is in direct response to an ideology of social efficiency which originated during the Progressive Era, "because those who have advanced farther up the educational ladder are seen as having learned more and therefore having acquired greater human capital" (p. 49; see also Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999). Simply put, the decisions schools made in the early 1900s to support methods of vocationalism have led society to expect that schools develop the economically efficient citizen (Labaree, 1997). Labaree argues that in this view, education is treated as a political "public good" which is the direct result of a "utilitarian and socially reproductive vision of schooling" (Labaree, 1997; p. 159; 2004). In this perspective, the comparison between political and economic outcomes has limited the definition of education through a redefined purpose removed from the democratic and egalitarian objective of education. As a result, schools have embraced the opportunity to teach students the romanticism that the

Progressive Era encompassed, leading towards optimism for social improvement and dignity for students (Labaree, 2004).

Vocationalism presents what many scholars describe as an *educational exchange value* while providing the opportunity of a job for the hard work of skill-based learning (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Labaree, 1997). In turn, employers have access to the best and brightest workers, based on the credentials earned through the attainment of a diploma. In essence, the “exchange value of a diploma is simply a reflection of the human capital that it embodies” (Labaree, 1997, p. 55). For taxpayers, education is an investment in the well being of the community in which the payer resides, and this exchange value produces citizens for the public good (Labaree, 1997). For students, their return on investment is the diploma, which provides youth with a commodity that can be used to leverage success (Labaree, 1997; 2004). As a result, youth have become enamored with the prospect of obtaining a credential. Through an emphasis on procedure over practice, the ideals of vocationalism have focused on meeting a social need in an attempt to educate the masses, versus truly empowering our citizens. Consequently, an educational meritocracy has taken shape as Americans have valued a vocational ideology that is measured solely by its capitalist successes (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kliebard, 1999; Labaree, 1997; 2004).

Between secondary education and four-year colleges, the continued promotion of the community college has provided support for vocationalism within individual communities through workforce development and retraining (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Labaree, 1997; Rury, 2013). The support for a vocational curriculum has provided community colleges with an educational stronghold on the development of a skilled working class, as increasingly, community college students have enrolled intending to enter a specified workforce following the

completion of an associate's degree, certificate, or diploma (Labaree, 1997). Coupled with open enrollment and low tuition, the community college has become a safety net for the middle class and a road to higher education for the marginalized (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). In turn, scholars argue that this has reproduced the lowly credentials of the community college, by separating graduates from the white-collar jobs required for the attainment of a bachelor's degree (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Labaree, 1997). The result is a narrow opportunity for social mobility in exchange for immediate employment within a skill-based working class (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Labaree, 1997).

The vocationalization of the community college represents a near mirror image of the stratified form of education, which was proposed by reformers during the Progressive Era (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). By serving the demands of technical and semi-professional employers, the community college has met a vocational need by training middle-skilled workers for immediate employment (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). With its flexible scheduling model and low-cost tuition, the community college has been the primary choice of higher education for working-class citizens (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). Grubb and Lazerson (2004) note that between 1960 and 2000, public community college enrollments grew at a faster rate than any other form of education in America, encompassing 37 percent of all post-secondary enrollments by 1997. However, the community college has perpetuated educational stratification through its open doors and vocational goals. Similar to early models of vocational education in high schools, Burton Clark (1960) contends that the mission of the community college was to redirect low-performing students into vocational programs (see also Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). The result is a preparation of school for work that serves a utilitarian role within capitalist society. Explored in the next section, the stratification of the curriculum would become the predominant means of

skill-based training within southern states following the Civil War. The establishment of manual training, practical training for skill-based work, would be introduced to ex-slaves as a means to develop economically distressed communities throughout the south.

### **Manual Training and Post-Civil War Industrialism**

Studies on the birth of the vocational curriculum refer to the white pioneers of education and their attempt to reorganize America following the Civil War (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Beginning with agriculture training, formal methods of manual training began with the opening of the Hampton Institute in 1868, a manual training school for blacks and Native Americans in Hampton, Virginia (Anderson, 1982; Kliebard, 1999; 2004; Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Founded by Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the Hampton Institute sought to improve the social and economic status of southern blacks through social reform. Watkins (2001) argues that Armstrong's ideology pitted the black race as inferior to whites as he became determined to divide the laborers by providing manual training as a means of civilization for ex-slaves. Armed with political and financial prowess, Armstrong's influence on manual training, race, and culture became widely accepted by many, including David Snedden and Booker T. Washington, student and mentee of Armstrong at the Hampton Institute (Drost, 1977; Kliebard, 1999; 2004; Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Similar to Armstrong, Snedden's vision was that of a differentiated education, which he titled "sociological determination" as a means to meet the specific needs of social groups (Drost, 1977, p. 21). Likewise, Washington's support for Armstrong's mission validated his methods of personal growth for blacks through their contribution to the labor force (Watkins, 2001). By promoting the personal growth of citizens through manual training, the contributions of emancipated slaves could directly support the

growth of the black labor force while stimulating the much-deprived economy of the south (Watkins, 2001).

Known for his acceptance and perception of the opportunity for economic mobility, Washington aimed his rhetoric at blacks and his belief that labor would produce financial wealth (Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). In his perspective, Washington argued that manual training provided an effective and immediate form of education at a time when no other formal method of education was available for blacks (Rury, 2013). It was his view that humans should begin life through work, only to then seek education from the perspective of labor (Rury, 2013). However, as Washington's popularity amongst whites grew, he would continue to defend himself amidst his black race (Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Washington criticized those within the black race that sought education as a means of mobility (Rury, 2013). For Washington, steady work habits and morality were foundational to his educational philosophy (Rury, 2013).

While manual training expanded to schools such as Washington's Tuskegee Normal Institute, it began to attract opposition. Writings by W. E. B. Du Bois challenged Washington's promotion of manual training by highlighting its limitation of the black race (Du Bois, 1902; Rury, 2013). Du Bois believed that blacks did not receive the same academic and skill-based training needed to be economically and intellectually stable within a twentieth-century economy (Du Bois, 1902). In his view, vocational education became a form of what Watkins (2001) refers to as "accommodationism"; a means to accept the status quo presented by the political elite at a time when racial ideology aimed to control social order in the south (p. 114). In response to Washington, Du Bois viewed education as more than a practical form of skill development that presented humanistic ideals, leading to personal growth and the opportunity for a broad livelihood (Du Bois, 1902; Rury, 2013).

Arguably, the most well known opponent of manual training and vocational education, John Dewey, used his scientific background to dispute the development of skill-based training and racial disparity (Dewey, 1966; Selden, 1999; Tanner & Tanner, 1975). Dewey feared development of vocational education into the traditional school curriculum as a means of industrial efficiency and segregation (Tanner & Tanner, 1975). Dewey's work in *Democracy and Education* (1916) further illustrates this perspective based on his observation of the German models of vocational training. In turn, he sought for a well-rounded vocationalism that would promote academic growth and the "social meaning of work" while developing strong problem-solving skills (Dewey, 1966; Tanner & Tanner, 1975). Dewey's vision pursued the development of the human being and fought against limiting populations within a dual system of education (Dewey, 1966). This position would eventually receive opposition for its perceived lack of scientific management, as calculated theories of human ability from Charles Darwin and Fredrick Winslow Taylor would grow in popularity nationwide.

### **Social Darwinism and Scientific Management**

While industrial development during the late 1800s sought a pipeline for a consistent workforce, advocates of manual training recognized the need to restructure the school curriculum to meet employment on a grander scale (Kliebard, 1999). During this same period, technological advances in science provided contributions towards modernization and change (Rury, 2013). Of the many innovations during the period, many were influenced by the work of Charles Darwin and his perspective on biological populations and their environments (Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Darwin's theory of natural selection argued that as living organisms grow, a natural selection occurs where some organisms survive and reproduce, while others perish (Watkins, 2001). For Darwin, this natural selection occurred because some organisms were better



positioned for survival than others, leaving those that succumbed to extinction as inferior (Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001). Darwin's theory provided a profound contribution toward scientific discourse, spawning the development of the ideology dubbed "social Darwinism" (Rury, 2013, p. 142; see also Watkins, 2001).

Social Darwinism perceived individuals within poverty as inferior and inadequate, as they were unable to meet the expectations of society in a natural form (Rury, 2013; Winfield, 2007). In turn, Darwin's theory of natural selection provided support for the separation of capital and wealth within society (Rury, 2013). Darwin's influence during the late nineteenth century presented a perspective that positioned science as a form of validation and a gateway to the new world (Rury, 2013). This validation grew to immense proportions as social Darwinists began to position science against politics as they argued for the deregulation of natural processes (Winfield, 2007). The iconic term of the period, coined by English philosopher Herbert Spencer, "survival of the fittest" describes the development of natural selection and change over the interests of individuals (Spencer, 1898, p. 444; see also Winfield, 2007). For social Darwinists, natural selection was the only form of progress, and helping the poor did not promote advancement as those on the low end of the socio-economic scale were destined for mediocrity if they continued to wait for governmental intervention to aid their existence (Winfield, 2007). The result was a new ordering of society, as Darwinian influences were observed within business, politics, and the economy (Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007).

As education began to take a form of industrial preparation, efforts to control the process of production began to take shape as leaders sought to increase workplace efficiencies (Kliebard, 1999; Rury, 2013). During this time, Frederick Winslow Taylor sought to influence curriculum through his method of scientific management, and his notion of workplace efficiency and

productivity in response to his view of the inefficient laborer (Kliebard, 1999; 2004; Spring, 1972). Taylor's scientific theory came in response to the "moral character" of the worker (Spring, 1972, p. 32). While he anticipated opposition from the laborer, employers welcomed Taylor's approach toward workplace efficiency, as they sought an efficient and effective use resources (Spring, 1972). As Kliebard (1999) describes, Taylor's scientific management system would replace foremen with "efficiency experts...and the stopwatch as a mechanism of control" (p. 46). Taylor's public persona and relentless means to improve labor eventually resulted in his election as the president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1906 (Kliebard, 1999). Taylor's central argument was that the interests of the employer and the employee were the same, and workers needed to be trained appropriately in order to meet the most efficient and effective means (Kliebard, 1999). From his perspective, the worker and the employer both wished for faster production, harder work, and increased profits (Kliebard, 1990). As a result, education served as the most effective method to deliver a new curriculum that would support his vision of quality improvement (Kliebard, 1999; Spring, 1972).

While his influence within progressive circles began to draw national attention, Taylor sought to standardize his notion of scientific management as a means to increase production and reduce costs to the employer (Kliebard, 1999). As standardization began to take shape, Taylor asserted that the average worker would then begin to increase their level of productivity in order to meet employment demands (Kliebard, 2004). For Taylor, breaking down tasks into essential components was an excellent method to reduce errors and fatigue of the worker (Kliebard, 2004). As Taylor's influence grew, political conservatives continued to embrace his ambitious goals. Speaking to a Special House of Representatives committee, Taylor argued that his method of scientific management would reduce conflict between the employee and employer as both groups

began to work together for the common good (Kliebard, 2004). Logically, the next step was to begin the implementation of his concept within the school curriculum (Kliebard, 1999; 2004). As a result, educational leaders began to take notice, as Taylor's influence sought something nearly every American wanted during this time: strong citizens and a productive workforce.

While America never fully developed a separate system of vocational schooling, the high school curriculum supported the premise of social efficiency as it divided into separate forms of vocational and general education (Gonon, 2009; Kliebard, 1999). In *Schooled to Work: Vocationalism and the American Curriculum, 1876-1946*, Kliebard (1999) infers that business and industry advocates aimed to include vocational education within the curriculum as a means to support labor market control (Kantor & Lowe, 2000). This argument supports the view that champions of vocational education focused their attention on the intangible aspects of education that were foundational to the values and beliefs and the development of a well-rounded and compliant worker (Kantor & Lowe, 2000).

While many advocates and scholars provided support for separate vocational schools, labor groups perceived that curriculum separation would further stratify education (Kantor & Lowe, 2000). Kliebard (1999) argues that the most significant aspect during the push for vocational education was that it presented an entirely new way to consider the purpose of public education (see also Kantor & Lowe, 2000). In turn, the door opened for a growing list of curriculum reformers to present their perspectives on vocationalism and social efficiency within education. Kliebard (1999) contends that one of the greatest influencers of the curriculum during this time was John Franklin Bobbitt and his scientific perspective on education (see also Kantor & Lowe, 2000; 2004; Null, 2004). Bobbitt, Professor of Education at the University of Chicago in 1909, became the first to introduce specific teachings on curriculum (Kliebard, 2004). One of

Bobbitt's initial influences came in the form of social efficiency and Willard Wirt's school system in Gary, Indiana. Wirt faced the difficult task of educating students without a previous school or "plant" in place (Kliebard, 1999, p. 51; see also Kliebard, 2004; Rury, 2013). In order to do so effectively, Wirt developed what he referred to as the "platoon system" which was designed to move students from classroom to classroom (or auditorium, playground, etc.) as a means to efficiently use the space within the school building (Kliebard, 1999, p. 52; 2004, p. 83; see also Rury, 2013). Bobbitt observed Wirt's use of building resources and immediately began to apply it to his curriculum theory. Touting Wirt as an "educational engineer," Bobbitt began to create a new meaning for the role of school superintendent through his association of the school building to the factory plant (Kliebard, 1999, p. 51; 2004, p. 83). In this perspective, Bobbitt believed that the use of the school building could be expanded even further to include additional hours and weekend utilization (Kliebard, 1999). While many advocates for vocational education, including John Dewey, cheered Wirt's Gary plan, its overt ideological tie to social efficiency was widely supported (Kantor & Lowe, 2000).

The premise of social efficiency argued that by developing a curriculum for particular classes of citizens, inefficiency within education could be eliminated (Kliebard, 1999; Ravitch, 2000). In his book *The Curriculum* (1918), Bobbitt expounded on his beliefs, defining curriculum as either a "range of experiences that expand the abilities of the individual," or a "series of training experiences that schools would utilize to complete the process to expand the beliefs and abilities of the individual" (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 43). Continuing with his reference to social efficiency, Bobbitt argued for the classification of individuals into vocational areas as a means to contribute to the economic structure of society (Kliebard, 1999; Null, 2004). According to Bobbitt, "occupational efficiency" was paramount (Null, 2004, p. 113), and education should

strive to provide appropriate training to individuals to develop “the rising generation” (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 64). While Bobbitt recognized that America required more jobs than just that of labor, he argued that if everyone were a college graduate, society’s labor needs would go unfulfilled (Bobbitt, 1918). As a result, Bobbitt believed that vocationalism should be the primary source of development for youth, and schools should be held responsible for preventing deficiencies and eliminating the instructional waste previously provided by liberal education (Bobbitt, 1918; see also Kliebard, 1999; Null, 2004). In order for school districts to adequately define the vocational curriculum necessary to meet occupational efficiency, Bobbitt directed administrators to meet with their communities to determine the specific job needs that were in demand (Ravitch, 2000). Ravitch (2000) describes Bobbitt’s prediction that “6 of every 100 boys would ever enter a profession. The other 94 percent needed vocational training” (p. 106). Bobbitt’s writings infer that, in his belief, racial and class differences determine the performance of specific activities as their contribution to the societal workforce (Winfield, 2007). In short, Bobbitt’s view positioned vocationalism as the precursor to prevent deficiencies within society through a skill-based, industry-driven curriculum.

For Bobbitt, he sought an immediate need to fulfill America’s labor force through vocational education training for the majority of its youth. In his view, the laborer was the primary contributor to the overall economic development of society, and stratifying youth into occupationally efficient jobs appropriately represented the citizen’s place in society as a direct contributor to economic growth (Kliebard, 1999; 2004; Null, 2004; Ravitch, 2000). As a means of social control, Bobbitt’s position further defined the laborer as an individual, and vocationalism served as the primary source of personal growth and social value for its citizens. While Null (2004) argues that Bobbitt separated himself from the more common social

efficiency definitions of the time, it remains evident that his curricular influence contributed towards social efficiency's popular ideology, derived from aspects of scientific management and social control.

By the early twentieth century, contributions by such scholars as Bobbitt and Snedden positioned the underpinnings of education reform on the means for education to prepare young people for the world of work, and their influence along with the efforts of many others in their scholarly circles would go on to make lasting contributions toward federal legislation and funding for vocational education during the Progressive Era (Kantor & Tyack, 1982). While the majority of reformers supported vocationalism in the decades that would follow federal legislation, Snedden began to question the outcomes of vocationalism and its relationship to efficiency in 1931 (Gonon, 2009). Snedden positioned efficiency and democracy as co-principles within his prediction of schooling in *American High Schools and Vocational Schools in 1960* (1931). In a turn of events, Snedden began to position education, similar to Dewey, as a means to provide guidance and support to youth following the completion of general, pre-vocational, curriculum (Gonon, 2009). In his belief, vocational education lacked efficiency since most youth began to develop vocational desires around the age of 15 (Snedden, 1931). For Snedden, his wavering position on vocationalism came at a time when his influence declined, and many other scholars, politicians, and philanthropists had committed to his initial social efficiency goal in the decades prior.

### **Federal Support for Industrial Education**

By the beginning of the twentieth century, advocates for vocational education such as Charles Prosser and David Snedden sought to take vocational education to the next level by working to achieve appropriations that would provide a sustainable solution to meet the growing

needs of industrialism (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). By 1906, the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) was increasingly vocal in their support for industrial education to grow the U.S. economy (Kliebard, 1999). Charles R. Richards, manual training professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, and James P. Haney, director of art and manual training in the New York City public schools formed the National Society for the Promotion of Industrial Education (NSPIE) as a means to engage with the growing trend of industrial training nationwide (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). The committee had agreed that educationally and socially, the nation was deficient, and it would be their job to ensure that:

A much deeper impression could be made upon public opinion, while through discussion and exchange of views, more explicit ideas would be developed as to the practical possibilities of industrial education. (Bulletin 1, 1907, p. 7)

The first meeting of the NSPIE gathered over 250 business leaders and educators, sharing information regarding an inefficient and ineffective workforce and the needs of industrial training (Bulletin, 1, 1907; see also Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). Prominent educational and industrial leaders such as Jane Addams of Hull House, Fred Sivyer of Milwaukee, and Frederick Winslow Taylor participated in gathering ideas and discussing workforce needs (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). Speaking on the economic value of industrial education, Alexander C. Humphreys, President of the Stevens Institute in New Jersey, praised Wisconsin and the city of Milwaukee for its “deep and effective interest in industrial education” (Bulletin 1, 1907, p. 27). He went on to discuss the successes of industrial training in Germany, stating:

The German idea is to train its youth for future efficient citizenship....we must recognize, as President Eliot has more than once pointed out, that there is no such thing among men

as equality of natural gifts, of capacity for training of intellectual power. (Bulletin, 1, 1907, p. 28)

Humphreys' message to the NSPIE faithful was that academics should not be considered for the masses over industrial education, and primary schooling should teach "Brains and hands...to work in harmony" (Bulletin 1, 1907, p. 29).

Strong rhetoric for industrial training, such as Humphreys' message, was commonplace at the NSPIE meetings, as the group would aim to collaborate with many different groups over the problems of education and the need for industrial training (Bulletin 1, 1907; see also Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). One of the most significant challenges for the NSPIE would be to achieve an agreement among the labor unions regarding the financial and administrative needs of industrial education (Kantor, 1988). Workforce training had typically occurred with the union shops, and the interest of the labor union was to remain in control of this training (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999).

The 1910 NSPIE Bulletin (Bulletin, 12, 1910), would include a national study on industrial education, revealing that 29 states had passed legislation, with Massachusetts and New York gaining appropriations for state funding (see also Kantor, 1988). By 1912, the NSPIE had gained consensus with the American Federation of Labor regarding public support for federal aid and would gain additional support from the National Education Association (NEA) (Kantor, 1988). The contention would then come between a dual system of academic and vocational schooling, or one "unit system," which would include vocational education within secondary schooling (Kantor, 1988, p. 39).

The year 1914 would witness a path toward vocational funding when the Smith-Lever Act was passed, providing federal funding for agricultural education (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard,



1999). In collaboration with advocates of the Smith-Lever bill, Prosser and the NSPIE gained the attention of Congress and aided in forming the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education to look into federal appropriations further (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). The proposal included grants issued for courses of “less than college grade” within industrial education (Kantor, 1988, p. 41). However, ensuring congressional support would prove challenging (Kliebard, 1999).

In a strategic measure, the NSPIE would garner support for the plan from southern members of Congress due to limited state appropriations in the region (Kliebard, 1999). With a system of segregated education in place between whites and blacks, southern education was not only disparate; it was destitute (Kliebard, 1999). To control the impact on the segregated system, Georgia congressmen, Senator Hoke Smith, and Representative Dudley Hughes brought the bill to congress in 1914; however, action was not taken regarding the bill at that time (Kliebard, 1999). In 1915, the bill would be reintroduced, requiring a push from President Woodrow Wilson, in response to the preparation efforts for World War I and the immediate training needs that were on the horizon (Kliebard, 1999).

Passed on February 23, 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act introduced youth to the subjects of agriculture, trade and industry, and home economics through the advisement of employers (Cuban, 1982; Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). Kantor and Lowe (2011) importantly highlight that “no other reform attracted such a broad spectrum of supporters or generated such high expectations for success” during the beginning of the twentieth century (p. 16). With federal control in place, manufacturers would begin to lose their influence on workforce training (Kliebard, 1999). Individual states would receive funds through a Federal Board for Vocational Education that would distribute appropriations on behalf of the secretaries of commerce, labor,

agriculture, and the commissioner of education (Kantor, 1988). Of the federal provisions for funding, only schools deemed secondary to college preparatory could receive funds (Kliebard, 1999). Focusing on “practical job-related skills,” states could employ their current state board of education or a separate board of vocational education to lead the initiative (Kantor, 1988, p. 42). Thirty-three states would opt to utilize their existing boards for this purpose, leading to many following a unit system of support, contrary to Prosser and Snedden’s vocal recommendations (Kantor, 1988).

While the passage of the Smith-Hughes Act would become a turning point for vocational education that would secure a federal funding source for vocational education, it is important to note that its passage was meant to provide a foundational resource for states to invest their plans for vocational education (Lazerson & Grubb, 1974; see also Kantor, 1988). As I examine further in this study, Milwaukee had a well-established trade school program for decades before Smith-Hughes, and the State of Wisconsin would establish their statewide program for vocational education that would include aid appropriations (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Lazerson & Grubb, 1974; Kliebard, 1999). In many ways, the federal aid provided by the passage of Smith-Hughes would demonstrate the commitment and vision that the U.S. would have for vocational education near the end of the Progressive Era. It would be, however, the early work of educators, philanthropists, and reformers that would serve as a pivotal contribution to Smith-Hughes and its success.

### **Summary**

This chapter illustrates the tensions between vocational schooling and academics that emerged during the Progressive Era. Social efficiency became prevalent at a time when the country was in an economic competition on a global scale, and by developing educational

models similar to the factory, education would effectively serve society. Historical examinations of the Progressive Era and the birth of a formalized curriculum draw on the ideologies of the era and the goal to increase U.S. global and economic worth for future generations. This socially efficient approach exhibits the stratification of society, which has been further perpetuated within the mentality of the “survival of the fittest” (Spencer, 1898, p. 444).

Recent historical arguments illustrate the development of class-based educational systems as a result of the support for vocational education (Kantor, 1988; Labaree, 2004). This theme resonates throughout this chapter within the distinct separation of the working-class and middle-class during this period. As David Labaree (2004) suggests, the community college of today demonstrates this separation of classes further through the stratification of comprehensive vocational education and elite four-year institutions of higher education.

The vocationalization of the community college presents an approach of open enrollment, which has been stigmatized due to its lack of elitism as compared to the four-year university. By preparing students for work within community-based businesses, the community college demonstrates the argument between vocational schooling and academics that is rooted within the link between school and work. While the community college promotes efficient methods to prepare for immediate workforce needs, the four-year university prepares for middle-class jobs that promise economic mobility. Looking back on the social efficiency goals of the Progressive Era, the social preparation of the working-class would appear as a proud display of masculinity and citizenship for individuals, similar to the aspirations of the community college today.

Further separated by eugenic-related theories of academic ability and the worth of individuals, Progressive Era education demanded the need for social preparation, as collective belief centered on the failure of education to serve the community through economic growth

adequately. By envisioning an educational “crisis,” the importance of this issue would rise to politicians and philanthropists who held influence and could spearhead change. Examined in chapter five, Milwaukee’s history of the economic depression of 1893 helps us to understand how educational reforms grew out of an effort to support the poor by providing a sense of purpose for citizens. While Milwaukee’s economic decline would devastate its business landscape, influential leaders would push citizens to care for the poor by using manual training and vocational education toward social improvement over indigence. Paving an avenue for growth for the working-class, the separation and tension between academics and vocational education would also mount among citizens and social classes. The result would support the establishment of vocational education linked to guidance, intervention, and social reproduction.

## Chapter 5

### Cream City Economics and Social Order

The late nineteenth century brought innovation and production to cities as Americans embraced a manufacturing mindset to meet the growing needs of the country. While this newfound capitalism divided citizens into mass markets of producers and consumers, ideological perspectives on the preparation of work and support for the laborer arose within communities across the country and class-based interest groups. As an outcome of this capitalist economic structure, educational reform became an equal opportunity for citizens to ensure that industrial growth, social capital, and upward mobility were on their side.

The origins of progressivism have been widely studied within historiographical approaches centered on the role of the worker (Thelen, 1972). Examinations of class-based, Marxist, and political suppression have dominated the legacy of the Progressive Era historically. This chapter introduces the reader to the Midwestern city of Milwaukee and provides an orientation to these historiographical examinations of the industrial past to contextualize the time frame, citizenship, and economic demands of the Progressive Era.

Visitors of Milwaukee, commonly referred to as the “Cream City,” can easily trace its historical roots to the moniker coined by the employees of its founder, Solomon Juneau in 1835 (Still, 1948, p. 64). This reference comes from the production of cream-colored bricks made from nearby riverbed clay (Still, 1948). Milwaukee’s manufacturing roots began almost immediately after the French-Canadian, and first mayor settled it. Today, Juneau remains immortalized within the city on the shores of Lake Michigan with a statue and lush park of green space in his name.

Sixteen years after being incorporated as a city, Milwaukee's location along Lake Michigan, and proximity to nearby Chicago solidified its role as the largest exporter of wheat in the world (Still, 1948). Expanding from 213,448 bushels in 1846 to 16,127,838 bushels in 1870 demonstrates Milwaukee's magnitude of growth and significance within the nation at this time (Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, 1862; Still, 1948). Milwaukee's proximity to the nearby hinterlands of the state, coupled with its accessibility by rail, led to an opportunity to become a centralized location for grain within the Midwest and beyond.

As grain and trade were foundational economic forces for the city, meatpacking and tanning also became essential means of production based on the accessibility of cattle within the state (Kliebard, 1999; Still, 1948). Led by influential meatpackers such as John Plankinton and Michael Cudahy, Milwaukee became the fourth largest meatpacking city in the nation in 1871 (Still, 1948). Similarly, Milwaukee's tanneries expanded rapidly during this time with nine businesses in 1855, growing to 30 by 1870 (Still, 1948). Milwaukee's plethora of skilled Germans, who had easy access to hides from the nearby cattle farmers, dominated the business for much of the nineteenth century (Still, 1948). By 1872 Milwaukee would become the largest center for hide tanning in the world (Still, 1948).

Milwaukee's influential and skilled German residents also led the way toward arguably its most well-known means of production, brewing. With access to local water and grain, German brewers emigrating to Milwaukee such as Jacob Best, Valentin Blatz, Frederick Miller, and Joseph Schlitz helped to put Milwaukee on the world stage with its mass production of lager beer valued at \$706,070 in 1870; an increase greater than 300 percent from 1853 (Still, 1948). By 1889 the city would be home to 12 breweries; of which the majority would fall to what would become known as the "Big Three": Pabst, Schlitz, and Miller (Buenker, 1998, p. 112).

Milwaukeeans enjoyed the fruits of their labor and sought economic capitalism as a means of democratic prosperity and growth for citizens during the mid-nineteenth century. In turn, the discourse around capitalism rose as the city began to enter the industrial age. Reports of tax benefits for manufacturers during the mid-century promoted Milwaukee-centric marketing that would promote the benefits of the land to those back home in Germany (Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, 1871). In addition, manufacturing demands in response to the Civil War would position Milwaukee as a prime outlet for growth; supported by the recently formed Manufacturers' Association in collaboration with nearby Chicago (Still, 1948).

Early competition between Milwaukee and its lakefront neighbor to the south, Chicago, grew to rivalry status during the late nineteenth century (Still, 1948). Milwaukee's shipping line across Lake Michigan presented a direct avenue for trade moving westward (Still, 1948). The proximity to wheat production in Wisconsin meant a high-quality product in comparison to what was sold in nearby Chicago (Still, 1948). In addition, Milwaukee was able to hold a high value of its wheat in European markets based on agricultural quality and efficient shipping methods (Still, 1948). While the production of wheat and other goods helped Milwaukee's population increase to approximately two-thirds the size of Chicago in 1850, Chicago's rapid growth would outpace Milwaukee by more than half its population by 1860 (United States Census, 1930; Still, 1948, p. 197).

Although Milwaukee would never surpass the growing metropolis of Chicago, its rank among the top seven cities in the nation for flour, tanning, brewing, distilling, and iron and steel production gave the city public prominence beyond the Midwest (Korman, 1967). Growing in population from 71,000 in 1870 to over 200,000 in 1890 demonstrated Milwaukee's attractiveness to Europeans who supported its industrial power as businesses continued to expand

in number to meet national demands (Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, 1909; Korman, 1967). While Milwaukee would quickly become a hub for European immigrants, its residents would witness its population rise 247 percent between 1880 and 1900 (Reese, 2002, p. 20). In turn, Milwaukee's more prominent and wealthy residents, the Germans, would hold prime influence on the social, educational, and civic politics of the city throughout the majority of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Reese, 2002).

### **The People of Milwaukee**

While Milwaukee's industrial growth required a workforce, its population was no match the rapid expansion similar to the manufacturing cities of Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit (Korman, 1967). As Europeans left their native lands in droves for the expansive United States, Wisconsin's political leaders drew on those seeking opportunities through advertisements aimed at bringing those in northern and western Europe to Wisconsin for factory work (Korman, 1967; Still, 1948). The promotion of Milwaukee and its established industry, coupled with its attractive setting along the shores of Lake Michigan, brought Europeans to settle in America within a city that was recognized as similar to the homeland. With particular focus on residents of England, Belgium, Holland, France, and Scandinavia, Milwaukee began its population boom by the late 1800s (Wisconsin Commissioner of Immigration, 1871; Korman, 1967; Still, 1948). In addition to these northern and western European countries, Poles from Eastern Europe received targeted invitations from Catholic churches that often made connections with priests from their homeland during this time (Korman, 1967).

While the need for labor was paramount, the focus on "cheap labor" was an essential factor for Milwaukee's political leaders, as the fear of immigrants taking jobs from Milwaukeeans began to take shape (Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, 1871; Korman, 1967, p.



26). By 1871, Germans were perceived as being “thrifty, frugal, industrious, and productive” (Milwaukee Chamber of Commerce, 1871, p. 16). Following a brief economic panic in 1873, large groups of Germans and Poles began to settle in Milwaukee’s cultural neighborhoods, connecting with others of Teutonic heritage (Korman, 1967). In addition to the European migration, East Coast Americans who settled in cities such as New York and Boston often found their way to Milwaukee through a natural progression of transient job seekers who migrated westward following job losses during this time (Korman, 1967).

Social capital quickly became a factor for job success, as immigrants shared job tips and sought similar experiences for their cultural peers (Korman, 1967). By 1870, 47 percent of Milwaukee’s population consisted of foreign-born immigrants (Reese, 2002; Still, 1948). By 1890, nearly one-third of Milwaukee’s residents were of German descent, and the cityscape reflected as such (Still, 1948). German signage, building facades, and community spaces were commonplace, as well as the establishment of several Turner Societies, spread throughout the city, which served as a form of exercise and political camaraderie (Still, 1948). As I examine further, Milwaukee’s dominant population of Germans would go on to hold civic authority for much of the period defined as the Progressive Era.

## **Germans**

As Milwaukee’s foreign-born population changed to meet the growing industrial demands of the city, in many ways its Teutonic influence and historical authority remained. Today’s visitors can witness this Germanic dominance among the sausage shops, restaurants, and buildings of Old World Third Street, the massive plants of the once vibrant breweries of Miller, Pabst, Blatz, and Schlitz, and the European architecture of its downtown and East Side buildings.

The result was an ethnic population that was perceived as being native to Milwaukee and socially elite compared to every other immigrant newcomer (Korman, 1967; Still, 1948).

As political leadership quickly turned to its Germanic influence, the dominance of residents would outnumber that of any other ethnic or cultural group within the city for decades (see Table 1; Reese, 2002; Still, 1948). For those of Teutonic relations, newspapers, social organizations, places of worship, and political leaders all spoke to their interests (Korman, 1967; Still, 1948). In schools throughout the city, the German language was paramount; most notably in German Catholic and Lutheran parochial schools, teachers claimed the lack of class timing necessary within the curriculum to offer studies in both English and German languages (Still, 1948). The result would include a Germanic influence that extended well beyond the Cream City, as one-third of Wisconsin's residents were of Teutonic heritage during this period (Buenker, 1998).

**Table 1**  
**Percentage of Foreign-Born and German Citizens in**  
**Milwaukee, 1850 to 1920**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Percent Foreign-Born</b>	<b>Percent German Born</b>
1850	64	38
1860	50	35
1870	47	32
1880	40	27
1890	39	19
1900	31	17
1910	30	8.7
1920	24	7.2

Sources: Still, 1948; Anderson & Greene, 2009

While a perceived threat of Teutonic dominance continued across the state, the Wisconsin legislature passed the Bennett Law in 1889 in a measure that would require schools to

provide elementary school curriculum in English (Buenker, 1998; Still, 1948). This controversial effort to ensure that the “right behavior” was upheld within schooling and social activity pitted advocates against the Germans; leading to a brief, however, pivotal moment in Wisconsin politics (Buenker, 1998, p. 183). While shortly thereafter in 1890, the Democrats repealed the Bennett Law as they won political power within the state, the overall impact on the cultural conflict that was exhibited within the legislature demonstrated the power that Wisconsin politics could have over education and acculturation.

Dissemination of the word of the people was an important factor towards continued German influence within the city and beyond. German-language newspapers served thousands during the late 1800s; so much so that the combined readership of the newspapers of the popular *Germania*, *Herold*, and *Seebote* was read nearly twofold compared to the number of residents that received the English-written *Sentinel*, *Journal*, and *Evening Wisconsin* combined (Still, 1948, pp. 264-265). However, as the population grew and the numbers of other foreign-born immigrants began to increase by 1910, generational changes would take place within Milwaukee’s German community as many began to identify more with American life and readership of the English press soared beyond those of the Germanic press (Still, 1948).

During the turn of the century, Milwaukee’s Germanic influence would begin to decline for many factors; however, the most notable change occurred because of the class-based social perceptions among Germans and Americans (Still, 1948). Situated within several locations in the city were social clubs such as the Turner societies. The Turners provided cultural refuge for the Forty-Eighters, who advocated for “free press, free speech, [and] free assembly” for the Teutonic ideology (Still, 1948, p. 123). German for *Turnverein*, the Turners guided citizenship alongside gymnastics and other social activities that demonstrated strength and intellectualism (Still, 1948).

For many the Turners provided the German laborer with a warm welcome, as Milwaukee's elite class sought more exclusive social clubs (Still, 1948). During this time, the camaraderie of upper-class German immigrants would be met by the connection to Milwaukee's elite Americans (Still, 1948). The result was the beginning of German class differentiation, which had not been witnessed on such a large scale prior to the mid-century.

Citizenship and Americanization became important social goals as the number of American-born Germans began to increase during the twentieth century (Still, 1948). The result was an affinity for the English language and a separation from cultural norms (Still, 1948). As Americanism became prevalent throughout Milwaukee, it remained evident that the Germanic influence would continue throughout the social and political process (Still, 1948).

Schooling would become an essential means for Milwaukee's German community to ensure that the Germanic influence remained steadfast with their kin. Affluent Germans that disagreed with the shift toward Americanism within the public schools often supported private and parochial education (Still, 1948). Often German speaking, the parochial schools of Lutheran and Catholic parishes would provide an avenue of acculturation for descendants of German-born immigrants as many sought preservation of the Germanic heritage (Ortlepp, 2009; Buenker, 1998).

As I examine further within this study, the model of schooling as a means of preparation for work would originate from widely publicized examples of schooling in Germany that would be brought to America (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Kean, 1983). Furthermore, Marxist political influences from the homeland of Germany would provide a foundation for the development and rapid growth of the Democratic Socialist Party within the United States and most notably, Milwaukee (Korman, 1967; Reese, 2002; Still, 1948). There is no debate that the Germans were the most

dominant and affluent ethnic population within the city for the majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; however, several other growing populations of immigrants would claim their existence within their enclaves of the city. While these other groups would not become as influential as Milwaukee's elite Germans during the time, their existence would have a significant impact on the social, economic and educational transformation of the Cream City for decades to follow (Anderson & Greene, 2009).

### **Poles**

The study of Milwaukee's Polish community is often overshadowed by examinations of its more populous and influential German inhabitants (Pienkos, 1978). Second in population to the Germans during the Progressive Era, Milwaukee's Poles served a vital role in the political, economic, and social fabric of the city (Mikoś, 2012). Alongside the popular ethnic hubs such as Buffalo, Chicago, and Detroit, Milwaukee's Polish population would become second only to its 'Windy City' neighbor to the south by 1890 (see Table 2; Pienkos, 1978).

**Table 2**  
**Number of Polish Immigrants, 1870 to 1900**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Milwaukee</b>	<b>Chicago</b>	<b>Detroit</b>	<b>Buffalo</b>
1870	325	1,205	285	135
1880	1,790	5,536	1,771	723
1890	9,222	24,086	5,331	8,879
1900	17,033	59,713	13,631	18,830

Source: Pienkos, 1978

In a city dominated by German political and religious leaders, the emerging Polish community sought refuge within the development of low-cost enclaves of the city's South Side and a small section within the North Side near the Milwaukee River (Mikoś, 2012; Pienkos, 1978; Still, 1948). While the rapid growth of Poles during the late nineteenth century displayed

dramatic population figures, Milwaukee's Poles sought validation within the Germanic social landscape (Mikoś, 2012; Pienkos, 1978; Still, 1948). Of the Poles' greatest attributes towards early social success was their contribution toward the city's Catholic parishes and the construction of several influential churches within the densely populated South Side (Mikoś, 2012; Pienkos, 1978; Still, 1948). Construction of St. Stanislaus, Wisconsin's second Polish parish, and the nation's first urban Polish church served an influential role in 1866 as Milwaukee's Polish population observed substantial growth following the arrival of its first immigrants in the early 1840s (Mikoś, 2012; Pienkos, 1978). Shortly thereafter in 1868, St. Stanislaus opened the doors to a parochial grade school, becoming only the second Polish parochial school to form in the United States (Mikoś, 2012; Still, 1948). Educating approximately 500 of Milwaukee's Polish youth, St. Stanislaus quickly became the model for Polish education and community within the city as additional parishes and schools were formed across its footprint (Still, 1948). By 1892 Milwaukee's Polish Catholic schools served approximately 4,000 youth, and by 1910 approximately 25 percent of Milwaukee's churches were of Polish Catholic faith (Mikoś, 2012).

Serving as a vehicle for social development, Catholic churches produced a substantial advantage toward the establishment of Milwaukee's Polish economic foundation, leading to the development of their political party (Still, 1948). By 1890, prominent Polish citizen, Michael Kruszk, leader of the *Kuryer Polski* a well-known Polish newspaper, argued for the need to teach the Polish language and include Polish texts and materials within the private schools throughout the city to serve its citizens (Mikoś, 2012; Still, 1948). Kruszk's daily newspaper would eventually become the prominent voice of the Poles, as it would be the first of its kind with national distribution, serving both political and social interest for Poles across the United

States (Mikoś, 2012; Still, 1948). Kruszką's paper would grow to be so influential that by 1896, the Milwaukee School Board would approve the inclusion of the Polish language within schooling based on his writings and social proposals (Mikoś, 2012). However, internal opposition from the Catholic church would perceive Kruszką's influence towards social change as a means of opposition toward the church and its strong parochial school; further dividing Kruszką from the faith (Mikoś, 2012; Milwaukee School Board, 1896; Still, 1948).

Milwaukee's Polish press would go on to be one of the most significant factors towards the group's social success within the Germanic city. Serving a national audience, the *Kuryer Polski* drew readers to the issues facing Milwaukee's Poles, further solidifying the influence of the city among immigrants across the United States (Still, 1948). This aspect of Milwaukee's Polish authority is further demonstrated by the development of its growing political stature. Importantly illustrated is Donald Pienkos' (1978) research identifying that "the first Poles in America to win the major political offices of state senator, city comptroller and U.S. congressman were all from Milwaukee" (p. 67). In addition, Milwaukee Poles such as Kruszką would go on to serve various roles within state and city politics such as state senator, alderman, and county supervisor (Still, 1948). Originating with a strong following of the Democratic party from the native land, Milwaukee's Poles would claim positions in nearly every political ticket citywide by 1890 (Still, 1948).

Contrary to typical Polish politics, Kruszką's *Kuryer Polski* would possess a progressive Republican ideology (Pienkos, 1978). As a result, Catholic leaders and Kruszką were often at odds over the Polish ethos and the relationship to its faith. The late 1800s and early twentieth century would eventually bring the political influence of Victor Berger and the heavily established Social Democratic Party. Poles would vote in favor of the socialist ticket and be an

influential factor in the creation of Milwaukee's social Democratic machine and the Mayoral appointment of its first Socialist Mayor, Emil Seidel (Pienkos, 1978). As the Polish Socialists of the city established influential labor union support among its followers who were against capitalism and the perceived hegemonic stronghold of the Catholic church, their support for the Social Democratic Party would prove to aid in the eventual success of the socialistic political machine that would become situated within Milwaukee for decades to follow (Pienkos, 1978; Reese, 2002). As I examine further in chapter six, the rise of Milwaukee's "Sewer Socialists" would come as a result of the support and avocation of Poles who would eventually separate from their national following and cohesive support for the Catholic faith (Reese, 2002).

The Democratic support of Milwaukee's Poles would prove to be so cohesive that some researchers claim that the unity of the Poles originated from the fact that many had emigrated from the same rural part of Poland (Still, 1948). At the time, this section of Poland was under German rule and consequently, was heavily industrialized in response to the Germanic labor influences of the period (Still, 1948). By 1905 more than half of Milwaukee's Poles worked in unskilled labor jobs such as painters, saloonkeepers, and industrial laborers (Still, 1948). Relegated to the bottom class of immigrants along with the Italians and Greeks, Milwaukee's Poles would earn just enough to establish a small enclave on the South Side through the purchase of inexpensive property and building materials (Mikoś, 2012). In turn, the family business became an important aspect of equity and capital, while also providing monetary support to the homeland (Pienkos, 1978; Still, 1948). Two large, family-owned businesses within the city, Superior Die Set Corporation, and Maynard Steel Company were owned by Poles and would aid in the eventual development of a Polish business class of workers (Pienkos, 1978).



Ostensibly Milwaukeeans would consider the Poles a step above the “ignorant newcomers,” that would be used to describe the small, but growing population of Milwaukee’s blacks (Trotter, 2007, p. 18). While the Poles grew in fast numbers by the turn of the century, Milwaukee’s black population would grow slowly from the small population and tight, segregated housing; often facing overt racial hostility and discrimination (Dougherty, 2009).

### **African Americans**

Of the ethnic groups examined in this study, the history of Milwaukee’s African American residents provides a critical analysis of the proletarianization of the Progressive Era. While the population of blacks in Milwaukee was much lower than the industrial cities of Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland during this time, its residents played an essential role in the establishment of a foundation for future blacks as the city grew to become an industrial giant (Dougherty, 2009; Trotter, 2007).

Milwaukee first black residents came to the city in the 1830s. Of those who resided in the city was Joe Oliver, a cook for its founder, Solomon Juneau (Dougherty, 2009). While other historical accounts of Milwaukee’s black settlers arrive at the first family of Henry and Georgiana Anderson, it remains consistent that the city’s first black settlers came with established wealth and freedom from slavery (Dougherty, 2009). Through the mid to late nineteenth century, black newcomers arrived in Milwaukee as they did in other Midwestern cities; however, they often took jobs in domestic service or positions as laborers (Trotter, 2007). As the population grew slowly, blacks commonly took positions as porters, waiters, servants, cooks, and common laborers (Trotter, 2007, p. 9). By 1890, Milwaukee’s black population was 449 residents, representing merely 0.2 percent of the city’s total residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 1890).

While the thrust of industrialism aided in rapid population growth for the city, black workers were often limited to the most undesirable jobs (Trotter, 2007). The hostility and mistreatment of blacks by whites was commonplace, and as a result, social capital became an important means of establishment and survival for Milwaukee's blacks (Dougherty, 2009). As the black population nearly doubled from 1890 to 1900, its percentage continued to be disproportionate to foreign-born and American-born whites at 0.3 percent of residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 1900). Similar to foreign-born Milwaukeeans and supporters of women's suffrage during this time, blacks sought solidarity within religious groups, social organizations, and the press (Dougherty, 2009). In 1890, one of the first such groups was the Afro-American League, which wrote a civil rights bill that was introduced to the Democratic state legislature in 1891 to combat racism and discrimination (Trotter, 2007). While the bill would not pass until 1894, the significant modifications made to the bill would prove to be more of an appeasement for blacks, as civil rights violations were often found to be negligible on behalf of judges review the case (Trotter, 2007).

While Milwaukee's black population continued to increase, its first newspaper, the *Wisconsin Afro-American*, wrote articles for blacks migrating from the south to Milwaukee as early as 1892 (Trotter, 2007). Six years later, black Milwaukeeans would produce the *Wisconsin Weekly Advocate*, which would serve the employment interests for those residing in the city through domestic employment through their "Colored Helping Hand Intelligence Office" (Trotter, 2007, p. 13).

The *Advocate* would go on to promote the controversial black ideology of Booker T. Washington throughout the Milwaukee community through its editor, Richard B. Montgomery (Trotter, 2007). In opposition to W. E. B. Du Bois' study of blacks in Philadelphia in 1899,

which examined the development of the black race within the north through social issues such as segregation, manual training, and access to industrial education, the *Advocate* would support Washington's ideology of self-sufficiency and independence for blacks (Du Bois, 1902; Rury, 2013; Trotter, 2007). Montgomery's motto, "The Negro must work out his own problem" would receive opposition for many of Milwaukee's "old elite" blacks, who were often light-skinned and connected to well-established whites during the period (Trotter, 2007, pp. 29-30).

Washington's ideology would be challenged further by Milwaukee's most seasoned blacks through aggressive boycotts and opposition of Montgomery's plans for a black industrial school in northern Wisconsin, and an invitation for Washington to speak in Milwaukee in 1902 (Trotter, 2007). The result was an overt subdivision of Milwaukee's middle-class and working-class blacks through Montgomery's ongoing degradation of poor and old blacks that disagreed with his support of Washington (Trotter, 2007). Montgomery would go on to battle editors of newspapers throughout the country regarding his ideological stance, similar to Du Bois' and Washington's debates, which occurred throughout the period (Rury, 2013; Watkins, 2001).

Following a period of financial concern, the *Weekly Advocate* would eventually halt production and would merge to become the *Wisconsin Enterprise-Blade* (Trotter, 2007). In contrast to Milwaukee's leading newspapers of the *Sentinel* and later the *Journal*, which often published racially charged reports of blacks, the *Blade* would serve the black community aggressively through opposition to the racist press and the promotion of civil rights (Trotter, 2007). A prominent voice for Wisconsin's black population, the *Blade* would become a critical vehicle for race relations through opposition to the utilization of blacks for strikebreaking, anti-segregation, inequality in education, and employment opportunities (Trotter, 2007).

Germans, Irish, Italians, and even the Poles took on most of the unskilled work within the city during this time, while the respective labor unions fought hard to keep the jobs within the hands of White workers (Trotter, 2007). Racist and eugenic ideologies thrived through the workforce as blacks were commonly labeled as being incapable of training and skill development (Trotter, 2007). In addition, labor unions barred blacks from entrance, further limiting the opportunities for blacks to gain sustainable wages and upward mobility (Trotter, 2007). The perceived threat of the black race was further disseminated through the discourse of prominent political leaders such as Victor Berger of the Socialist Democratic Party who publicly spoke of racist beliefs towards blacks as being inferior to all other ethnic groups (Dougherty, 2009; Trotter, 2007).

Joe Trotter (2007) illustrates the limited impact of Milwaukee's black workforce through the comparison "About 8 percent of Chicago's black male population worked in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits in 1900, as contrasted to the 2.6 percent for black men in Milwaukee" (p. 14). One avenue into Milwaukee's industrialization came from work as strikebreakers (Trotter, 2007). While most often temporary, blacks would quickly replace white, foreign-born workers who answered newspaper advertisements for immediate work during this time (Trotter, 2007). Often accepted as an immediate means toward earning a wage, Milwaukee's blacks would often succumb to exploitation for their ability to keep the plant in operation while white workers walked off the job.

At the turn of the century, several blacks had become economically stable and established small businesses within the city, catering to the needs of their community (Trotter, 2007). The often service-oriented businesses such as barbers, seamstresses, saloonkeepers, and rooming house operators aided in the development and growth of black-owned businesses and

the establishment of Milwaukee's black economic base (Trotter, 2007, p. 19). By 1908, business growth in the black community would increase by over 230 percent to a total of \$200,000 (Trotter, 2007, p. 19).

Following a modest increase in population in 1910, Milwaukee blacks found solidarity within a tiny one-square-mile enclave in the city's Near North Side, succeeding in the transition of many early Germans moving farther north (Dougherty, 2009; Trotter, 2007). Similar to other Midwestern cities during the time, overcrowding in this area led to a drastic increase in population density within the neighborhood. While Milwaukee's black population increase would continue to remain modest, the most substantial increase during the Progressive Era would occur between 1910 and 1920 (Trotter, 2007). By 1920 Milwaukee's black population had grown to 2,229 and rose to 0.4 percent of the total city population of 457,147 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1920; Trotter, 2007). At least 150 black-owned businesses operated during this time, which provided an avenue for the establishment of a black middle class that would begin to represent the bourgeoisie among the race within the city's small black enclave (Trotter, 2007). Tables 3 and 4 illustrate Milwaukee's black workforce during this period further.

**Table 3**  
**Occupations of Black Males in Milwaukee 1920**  
**Total Male Workers: 988**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Workers</b>	<b>Percent of Black Workforce</b>
Professional	41	4.1
Proprietary	36	3.6
Clerical	17	1.7
Skilled	90	9.1
Semiskilled	125	12.6
Unskilled	488	49.3
Domestic and Personal Service	186	18.8

Source: Trotter, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 1920

**Table 4**  
**Occupations of Black Females in Milwaukee 1920**  
**Total Female Workers: 289**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Workers</b>	<b>Percent of Black Workforce</b>
Professional	4	1.3
Proprietary	19	6.4
Clerical	14	4.8
Skilled	3	1.1
Semiskilled	113	39.1
Unskilled	12	4.1
Domestic and Personal Service	114	39.4

Source: Trotter, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 1920

Quickly becoming an influential source for the growing community of blacks, the Milwaukee Urban League formed in 1919 to support the growing needs of employment, housing, and social services as a sub-organization of the National Urban League (Still, 1948). Through the

development of several black-serving businesses, the Urban League would provide a vehicle for social capital through employment services and the development of a community drug store within the black enclave of the city (Still, 1948). The Urban League would go on to research interviews and surveys, which called attention to practices in discrimination and racism to advance the well-being of blacks within the city (Trotter, 2007). By the late 1930s, the Milwaukee Urban League would become an integral part of the education within the community through the offering of health education, music, and black history to citizens (Still, 1948).

In many instances, Milwaukee's Great Migration came much later in comparison to other industrial cities of the north and would not rise to the levels observed by other Midwestern cities until after 1940 (Dougherty, 2009; Trotter, 2007). However, early discrimination by labor unions, the Socialists, and white laborers fearing for the loss of their jobs certainly played a role; as word traveled to the homeland in the south that Milwaukee's opportunity for labor was drastically limited compared to expanding cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo (Dougherty, 2009; Reese, 2002; Trotter, 2007).

Milwaukee's black history provides an important contribution to the examination of schooling and work through an illustration of the overt discrimination and segregation that would impact the development of its population. While Milwaukee's blacks would eventually rise to significant proportions, their opportunities for training and skill development would remain limited. Milwaukee would go on to face an important economic crisis near the end of the nineteenth century that would impact the ideology of the city forever, and the fruits of this ideological development would remain with the foreign-born and American-born whites for decades to follow.

### **The Depression and Social Order of 1893**

The beginning of the Progressive Era sparked a critical time of economic change for Milwaukeeans as well as citizens across the United States. From 1893 to 1897, cities across the nation experienced increased economic hardship as poverty rates drastically rose. While economic panics had occurred across the nation prior to the 1890s, an awareness and understanding of education and poverty became prevalent during this period more than ever before (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). Originating as a financial institution panic in the summer of 1893, bankers and economic reporters attempted to fend off discourse that focused on an impending depression hitting cities across the nation (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). Before this point, economic growth had continued at a rapid pace, while cities across the Midwest received thousands of immigrants in search of new beginnings. In turn, most believed the banks were healthy and stable; however, many did not account for the eventual bursting bubble (Thelen, 1972).

By 1880 Wisconsin had 29 banks across the state; however, by the beginning of 1893 that total had risen over 300 percent to 119 (Buenker, 1998; Thelen, 1972). By the summer of 1893 prominent Milwaukee banks such as the Plankinton Bank of Milwaukee and the Wisconsin Marine and Fire Insurance Company closed their doors, producing a domino effect within the city and state (Buenker, 1998; Thelen, 1972). Writing on the origins of the depression, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* pointed to the Plankinton Bank's loan of \$267,000 to the Frank A. Lappen Furniture Company, depleting its reserves to \$148,000 (Buenker, 1998; "City Reform," 1893). Prior to this point city governments within the state had so much faith in the banking system that public funds were often deposited in state banks, generating a tense situation following the collapse (Thelen, 1972). While many public services suffered tremendously as a result of the



economic crash, support for schooling rapidly declined as cities across the state had to make crucial decisions to fund services such as police and fire protection over textbooks, building repairs, and school maintenance (Thelen, 1972).

While impact of the depression spread across the country, unemployment and poverty rose at unprecedented rates (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). Between 1893 and 1894 an estimated 35 to 40 percent of Milwaukeeans were unemployed (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). No more significant observation was the growth of the Milwaukee County poor list, which saw the number of families rise from an average of 681 before the depression to 3,430 by 1894 (Buenker, 1998; Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). A year prior, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported 13,000 Milwaukeeans were indigent, justifying the totals in aid distributed to residents of \$110,000 by 1894 (Buenker, 1998; "Pauper List," 1894).

With most of Milwaukee's labor held in the manufacturing sector during the 1890s, a decline in the workforce, coupled with the overall production of manufactured products between 1890 and 1896 presented a 20 percent decline in employment by 1895 and half of the earned wages that were observed prior to 1892 (Buenker, 1998). The result was a *Milwaukee Journal* article that reported unemployment had hit totals much higher than the previous economic recession of 1873 ("Two Great Panics," 1894).

Before the depression, distribution of aid to the poor came into question as former Milwaukee County Supervisor, G. E. Weiss, was quoted in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* demanding reforms that combat aid fraud and perpetual public dependence on taxpayer funding ("County Relief," 1888). In turn, the depression identified a group of "able-bodied paupers" within society, which demanded work for earning aid ("Reliving the Unemployed," 1894, p. 4). While many sought jobs during the depression, Milwaukeeans held the local government responsible for the

economic crash, and residents expected immediate relief along with civic action (Thelen, 1972). In response, the city hired many unemployed men to work on the construction of its city hall, library, and local infrastructure during this time (Thelen, 1972).

Milwaukee's manufacturers had many differing views of the causes for the depression beyond the reports of the Plankinton Bank's loan practices. At the end of 1893, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* solicited feedback from business and industry to capture the perspectives of the community ("Business Depression," 1893). Of the demands employers sought was a change in political policy, better railroads and city streets, financial support for the closed banks, and an awareness of overproduction, among others ("Business Depression," 1893). While many held the responsibility of the economic fall on the "rotten Democratic administration," others identified the lack of national investment in Milwaukee's significant industrial growth ("Business Depression," 1893, p. 10). It was clear that Milwaukeeans had various arguments for the impact of the economic fall; however, one recurring theme was the need for a doctrine of reform that would support the growth and future of the city. As one prominent industrial businessman stated, "We see nothing ahead that indicates improvement in business. The present administration's policy does not encourage any improvement in this great depression, which we are feeling" ("Business Depression," 1893, p. 10).

While the depression made a significant impact on the economic and social order of Milwaukee's citizens, the Progressive Era was a valuable time of growth for the city. More than 40 years prior to the depression of 1893, former editor of the *Albany Evening Journal*, Rufus King, forecasted Milwaukee's prominence and growth in an article, which he published with his new paper, the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, as well as back home in New York upon his arrival to

the Cream City. In King's (1845) article, he describes the vast land and lakeshore of the city, declaring:

Milwaukie is most advantageously situated. While the...deposities of the Milwaukie and Menominee rivers furnishes a spacious area for the business part of this growing town, the table-land which surrounds it...affords 'ample room and verge enough' for thousands of delightfully situated public or private edifices. (np)

King concluded his article boasting "Milwaukie...is destined to be the chief commercial and manufacturing city of this WESTERN EMPIRE" (King, 1845, np).

King's prediction of Milwaukee's manufacturing prowess was no coincidence. The city's ideal setting along Lake Michigan and well-established rail connections made it a dominant force within several industries before and following the depression (Still, 1948). By the turn of the century, Milwaukee's iron and steel industry was one of the nation's leaders behind those in Pittsburgh, Cleveland and Detroit; with the largest of its production coming from railroad castings made at the Edward P. Allis Company (Buenker, 1998). Prior to the depression in 1889, the Edward P. Allis Company "covered twenty acres, employed 1,500, and turned out more milling equipment and large steam engines than any other manufacturer in the country" (Still, 1948, p. 104). By 1904, the company formed into the Allis-Chalmers Company and employed 10,000 workers, producing \$30 million in manufacturing each year (Still, 1948).

While the impact of the depression halved the production output observed a decade prior in 1880, by the turn of the century Milwaukee's growth was greater than any other city in the nation (Buenker, 1998; Still, 1948). With an 88 percent growth in the value of manufactured products from 1899 to 1909, Milwaukee became a sought-after place of labor and progress for many seeking upward mobility (Still, 1948).

Of Milwaukee's industries during the Progressive Era, brewing was arguably the business that placed the city on the national stage with consumers. By 1889 Milwaukee's brewers were well established, and its Pabst plant had the lead with 700,000 barrels produced per year as it began construction of the largest bottling plant in the country (Buenker, 1998; Still, 1948). While Pabst, Miller, and Schlitz would eventually control Milwaukee's brewing legacy, the Blue Ribbon brand of beer would remain the largest seller until Schlitz would officially take the crown in 1903 (Buenker, 1998; Still, 1948).

The success of the Milwaukee brewers made vast contributions to the economic growth of the city during the late 1800s. With expansion readily prevalent, brewers such as Pabst, Miller, and Schlitz would often invest their profits into the growth of their plants (Still, 1948). In addition, several of Milwaukee's predominant banks such as Second Ward Savings and First Wisconsin National were known to almost exclusively cater to the brewers (Still, 1948). During this time, Captain Pabst, became known as Milwaukee's largest property owner, investing in many buildings throughout the city, which can still be identified by the Pabst crest emblem today (Still, 1948).

For Milwaukeeans, the panic of 1893 was more than a period of rapid decline; it was a period of reflection steeped from a realist perspective. Examining the past 50 years of the city's history in 1895, the *Sentinel* described the recent economic depression by writing "it will be found that the main cause of the numerous bank and commercial failures was the over-confidence shown in speculators and adventurers by banking institutions" ("Notable Events," p. 19). Milwaukeeans quickly determined that the blame for the depression was an overzealous trust of the banks, which "were oblivious to the signs of impending commercial disaster" ("Notable Events," p. 19). The number of businesses that closed and the number of the poor who

required assistance rose to astonishing numbers for Milwaukeeans who had not experienced such a decline in the history of the city. In response, the city looked to several groups of prominent citizens who worked tirelessly to ensure that the impact of 1893 would not be felt within the city again. The result would become the establishment of civic reforms that would forever change the ideology of the Cream City.

### **The Search for a New Ideology**

Between those working for aid and those collecting assistance due to being indigent, Milwaukeeans, similar to other citizens across the nation, identified with a Darwinian ideology that believed everyone had an equal opportunity to get out of poverty, and that it was their responsibility not to be dependent on public funds. The result was a public identification of the separation between the poor and the wealthy (Thelen, 1972). Democratically, Milwaukeeans, among Wisconsinites, sought opportunities for mobility and growth of citizens. The observations of poverty that spread throughout Milwaukee and the state led to social concern for the vast disparities in economic wealth (Thelen, 1972). The result was an allegiance by many toward the discourse of social scientists within the discipline of economics (Thelen, 1972). It was believed that by following these elite economic leaders, urgent matters of economic disparity and widespread interest would be examined and identified as methods of sociological betterment (Thelen, 1972).

It comes at no surprise that education would become the vehicle for delivery of the social scientists to the citizens. Just before the depression in 1890, cities such as Milwaukee, among others, developed university extension centers as a means of providing tutelage in various subjects to meet the demands of education (Thelen, 1972). By 1896, as efforts to gain economic stability increased, Wisconsin was reported as providing the best education across the nation by

the *Milwaukee Sentinel* (“Doing a Great Work,” 1896). Access to education of economics, sociology, and political science gave people the tools to be informed citizens while producing a widely accepted pride in their city and state. David Thelen (1972) notes that during the years of the depression, it was anticipated that “forty or fifty thousand different citizens” were served through classes offered within Wisconsin cities that formed university extension centers (p. 68).

In addition to formal educational outlets such as the university extension centers, social clubs were formed as a means to share discourse on economic improvements and proactive amelioration of future issues. Often prominent were women’s clubs as well as labor unions that aimed to be a source of refuge for those seeking economic understanding (Thelen, 1972). In Milwaukee alone, over 12 such clubs were created in response to the depression and the support of the worker (Thelen, 1972). Reform was an inevitable result of change in order to ensure that the severe impact of the depression would never return, and Milwaukeeans would experience widespread support across class lines that had not been witnessed in the decades prior (Thelen, 1972).

One such organization that rose to predominance was the Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association of Milwaukee (MMAM). Formed in 1894, the MMAM sought for social and economic growth for businesses as well as aid for the poor and support for the self-made man to support labor and industry over bureaucracy (Buenker, 1998). Initially led as the Merchants’ Association in the mid-1800s, the group advocated for the support and growth of local manufacturing interests across the city (Still, 1948). Of MMAM’s most significant accomplishments during this time was the support for the expansion of Wisconsin’s railroad lines as well as the benefits of freight fares that would go on to support the growth of trade within the city and across the state (Buenker, 1998; Still, 1948). Representing the largest of

Milwaukee's manufacturers, MMAM would become most well known for its promotion of industrial education, apprenticeships, and workers' compensation, among other reforms that supported the work and development of the laborer (Buenker, 1998). Of the accomplishments of MMAM would be the support and development of a trade school for boys and the support of continuation and technical schools within Milwaukee and beyond (Kean, 1983).

The history of Milwaukee's women's clubs presents an important role within the ideological shift that took place within the city and state following the depression. While the Wisconsin Woman's Suffrage Association began in 1867, Wisconsin's central location for women's clubs was in Milwaukee. Women with husbands who championed the industrialization within the city, such as Allis and Cudahy led the Association (Thelen, 1972; McBride, 1993). By the start of the depression, several women's clubs were already well-established and focused efforts on providing education for self-improvement, eventually expanding their resources for citizens across the city (McBride, 1993). Of the educational efforts of these groups was an overwhelming support for the university extension centers and the establishment of the Wisconsin Library Association in 1894 (McBride, 1993). Following avid advocacy, Milwaukee's first woman won an appointment on the school board in 1895; leading the charge to establish state law that would provide similar opportunities for women on school boards across the state (Thelen, 1972).

The mission of Milwaukee's women's clubs represented an ideological shift that took place within the city as a means to support democratic social reform in response to the depression. Through examining the needs of the poor, the women leaders of the city developed a linkage between education and poverty to ensure that the appropriate skills and training took place for youth (Thelen, 1972). While the goal was to ensure that another depression would not

impact society as adversely as that of 1893, Milwaukee's women leaders would begin by examining the validity of schooling and its relevance for the poor (Thelen, 1972).

Established in 1891, the Wisconsin Woman's School Alliance was formed after several prominent members of Milwaukee's elite and influential households joined together to challenge the status quo within public education (Buenker, 1998; Reese, 1981; Thelen, 1972). Becoming the first state organization to focus its efforts on schooling, the Alliance supported a working-class ideology to promote the needs of Milwaukee's poor (Reese, 1981). While the organization was established just before the depression, the Alliance would slowly rise to prominence following an almost immediate response to the growing poverty rate during the late 1800s (Reese, 1981, 2002).

Social justice became a popular topic as Alliance members attended school board meetings challenging access to textbooks, school building sanitation, class-size ratios, playgrounds, vacation schools, manual training, and school lunches (Reese, 1981, 2002). The mission of the Alliance was to develop the skills of the poor to provide them with opportunities for social mobility through the attainment of work (Thelen, 1972). In turn, the efforts of the Alliance spread a similar ideology held by the Social Democrats during this time (Reese, 1981). Thelen (1972) describes how their ideological goal was to "inject 'real-life' into the curriculum for all children, [while teaching] rich children a respect for manual labor" (p. 94). As the members exhibited their passion for school reforms, many school board members dismissed the presentations by Alliance members, treating them to an adversarial and often disrespectful response (Milwaukee School Board, 1896).

By 1896 Milwaukee's Jewish women's clubs taught manual training for citizens, paving the way for a shared ideology of environmental support for youth to increase upward mobility



(Thelen, 1972). The success of the manual training offered through Milwaukee's women's clubs would lead to arguably the greatest educational accomplishment of the Milwaukee women: the establishment of the vacation school. While previously established in cities such as Toledo and Kansas City, Milwaukee's first vacation school opened in 1899 and offered an outdoor experience for approximately 400 of Milwaukee's most impoverished youth to explore life beyond the becoming metropolis of the city over the summer months (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). As an integral part of this experience, a formalized curriculum of manual training was offered and received well-praised endorsement from the labor unions (Reese, 2002). As I discuss further in chapter six, the experimentation of the vacation school provided an altruistic experience for the women's clubs, which would later become an important factor in the promotion of upward mobility and social order at the promise of vocational training (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972).

While the outcomes of the Woman's School Alliance would never reach the scale its members would seek, their support for labor, working-class, and, indirectly, the Socialist agenda, would later prove to be a significant factor in the eventual promotion and success of Milwaukee Socialism. The Milwaukee women proved relentless in their efforts, and notably, shed essential light on the social and economic factors of schooling throughout the state well before formalized vocationalism was observed (Reese, 1981).

Although the summer of 1893 was a year of panic and economic fear for most Milwaukeeans, the founding of the Milwaukee Municipal League (MML) proved to be a timely resource of non-partisan support for its people (Buenker, 1998, 2009; "City Reform," 1893) Responding to the fear of tax hikes and corruption within local government, the MML represented the Populists of Milwaukee with reforms during the Progressive Era (Buenker,

1998). While local reforms were limited in scale, they would not provide the necessary strength to sustain, as political corruption often overcame grassroots Populist support. At the state level, local politics were at the mercy of the state legislature, and issues such as poverty and corruption that were witnessed in Milwaukee would need to be addressed in Madison in order to establish sustainable reform (Thelen, 1972). At the Capitol, however, the MML leaders would receive minimal support from legislative members who had little to no perspective on the economic and labor issues of the Cream City (Thelen, 1972).

Led by John Butler, the MML challenged the civic systems in Milwaukee to better serve its citizens (Buenker, 1998; Thelen, 1972). While tax relief became a primary outcome for the MML, it was not without controversy. Those in opposition to the reforms of the MML argued that its tax relief efforts best supported the large businesses of Milwaukee and did little for the middle-class citizen (Thelen, 1972). For Milwaukeeans, poor and elite, the reform efforts of the MML would go on to provide change amid rampant citywide corruption, which persisted during the late 1800s.

By working with statewide legislative members, the MML would establish itself as a force of civic and state reform. Butler would become known as an “honest [and] earnest man...who cared for the city’s welfare” (Thelen, 1972, p. 161). However, Butler’s most significant challenge came when Milwaukee’s city leaders, the Common Council, opposed his civil service reforms that would move to end corruption (Thelen, 1972). After several failed attempts by Butler and the MML leaders to change local politics, it was time to bring the issues to Madison. Supported by prominent bankers and Turners, Governor William H. Upham supported the civil service bill; observing that the reforms of the MML were endorsed by many prominent Milwaukeeans who spoke for the needs of its citizens (Thelen, 1972). By 1895 the

efforts of the MML were spread throughout the Milwaukee press as being victorious, as all city employees would now answer to the newly formed Milwaukee Service Commission (“The Civil Service Commission,” 1895; Thelen, 1972).

In 1895 the National Municipal League publicly praised the successes of the MML as being more successful than any other city-based League (Thelen, 1972). In turn, the impact of the MML would prove to be paramount for Milwaukee’s Progressivism during this time. By 1897 the MML was deemed a strong force of Populist reform as it continued to oppose increases in the local tax rate through Common Council protests and public debates (Thelen, 1972). Milwaukee’s civic issues were now within the purview of Madison’s legislators. From the outsider perspective, Milwaukee required state control, and the MML was just the group to ensure that occurred (Thelen, 1972).

The successes of the MML at the state level opened a door for Wisconsin politics to provide legislative oversight for its largest metropolis. As I examine in chapter seven, this political governance would continue to provide direction and support for Milwaukee’s social order for decades to follow; leading to a growing theme of political reforms that would prove unique to the Badger State and the city of Milwaukee (Kaufman, 2018).

### **Poverty and Economic Capitalism**

Milwaukee’s Progressivism took an altruistic turn for citizens as it became recognized that equality and poverty would not provide the city with the industrialization and capital that Milwaukeeans sought (Thelen, 1972). As Thelen (1972) describes, the depression of 1893 was arguably a more significant concern for Milwaukee, over other industrial cities, due to its small industrial roots at the time. While the nearby presence of Chicago’s industrial boom provided a rivalry for Milwaukeeans, the limited impact of the depression on the Windy City may have

promoted a prompt ideological change for Milwaukee at the fear of permanent isolation and loss of all that founder Solomon Juneau had established.

Social groups such as the Milwaukee Municipal League, the Woman's School Alliance, and the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association demonstrate the Cream City's Populist roots at a time when dramatic change, immigration, and economic decline were all converging on the city. For Milwaukeeans, attacking poverty would also resolve issues of crime and provide residents with equal opportunities for workplace success (Thelen, 1972). While support for the industrial worker would promote the development of youth, it was not without racial and eugenic concern for fear of the "other." Foreign-born whites were often in competition between their German, Polish, Irish, and Italian peers for skilled labor. In addition, Milwaukee had few black residents at the start of the Progressive Era due to overt racism and hostility; leaving the few blacks that did reside within the city relegated to the very bottom of economic opportunity (Trotter, 2007). As social capital played an essential role for each group of citizens during this period, it would remain evident that through politics and progressivism, the racial and ethnic boundaries of the city were held firm and would not become part of the altruistic fabric of reforms (Trotter, 2007). While Milwaukee would witness a period of vast black migration following 1920, blacks would continue to receive racial and ethnic inequality for decades to follow (Trotter, 2007). By 1967 Milwaukee would gain its infamous ranking of being the most segregated city in the nation (Desmond, 2016).

Prior to the economic fall of 1893, Milwaukeeans had experienced several economic depressions and had become familiar with job loss and poverty (Still, 1948). In 1883, Milwaukee experienced an economic depression that impacted the industrial and manufacturing growth of the city, similar to other Midwestern cities such as Chicago and Detroit (Still, 1948). By 1892

Milwaukeeans had made a commitment toward industrialism and the prosperity it promised for laborers (“To Workingmen,” 1982). By becoming institutionalized toward the commitment of industrial growth, citizens believed that they would have the opportunity of labor at their fingertips; however, without social reforms in place it would remain clear that access to the jobs of industrial labor would be limited to particular citizens, as racial and ethnic barriers persisted (Trotter, 2007).

The impact of the economic decline drew Milwaukeeans to think differently about poverty, as it reached an estimate that between 35 and 40 percent of the workforce was unemployed (Thelen, 1972). By 1895 Milwaukee’s population was 249,290, and relief for the poor totaled \$108,332, an approximate increase of 257 percent since 1891 (Thelen, 1972). An article printed in the Milwaukee Journal best illustrates Milwaukee’s ideology of the poor during this time:

The effects of the prostration of business are best measured by the rapid increase of the people compelled to apply for public aid. These applicants are not paupers, they are only poor persons who have struggled hard to escape what ambitious men consider the most trying ordeal - to make known to the world their wants. (“A Lesson,” p. 4)

For Milwaukeeans, “The harmonious progress of capital and labor is the only condition under which a prosperous future may be hoped...” (“A Lesson,” p. 4).

In Milwaukee, prominent discourse disseminated across the city and state from its most widely read newspaper, the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, led by editor and former state Republican chairman, Horace A. Rublee (Thelen, 1972). Rublee, an avid follower of Herbert Spencer and his ideology of Social Darwinism, used his newspaper as a primary means to disseminate the belief that Milwaukeeans, among all citizens, were destined to compete for jobs and social capital as a

means of determining wealth through forms of natural competition and survival of the fittest (Buenker, 1998; Thelen, 1972). In his perspective, the economic depression of 1893 was merely a bump in the road towards economic progress, and those who would suffer as a result would be deemed weak and unstable (Buenker, 1998). Rublee (1889) argued:

Most people who are poor are poor through some defect, physical or mental, and in some instances people are victims of a twist in the moral nature for which they are no more responsible than the lunatic is responsible for his delusions and incoherency of action. The charity worker who escapes ossification of the heart is to be congratulated. It is because there is so much of improvidence, lying, and moral weakness. (p. 4)

The economic panics experienced before 1893 “served to impose discipline upon those individuals and businesses that violated natural laws” (Buenker, 1998, p. 15). In turn, the widespread poverty that resulted between 1893 and 1897 produced eye-opening results that would forever change the social, educational, and economic landscape of the city.

By late 1893 Rublee began to reconsider his ideology of Social Darwinism, as was illustrated in his writings on the impact of reduced earnings and economic concern regarding the depression (Rublee, 1893, p. 12). Rublee stated, “It is this that makes legislative intervention necessary event to the point of theoretical oppression of private capital publicly employed” (Rublee, 1893, p. 12). This shift in ideological belief would resonate throughout the city and state due to the well-established and trusted discourse that originated from Rublee’s *Sentinel* paper (Thelen, 1972). The result was a birth of an altruistic discourse, with tenets steeped in capitalistic belief that would eventually lead to support and growth for the city towards its industrial and economic goals.

Milwaukee's ideological shift would go on to support social and educational reforms that would promote proletarianization for the majority of its citizens during the early years of the Progressive Era. As early as 1896, Milwaukee began experimenting with educational reforms that served as measures that would respond to the academic needs of youth as were identified during the depression (Thelen, 1972). In turn, Milwaukee's educators began to examine youth within a newly formed "Child Study Society" that recognized the child as an individual through democratic methods of education ("Child Study Society," 1896, p. 3).

While the depression officially lasted until 1897, Milwaukee began witnessing growth and encouragement in its trade industries of brewing, tanning, milling, and iron and steel manufacturing as early as 1895 ("Great Improvement," 1895). The result would be a manufacturing push that no other in the country could have predicted. From 1899 to 1909 Milwaukee would witness a massive economic growth as industrial visionaries placed their financial support into the growing market of Milwaukee: a clean slate for manufacturing success. In turn, Milwaukee embodied a new civic consciousness in prime position for economic and industrial success.

### **Summary**

This examination into the citizens and economic foundation of Milwaukee demonstrates its social landscape during a period of rapid decline and eventual resurgence. For Milwaukeeans, the depression of 1893 was a spearhead of educational, social, and civic reform at the turn of the century. Milwaukeeans believed in their city and the roots to which its founder Solomon Juneau established decades earlier. If the depression of 1893 had not impacted the city as extensively as it did, Milwaukee's prominent residents would have never lead to the establishment of the

expansive progressivism that would become the Milwaukee we know of today (Kaufman, 2018; Thelen, 1972).

This chapter captures a theme of altruistic behavior that appeared in response to the disparity and poverty witnessed by the depression of 1893. Milwaukee's secure enclaves of European citizens illustrate the alliances formed as a result of social capital to support citizenship and economic mobility. Milwaukee's social, educational, and civic problems were essential issues of concern for all citizens, as it was recognized that the political decisions and oversight that eventually prompted the depression were not adequately serving citizens.

The efforts of social groups such as the Woman's School Alliance, the Milwaukee Municipal League, and the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association of Milwaukee demonstrate the vying interests of social parties within the city that all sought for change and societal improvement. David Thelen (1972) writes of the vast impact the depression of 1893 made on Milwaukee and how citizens formed together due to a lack of trust towards politicians and the lack of proactive behavior that would have prevented the decline based on foundational issues within the city and state governments.

Education would become the commodity that these social groups would promote to develop informed citizens (Reese, 2001; Thelen, 1972). By combating poverty through education and a means of financial management, collective thought argued that the poor would have the tools necessary to be free from poverty. Separate ideologies provided pitting views on the reasons for the increase in poverty; however, all directed the primary reason for economic decline as the responsibility of the politicians.

Further demonstrated in chapter six, the political foundation of mugwumpery that existed before the depression argued that the poor were weak and "immoral" for not progressing into the



middle-class (Thelen, 1972, p. 129). While this was the belief of citizens in cities across the nation during this period, the depression of 1893 served as the spark that changed the status quo for Milwaukeeans, as citizens witnessed their friends, neighbors, and family needing aid as a result of the rapid decline (Thelen, 1972).

This examination of Milwaukee helps us to understand the collective unity that was established as a means of societal improvement. This unity can be translated into an ideology of altruism that would eventually become a vision for vocational education within the city. The collective approach by many social groups would lead to the development of vacation schools that would serve interests in manual training and activities that were not part of the public schools during the period.

## Chapter 6

### Politics During the Progressive Era

#### The Milwaukee Mugwumps

Like much of the country during the Progressive Era, the locus of Wisconsin politics focused on civic reforms aimed at eliminating the political stronghold that demonstrated corruption and support for the elite. For many Midwestern states, a political transition took place following the Civil War that divided reformers based on the interests of business and the economy. In Wisconsin, these independent groups were led by a conservative ideology that spoke specifically to the needs of its rural farmers and urban industrialists, providing citizens with a lens into the power of economic capitalism and control at the hands of the corporate elite (Thelen, 1972). In Milwaukee, these reformers, dubbed the Mugwumps, led the charge to improve the community by taking aim at civic politics through an independent republican structure (“Mugwumps,” 1884). Seeking “purity in politics,” Milwaukee’s Mugwumps quickly became a primary target for the business elite who reaped the benefits from the economic stronghold that took place at the hands of established politicians (“Loi the Poor,” 1885, np; Thelen, 1972).

As independent groups of middle-class citizens, the Mugwumps aimed to take down the continued political corruption that led the Gilded Age within many social groups in cities across the nation (Thelen, 1972). Believing that political leaders should be considered the best of the best, the Mugwumps led a charge of community through the support of the individual and non-partisan politics (Thelen, 1972). This populist perspective would go on to lead essential reforms in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin that would include woman’s suffrage and the opposition of long-standing civic corruption.

While Milwaukee would not exhibit political dominance from any single political party during the late nineteenth century, the independent Mugwumps would often be at odds with its largest population, the Germans (Still, 1948; Thelen, 1972). In turn, Milwaukee's Populists would support a Mugwump established non-partisan perspective that would attempt to combat the establishment of a Marxist labor class (Thelen, 1972). By appealing to the business interests of both Republicans and Democrats, Milwaukee's mugwumpery would establish the development of a "Citizens' Ticket" that would aim to serve the independence of the business elite from the class-based rise of labor ("It Augurs Well," 1888; Still, 1948, p. 280; Thelen, 1972).

Mugwumpery would promote "social harmony" and "social purity" that would place the citizen first through a foundation of focus on the community (Thelen, 1972, p. 9). Through an independence from original political affiliations, Milwaukee's Mugwumps sought control over everything that was wrong with civic politics. In their view, the political structure that currently resided over the community supported the societal vices and epitomized evil and corruption that existed, in primary support for the wealthy (Thelen, 1972).

With the vast industrialism that was taking place in Milwaukee during the period, its leaders sought cohesion. While in 1886 Milwaukee began its labor party, the independent Mugwumps would provide support for the development of the Union Labor Party in 1887, which would go on to promote a tension between organized labor and the businessmen of the city (Still, 1948; Thelen, 1972). As a Populist industrial labor group, the Union Labor party would lead its members to unprecedented levels of success in Milwaukee over the industrial giants in cities such as New York, Boston, Baltimore, and Chicago (Gavett, 1965). Entering the political race, the Mugwump-led Union Labor Party supported a long list of civic reforms; most notably which

included, abolition of child labor, equal taxation, city services, factory inspections, increases in public school accommodations for students and teachers, and a free public education for all (“One More Ticket,” 1888). Through significant inroads made at the municipal elections, the Union Labor Party helped to elect many civic leaders as candidates from the party (Gavett, 1965). In turn, the party would demonstrate a driving force within Milwaukee’s labor community that would extend within the decades to follow.

The Union Labor Party’s success would be short lived. Another Mugwump group, an independent labor ticket formed by prominent Socialists, Paul Grottkau, and beer baron, Valentine Blatz, would go on to drive tension between the Socialists and the unions (Gavett, 1965; “One More Ticket,” 1888). While both the Union Labor Party and Socialist ticket would eventually lose the 1888 municipal election, the Milwaukee Union Labor Party would capture 47 percent of the votes, demonstrating a tight race against the Citizen Ticket (Gavett, 1965). While mugwumpery in Milwaukee proved a success of division from partisan politics, the election of 1888 would become a pivotal success for the labor movement in the city that would eventually find collaboration between the Socialists and the labor party for the benefit of the proletariat (Gavett, 1965).

Even when Milwaukee’s mugwumpery failed, it succeeded; as awareness and discourse began to shift in the Cream City, civil service became the primary topic for discussion (Thelen, 1972). As I examine within this chapter, the ideology of mugwumpery would go on to support civic reform for woman’s suffrage, trade unionism, and the future growth of the Socialist Democratic Party (Gavett, 1965; Thelen, 1972). As David Thelen (1972) suggests, Milwaukee’s mugwumpery against partisan politics would provide justification for a push for civic reforms that were welcomed by many within the Cream City in response to the depression of 1893.

Leading the charge for civic improvement through mugwumpery, Milwaukee's political nimbleness would position the city for a dramatic shift in response to the economic decline; permanently changing the city's ideological stance.

### **Wisconsin's Social Progressivism**

While the foundation of Milwaukee's Mugwumps was well established prior to the depression of 1893, partisan politics would prove dominant, and reform groups would become increasingly isolated (Thelen, 1972). The impact of mugwumpery would lead citizens to identify agency, which, as David Thelen (1972) describes, led to "reinforced social divisions and encouraged social isolation" (p. 129). In many ways, an early form of neoliberalism spoke to the political heart of Milwaukee's elite. In Wisconsin, the middle-class was considered available to all who were honest, hard workers (Thelen, 1972). With the growing landscape of the city in response to its manufacturing successes, the disparity between the rich and poor was vast (Thelen, 1972). Following the devastating impact of the depression of 1893, altruistic efforts to support the poor became commonplace, and Milwaukeeans would not actualize the impact of their patronization until well after the depression would begin to show signs of economic decline (Thelen, 1972).

As the needs of the poor came in the forefront for citizens, Milwaukee's woman's clubs of the Wisconsin Woman's Suffrage Association and Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) would become a driving force in educational reforms that would aim to improve the access and opportunity for schooling (Thelen, 1972). Membership within these clubs was for the elite and well-known women of Milwaukee's established leaders. In turn, a class differentiation between those of high stature and the poor would become commonplace (Thelen, 1972). While most of the woman's reforms would be considered democratic and altruistic, the outcomes and

disconnection from the needs of the poor would initially keep those who were financially stable from deviating from their elite status (Thelen, 1972). While the depression of 1893 would provide a financial scare that would eventually shift the ideology of the city and state, Milwaukeeans would soon realize that support for their community would lead to the dramatic growth and expansion that was anticipated well before the late nineteenth century.

### **The Woman's Suffrage Movement and the Support for Schooling**

As the woman's club movement quickly spread across the Badger State, Milwaukee would serve as the hub for large-scale reform. With the highest population of poor in the state during the depression, the Milwaukee clubwomen would begin by letting down their guard relative to their elite status (Thelen, 1972). Milwaukee's woman's clubs helped to establish social and civic reforms that would forever change the landscape of the Cream City, beginning with a focus on women's educational reforms (McBride, 1993; Buenker, 1998). Dubbed the "New Woman," Milwaukee's women led a charge to attack the political mugwumpery that divided so many (Thelen, 1972, p. 86). In turn, support for the establishment of the university extension centers and its curriculum would lead to the clubwomen becoming sponsors of coursework that would support their charitable efforts for the poor (McBride, 1993; Thelen, 1972).

By the late 1890s, the impact of woman's clubs on the university Extension Centers began to take notice. The discourse produced through the courses and discussions would lead the clubwomen to shift their focus to supporting the adult learner (Thelen, 1972). Their reforms would begin with the promotion of libraries as public spaces for social interaction and collaboration (McBride, 1993; Thelen, 1972). Milwaukee schoolteacher, Lutie E. Stearns led the charge to establish the Wisconsin Library Association in 1894 and later, to assist with the

legislation to form the Wisconsin Free Library Commission in 1895 (McBride, 1993). Aiding in the development of 37 libraries throughout the state by 1899, clubwomen such as Stearns would prove instrumental in the dissemination of textbooks and educational resources into communities across the state (McBride, 1993; Thelen, 1972).

Along with the widespread impact from the woman's clubs came the establishment of the Wisconsin Woman's School Alliance (WSA) in 1891 (Thelen, 1972; Reese, 1981, 2002).

Wisconsin's only school-centric organization during the period, the WSA would lead the way in the state's transition to progressive politics and reforms aimed at supporting the needs of the poor (Reese, 1981, 2002). By engaging the community in altruistic activities such as clothing and caring for Milwaukee's poor youth, the WSA "paved the road to Social Democratic power" for the Cream City (Reese, 1981, p. 13).

Woman's rights gained little support during the period; however, the efforts of the WSA would provide limited influence concerning their goals. While the group would not become successful in establishing sought after education reforms, they would call attention to critical social factors that would go on to receive further political support (Reese, 1981). The timing of the depression of 1893 and the forming of the WSA by Milwaukee's elite women proved to be a serendipitous coincidence that would provide Milwaukee's future politicians with the foundation for reforms that would support the growth of the laborer. With a vision of the school as a community center, the Socialist Democratic Party would market the school as a space for evening lectures and manual training that would bring labor closer to the growing neighborhoods of the city (Reese, 1981). With a grassroots agenda towards educational reform, the WSA would open the door to a Progressivism that would leverage schooling as a catalyst for societal improvement and industrial growth (Reese, 1981).

Class and school building size would become popular topics of reform while Milwaukee continued its rapid growth during the late 1890s (Reese, 1981). Common within many cities during this period, Milwaukee's growing Socialist Party shared much of the same philosophy of the WSA school reforms, as many of its women leaders were wives of prominent Socialists (McBride, 1993; Reese, 2002). Led by Milwaukee's prominent business leaders, the school board did not overtly support reforms that would impact its poor youth (Reese, 1981). Aiming to overthrow the political machine of the school board, Victor Berger, editor for the *Vorwärts*, wrote of the importance of supporting the needs of youth over those of "capitalist reform" (Vorwärts, 1897; Reese, 1981, p. 16). While a clash between the school board and the Socialists would ensue, the importance of education would begin to rise as the spotlight shone on the board. The result would begin the establishment of Milwaukee's Progressive movement toward education (Reese, 1981).

As the nineteenth century would come to a close, a newly formed group, the Woman's Club of Wisconsin, would begin to take the lead in altruistic efforts where the previous clubwomen left off (Reese, 1981). With organized welfare support for Milwaukee's poor, the Woman's Club would open the door to provide educational opportunities for youth that were often not served by the school board (McBride, 1993; Reese, 1981). The establishment of the vacation school would serve a significant void for youth by providing hands-on education through manual training, museum visits, and outdoor activities throughout the summer months that school was not in session (Reese, 1981, 2002). In alignment with Socialist ideology, the need to provide working-class youth with experiences that would expand the mind through manual training and field trips, the vacation schools would become reform that would further engage the Socialists with municipal change.



While progressive women formed clubs across the nation during the time, the Milwaukee women would hold strong influence with their Socialist ties. By 1904, the WSA would go on to succeed with arguably its greatest accomplishment: the penny lunch program, which would provide access to free or low-cost lunches to Milwaukee's poor youth (Reese, 1981). Within the period surrounding this time, Milwaukee's Socialists would expand to immense proportions, as they would begin to shape educational policy and political structure within the Cream City. While it would be the prominent men of Milwaukee who would eventually spread the Socialist ideology throughout the city and state, the clubwomen can be attributed to taking the initial steps to develop a woman's movement that would forever change Milwaukee's landscape.

### **Manual Training and the Vacation School**

By 1910 Milwaukeeans such as president of the school board, Charles L. Aarons, would lead a charge for educational change that would respond to industrial changes and continued population growth from immigrants seeking upward mobility (Reese, 2002). While Milwaukee's vacation schools began in 1899, a well-established push for reforms supporting vacation schools and manual training curriculum would occur in the early twentieth century following documented support from the school board (Reese, 2002). William Reese (2002) describes how the reforms of the vacation schools demonstrate "classic examples of how the state, through its supporting institutions, expanded its control over the lives of children during this period" (p. 132). In many ways the reforms of the vacation schools would illustrate the various educational and labor movements that would take place during the Progressive Era (Reese, 2002). The community would identify an unmet need for manual training and practical skill development that was not offered in the public schools. In turn, like many other cities during the Progressive Era, Milwaukeeans took matters into their own hands.

Developed as a social center for Milwaukee's children, the vacation schools would serve as a local solution for educational training, playgrounds, and entertainment for youth (Reese, 2002). With a focus on the capitalist state of production, Milwaukee's Progressives sought collaboration with the unions and Socialists in a measure that would prove influential to transform education for youth in response to industrialism (Reese, 2002). While the depression of 1893 resulted in ideological change, by the early twentieth century, the public sought educational reforms that would ensure a future economic decline would never impact the city as dramatically as that of the past (Reese, 2002). Offering an education over the summer months would provide an opportunity to indoctrinate youth to Socialist beliefs as a means of problem solving for the current generation and beyond.

Vacation schools would become popular summer retreats for many children across the nation during the early twentieth century. For the industrial cities of the Midwest, municipal funding would eventually support the growth of these schools in response to the summer spike in crime from youth and a goal of continued educational preparation (Reese, 2002). Consequently, the Milwaukee woman's groups argued that vacation schools would support a reduction in crime while promoting social stability across the city (Reese, 2002).

While the goal of public safety would promote the vacation school plan, civic leaders knowingly supported the schools as a means of political and social support (Reese, 2002). For parents, they would have stability in knowing where their kids were at all times; while the Socialists wanted to leverage the vacation schools as a means to level the class differentiation often observed throughout the city through educational growth (Reese, 2002). In turn, the establishment of manual training and vocational education within the vacation school curriculum would lead to a means of education that was not delivered in a similar capacity within the public

schools (Reese, 2002). Developing a curriculum of what would come to be known as “experimental” learning would offer an attractive alternative to engage many youth beyond public schooling (Reese, 2002, p. 143). Manual training was sought of as being able to “[teach] the pupil not only how to observe, but to observe and create, stimulating the habit of thoughtful care before action” (“Manual Training Plea,” 1898, p. 3). For many of Milwaukee’s youth, the vacation school would provide the first experience for a formal manual training experience outside the city limits (Reese, 2002; “Turned Children Away,” 1899). As a result, proponents of manual training for the public schools would be encouraged to visit the vacation schools, as the *Milwaukee Sentinel* wrote in 1899:

[To] see for themselves how a school where the all-round development of the child is aimed at rather than his intellectual growth alone gets along; the nature lovers who are clamoring for a wider diffusion of the knowledge that has to do with the world of beasts and birds and insects and rocks and sky and sea, and who want the powers of observation trained and strengthened, visit the school to see for themselves just how nature study can be made the basis of everything else. (“Vacation School,” 1899, p. 12)

While at the conclusion of every summer, the vacation school would come to a close; it was thought that the summer attendance at the vacation school would provide “one of the things that will make him a better all round man or woman” (“Vacation School,” 1899, p. 12).

Attendance at the vacation schools was voluntary and highly competitive, and as a result, the level of discipline provided would be in stark contrast to that of the traditional public school administration (Reese, 2002). As an example, 100 boys and girls were turned away from attending the Tenth and Prairie Street School in the summer of 1899, with 400 granted access (“Turned Children Away,” 1899). In many instances, Poles and Germans who lived on Jones

Island would receive preferential treatment for attendance along with the poor Italians who resided in the slums of the Third Ward (Reese, 2002). Consequently, teachers would often observe the poor youth of these communities eagerly seeking attendance in response to boredom and parental demands (Reese, 2002).

Popular among the six-week vacation school curriculum was physical education in the gymnasium, sewing, cooking, music, literature, art, and schooling for the deaf (“Turned Children Away,” 1899; “Vacation Schools Success,” 1899). In some ways, the practical education of the vacation school was a revelation to Milwaukeeans. No textbooks were required or provided, and instruction focused on providing experiences to students that were not provided within the public schools (“Encouraged by the Success,” 1899; “Vacation Schools Success,” 1899). At the conclusion of the first cohort of vacation school youth, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* would report that more than half of the 400 students in attendance would experience something they never had before, such as leaving the city limits, visiting a farm, being on a railroad car, going in the lake, seeing cows, observing fruit growing, or playing in a park (“Turned Children Away,” 1899).

While the successes of Milwaukee’s vacation school experience would be somewhat short lived, the attention it received during the late 1800s through the start of the twentieth century would make a curricular impact on public schooling by the beginning of World War I. The success of the vacation school would promote the establishment of manual training within the curriculum in Milwaukee’s public schools along with many other cities nationwide (Reese, 2002). Curriculum in sewing, cooking, and shop would introduce practical skills as a means of social development, while more schools would begin to offer the experiences of excursions to museums and field trips outside of the city that were deemed successful as part of the vacation school experiment (Reese, 2002). Consequently, the novelty of the vacation school would begin

to disappear, as the public school would come to reach more children due to newly formed attendance requirements and enrollment capacity (Reese, 2002). In turn, the need for schooling to prepare youth for work would prove important with the initial successes of the vacation school. This transition is explored further within chapter seven, as Milwaukee would leverage the successes of the vacation school to establish its own trade schools for manual training and the needs of industrial labor.

As public schooling would continue its development and curriculum reforms, what was previously known as the vacation school would begin to change. By 1920 vacation schools would be sought after as more of a summer bridge program to ensure students were prepared for the next grade rather than the field trips and exploration that occurred in the decades prior (Reese, 2002). However, the achievements of the vacation school can be linked to the public school reforms that would take place throughout the Progressive Era. In many ways, the grassroots curriculum provided by the municipally funded and private vacation schools would promote the development of the child as an individual while preparing them for skill-based experiences that they would often encounter later in life. While little credit in many historical texts has been given to the many women reformers who called attention to the needs of youth and the initial establishment of these schools, we must acknowledge the important educational shift that took place as a result of the vacation school and the grassroots reforms of the period. In turn, schooling within cities such as Milwaukee would quite possibly have never been the same without these contributions.

### **Labor Unions and Support for the Labor Force**

The late nineteenth century showcased Milwaukee's rapid industrial growth within manufacturing and labor. Best described by the concentration of industrial workers during 1880,

which equated to approximately 45 percent of its population, Milwaukee ranked sixth in the nation for industrialism (Pifer, 2003). In Milwaukee and throughout the state, solidarity within the labor unions became an essential factor in ensuring that conflict between labor and management was supported.

While the support for many labor groups was prominent throughout the Progressive Era, Milwaukee's endorsement of the labor unions and later alliance with the Socialists presents an examination into the third-party groups that aided in the unique political developments during the era. Moreover, the previous successes of Milwaukee's Union Labor Party demonstrated a dramatic social allegiance toward labor as not witnessed within any other city in the nation at the time (Gavett, 1965; Reese, 2002).

Several trade unions such as the Knights of Labor, the Federation of Organized Trades, and the American Federation of Labor (AFL) held much support during the late nineteenth century, however, the formation of the Federated Trades Council (FTC) would become the centralized labor organization that would address the "welfare of the working class which cannot be dealt with in special and separate Trade or Labor Unions" ("Constitution and By-Laws," 1893, np). The local and collaborative support provided by the centralized FTC would connect unions throughout Milwaukee as a means to best represent the collective needs of workers instead of separate unions operating in contrast with one another (Gavett, 1965).

As previously stated, Milwaukee's largest ethnic population was the Germans, and so was its labor population. In turn, the FTC would secure its membership through bilingual German-speaking advertisements and activities aimed at Germans, such as those in the United Brewery Workmen, among others (Korman, 1967). Milwaukee's Poles, often in unskilled labor, would not be recruited until the early twentieth century, as many considered their allegiance with

the Catholic Church to be a contributing factor (Korman, 1967). During this period, an ongoing conflict would occur between labor and capitalism, and the public school would be considered a contributing factor toward this shift. While public schooling in Milwaukee taught academic skills, the number of youth leaving school for skilled labor jobs would begin to decline, further threatening the local growth of labor and the working class (Korman, 1967). Vocational education would later become a critical curricular tool for continued skill development; however, the first debate would come regarding the eight-hour workday.

Of the union leadership in the city, the FTC often received conflict from the well-established Knights of Labor: a politicized group of 700,000 members nationally in 1886 (Gavett, 1965). In 1888, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) sparked union solidarity between the two groups by proposing an eight-hour workday to meet the demands of the laborers who wanted to spend more time with their families (Gavett, 1965; Korman, 1967). The two groups would go on to form an eight-hour league that would combine efforts to support a citywide eight-hour workday ordinance (Gavett, 1965). The measure would pass the Common Council in 1890 and would receive praise from AFL president, Samuel Gompers, who visited Milwaukee to tout the success of the eight-hour league (Gavett, 1965). While the combined efforts of the Knights of Labor and the FTC would prove successful, the eight-hour movement would lead to the eventual disbanding of the Knights on a national scale due to the significant power of the AFL. However, in Milwaukee, the successes of both groups would prove that Milwaukee's labor workers were essential to the growth and social stability of the city.

The power that Milwaukee's unions would hold would go on to rise to new proportions at the turn of the century (Reese, 2002). The FTC would gain an alliance with the growing Social Democratic Party that would prove successful against the machine politics of the Democrats and

Republicans that stood before them (Reese, 2002). In turn, the success of the Socialists in Milwaukee would not come without the unified support of the trade unions. By 1920 the FTC would be comprised of approximately 35,000 members that would support a similar ideology of the Socialists, supporting large swaths of Milwaukee's workforce (Reese, 2002). The FTC along with other trade unions would overtly support the proletariat against the ongoing capitalist structure, which would call further attention to the fact that the workers of the trade unions fought for the same beliefs of the Socialists. In turn, these efforts would begin to attract the organization of unskilled laborers, such as the Poles, among others, drawing across most ethnic boundaries ("It Augurs Well," 1888; Reese, 2002). William Reese (2002) illustrates this point further by stating:

This situation was not replicated either in Toledo, Rochester, or Kansas City. These cities had their share of pro-Socialist unions, but the majority of urban trade unions usually eschewed formal alliances with political parties or socialist leaders. (p. 112)

While Milwaukee's Socialist Democratic party would grow to unprecedented levels, the solidarity that formed would aim to combat the capitalist outcomes that had resulted in the Republican and Democratic political structure in the years prior (Reese, 2002).

In the late 1800s, political reform was a collective goal for many working class Milwaukeeans. In addition, fear of future repercussions following unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty following the depression of 1893 gave Milwaukee's Socialists the spark that was needed to engage organized labor and attack the machine politics that were wrought with corruption and self-interest; which many believed had resulted in Milwaukee's eventual drastic decline (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). In 1901 the FTC called upon their members to join them in the adoption of a new political order that would serve the social



interests of the community and combat political corruption and social demise that had been previously witnessed (Reese, 2002).

This public endorsement for political reform would fuel the growth of the Social Democratic party by separating their ideology from the reform efforts of the far left (Reese, 2002). In turn, this distinct separation from more nationally known Socialist politics would brand a newfound Socialism in Milwaukee that would become known as “Sewer Socialism” (Seidel, 1944, pp. 79-80). Calling attention to the needs of union workers, Milwaukee’s “Sewer Socialists” would go on to serve an extension of local organized labor, calling for improvements in workplace conditions and social mobility for citizens (Seidel, 1944; see also Reese, 2002).

An illustration of Milwaukee’s Socialist ideology and relationship with organized labor can be best described in the conflict with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and its well-known president, Samuel Gompers (Gavett, 1965). While Gompers agreed with the Socialists regarding the need for political reforms nationwide, he sought a hegemony that would produce action through fear over political upheaval (Gavett, 1965). Gompers, known for his conservative nature, was long opposed by the Milwaukee Trades Council, proving to be a factor in Gompers’ defeat for his long-standing role as president in 1894 (“Opposed to Gompers,” 1895). However, Gompers’s reelection in 1895 would go on to further fuel a division between Milwaukee’s Socialists and the AFL, as he was perceived as being passive-natured in his approach to reform. For Milwaukee’s Socialists on the FTC, statewide political reform would produce immediate results, and the well-established support from the trade unions would be the fuel necessary to enact reforms (Gavett, 1965).

Tension would rise between Victor Berger, prominent Milwaukee Socialist and FTC delegate, and Samuel Gompers of the AFL, as the two publicly denounced support for the

opposition (Gavett, 1965). Gompers would go on to be accused of continued passive political support that supported capitalist candidates at the expense of the labor party (Gavett, 1965). While Berger expressed concern for the AFL's plans, he would go on to support a continued relationship between the AFL and the Socialist Democratic Party from a pragmatic premise. The Socialist goal was to develop reforms that would serve the proletariat, and Berger would use this as a means to separate the efforts of the Socialists between political and economic support. In this regard, his vision for Milwaukee would be to invest in the laborer who would, in turn, become an active part of both the trade unions and political reforms that would be necessary to strengthen the Cream City (Gavett, 1965). While the trade unions focused their efforts towards increased wages and workplace conditions, the Socialist Party provided the unions with a centralized ideology that would become the vehicle to deliver their message (Gavett, 1965).

### **The Rise of Milwaukee's Social Democratic Party**

The political proliferation of Milwaukee's Social Democratic Party presents an impressive story; one linked to labor, politics, and economics that would not be observed to a similar extent beyond the Cream City (Olson, 1960; Reese, 2002). While Socialism appeared within the Populist Party in most major cities before 1900, its efforts toward labor reform and education would begin prior in 1877 (Gavett, 1965; Reese, 2002; "Test of Municipal Socialism," 1893). In Milwaukee, the Socialist connection with the trade unions would prove a tight connection between labor and the needs of citizens in response to the depression of 1893 (Reese, 2002; "Obligation to Society," 1897). While the economic fall of 1893 presented hardships in cities across the nation, the citizens of Milwaukee sought an ideological change that would drive reforms to ensure its citizens were best prepared for a future economic decline that would be free from the vast unemployment and poverty witnessed during the late nineteenth century.

Milwaukee's shift to Socialism was led by Victor Berger, a Milwaukee teacher who owned and edited the Socialist Democratic newspaper, the *Wisconsin Vorwärts* (Anderson & Greene, 2009; Buenker, 1998; Reese, 2002; Stevens, 1995). Under Berger's leadership his dissemination of a Socialist ideology would prove to be well known through the distribution of his editorial publications, which would serve as the "official newspaper of the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor and the Milwaukee Federated Trades Council, thus forging the links between organized labor and Berger's political machine" (Stevens, 1995, p. 3; see also Anderson & Greene, 2009; Buenker, 1998; Reese, 2002). Inspired by Marx's *Das Kapital* (1867), Berger, in collaboration with Frederic Heath, co-founder of the Milwaukee Ethical Society, and Eugene Debs, president of the American Railway Union, would go on to become co-founders of the Social Democracy of America in 1897 (Buenker, 1981; Stevens, 1995). As interest in the Socialist ideology would spread across the nation, the vocal Berger would begin to position Milwaukee as a leader in the fight against machine politics.

Eventually seeking a more significant distribution outlet for Socialist beliefs, Berger would purchase two newspapers, the *Social-Democratic Herald* and the *Milwaukee Leader*, which would serve English audiences within Milwaukee and beyond (Reese, 2002; Stevens, 1995). Each paper would situate the current social progress with the importance of education for the working class, promoting an ideology of support for the proletariat (Reese, 2002). While efforts would push for better schools, parks, and social centers for citizens, Berger and the Socialists were conscious of the fact that the amelioration of social problems of Milwaukee could not be complete without eventual support for a shift in economic policies and the distribution of wealth (Reese, 1981).

Berger's Socialist platform would challenge the status quo in support of the working-class. In turn, education became paramount for citizens as a means of personal and civic development through study (Reese, 2002). The result would witness a dramatic increase in school engagement through appointments to the Milwaukee school board along with a rise in advocates with a passion for education reform across the city (Reese, 2002; Swanson, 2001). By 1909 both the Socialists and Federal Trades Council (FTC) would hold appointments on the Milwaukee school board, further exerting their ideology and support for education as a primary connection to the working class (Reese, 2002). Following the footsteps of the Woman's School Alliance and other clubwomen of early, the Socialists would link a need for social service with the schools in an effort to develop a community through Socialist Sunday schools and vacation schools that would teach youth about their rights as citizens; providing a the social capital needed to succeed beyond elementary schooling and unskilled labor (Reese, 2002).

For the Socialists, reforms were crucial to the transition of the establishment politics; however, they were not the outcome. The goal would be the eventual transformation of the economic landscape through the eradication of capitalism and the promotion of an equal distribution of wealth (Reese, 1981; "Obligation to Society," 1897). By leveraging education as a means to educate youth on the Socialist ideology and capitalism, the Milwaukee Socialists would be in a position to support the working class, and schooling would serve as the vehicle that would support the ideology (Reese, 2002). The *Milwaukee Leader* (1917) would declare that by educating the proletariat, the working class becomes a political for the working class by providing further benefit to the Socialist movement. Berger and the *Milwaukee Leader* (1917) illustrated this point further by asserting that schooling is "the key with which the masses may

unlock the storehouses of the world's accumulated knowledge” (as cited in Reese, 2002, p. 115).

Much like the vacation schools during the time, the Socialist Sunday School served as one of the first formal developments that tailored specifically to meet the needs of the Socialist ideology (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983). Capitalism, as they knew it was providing limited access to upward mobility for the working class at the benefit of the elite. The Socialist Sunday School would serve a curricular need that would combat capitalism while also teaching youth about their rights as citizens (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983). From their perspective, education took place in many forms of daily life and was not limited simply to the classroom (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983).

Milwaukee would support three Socialist Sunday Schools by 1915; however, prominent Socialist and former Mayor, Emil Seidel, would publically remain neutral on the establishment and support for the schools at the time (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983). For the Milwaukee Socialists, their need for the schools would not be as great as cities of New York, Boston, Cleveland, or Buffalo. Unlike these cities, the Milwaukee Socialists would become ingrained within the fabric of the public school system by 1909. Moreover, Victor Berger's wife, Meta Berger, would serve as a school board member from 1909 to 1939 and would be elected its president in 1915 (Reese, 2002; Stevens, 1995; Swanson, 2001). In addition to the well-established vacation schools of the period, Milwaukee's public schooling would experience an ideological shift during this period that would do more than prepare youth to recognize and attack anti-democratic hegemony, which was often the central premise of the Socialist Sunday Schools (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983). In turn, it can be said that for the Milwaukee Socialists, the

Socialist Sunday Schools were merely an extension of their widespread efforts to educate and prepare youth for the growing workforce and democratic society.

Of the curriculum within the Socialist Sunday Schools was a focus on social needs, nature, evolution, political economics, and social issues that were driven by the capitalist society (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983). The hidden curriculum would highlight political and economic equality as further means to combat capitalism and would lead to a “graduate” to be prepared to leave the school with an agency that would often drive youth to become activists for their party (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p. 447). While the enrollment totals of the Socialist Sunday School would pale in comparison to the public school enrollments, the schools would serve the political needs of the staunch Socialist who would seek a supplemental education in opposition to the public schools (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983).

While it would seem that Milwaukee’s Socialists would operate independently within the city, the fact is that they were more cooperative with interest-led social groups such as trade unions and political parties (Reese, 2002). Among their collective goals as a group, the predominant Socialists would seek efforts that would provide both immediate and long-term improvement toward schooling and preparation for work (Reese, 2002). However, they were careful not to lend too much power to labor, as they questioned the school board membership (Reese, 2002). In many ways, this cooperation would lead to the Socialists’ successes and eventual city leadership for Milwaukee. By placing the opportunity in the hands of the people, Milwaukee’s Socialists would establish a school board of elected representatives that would genuinely change city politics and the premise of schooling for decades to follow (Reese, 2002).

### **The La Follette Machine**

The year 1900 witnessed political change in Wisconsin as long time candidate Robert Marion La Follette became governor of the Badger State (Korman, 1967; Thelen, 1972; Buenker, 1998). Known to many as “Fighting Bob,” La Follette would become the progressive Republican voice for a movement of machine politics and would become celebrated as Wisconsin’s “most influential political figure” (Buenker, 1998, p. 433; Kaufman, 2018, p. 23). Serving thirty-four years in political office, La Follette made it his mission to ensure that Wisconsinites had economic and social equality while striving for the best democracy for citizens (Kaufman, 2018). Prior to his governorship, La Follette established a prowess across the state that would support a public call for attention to the concerns and reforms that were brought to him by his constituents within local districts (Thelen, 1972). The result would cultivate Wisconsin progressivism, and La Follette’s powerful political push as Wisconsinites witnessed a new politician that embodied servant leadership for the people (Thelen, 1972). By 1920 when the dust from the Progressive Era would settle, Wisconsin would be known as a “Laboratory of Democracy,” separating itself from many other progressively led states due to the success of its leader (Maxwell, 1956, p. 9).

For Wisconsinites during the twentieth century, La Follette represented the emergence of what would become known as Wisconsin progressivism (Kaufman, 2018; Thelen, 1972). Popular among many throughout the Badger State, La Follette aimed to represent the masses of constituents openly and often. In turn, his leadership would begin a statewide progressive ground for experimental politics that would serve citizens through dramatic social, industrial, and educational reforms (La Follette, 1960; see also Buenker, 1998; Kaufman, 2018; Thelen, 1972). In turn, La Follette’s deep connection to the interests of Wisconsin voters would position him as a redeemer of longstanding corporate corruption that plagued the state in decades prior (La

Follette, 1960; see also Buenker, 1998). This Populist position would present a unique approach that would focus on rural voters over those who resided in industrial Milwaukee (Fulda, 2013).

Serving as a sounding board for political reform, La Follette would take the voice of Wisconsin's rural farmers to Madison and, in turn, would bring the significant issues of importance to the rural communities so that they would stay engaged with the major reforms of the state (Thelen, 1972). According to historian, David P. Thelen (1972), "La Follette's genius was in accomplishing something of a political revolution by blending the old ethnic politics with the new issue politics" (p. 306). For La Follette (1960), "Wisconsin was a corrupted state, governed not by the people, but by a group of private and corporate interests" (p. 11). La Follette's Republican interests would often clash with the German and Polish voters of Milwaukee, placing little support for the growing needs of industrialism (Still, 1948). However, similar to the views of other reformers of the era, La Follette saw the depression of 1893 as a means to provide immediate political change in response to the growing poverty and unemployment throughout the state (Thelen, 1972). From his perspective, Wisconsin's industrialism had finally caught up with its social and political past, and La Follette believed that attention must be paid to the social landscape of the Badger State (Thelen, 1972). Consequently, many of La Follette's reforms would serve an immediate need for economic change that would aim to impact industrial cities across the state such as Milwaukee.

Of La Follette's many legislative reforms he garnered support for public education by providing increases in state aid and funding for "practical" education, among expansion of the agriculture-specific normal schools and funding for the university (Buenker, 1998, p. 456). For La Follette and the education reformers during this period, practical education meant support for industrial education that would lead to wage sustaining jobs that would support economic



growth. Accordingly, one of the most well known accomplishments during his tenure was the development of the *Wisconsin Idea* (McCarthy, 1912; see also Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944). The Wisconsin Idea placed the University of Wisconsin at the foundation of state reforms, further supporting La Follette's progressive mission of serving the needs of Wisconsin citizens (Buenker, 1998; Kaufman, 2018). In turn, La Follette's progressivism leveraged the knowledge and expertise of university faculty within a centralized Legislative Reference Library that would funnel research and reform to La Follette's team (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944; Kaufman, 2018).

While La Follette would become well known for his progressive school of thought, it would be Charles McCarthy and his staff of the Legislative Reference Library that would review and assess legislation from across the globe to develop the best reforms that would serve citizens statewide (Buenker, 1998). While it would not be until 1912 that *The Wisconsin Idea* (1912) would become a real force in the state political structure, it would be the foundation that La Follette set that would give a platform for the progressive reforms that would follow (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Buenker, 1998). Moreover, Edward Fitzpatrick (1944) illustrates in the biography of Charles McCarthy, *McCarthy of Wisconsin*:

With all the effectiveness of the popular dynamic leadership of La Follette, the social leadership of Wisconsin in legislation and administration could not have been achieved unless the Legislative Reference Library had furnished the ready means for the patient constructive study which Wisconsin's limited social outlooks and political mechanisms which had preceded 1901. (p. 71)

Consequently, McCarthy and the Reference Library would go on to develop the first statewide income tax structure, as well as other statewide reforms that would become Congressional

reforms nationwide such as Medicare, Social Security, and workers' compensation (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Buenker, 1998; Kaufman, 2018). Moreover, it would be McCarthy's relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the structure of the Wisconsin Idea that would serve as a statewide precursor to what would later become known as the *New Deal* (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944; Kaufman, 2018).

Of the educational reforms established by the Wisconsin Idea, McCarthy and his Legislative Reference Library would go on to establish a statewide system of industrial education that would later become a model for states across the nation (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Buenker, 1998; Paris, 1985; Tarbell, 1958). Modeled after the German continuation schools, which taught hands-on manual training and job skills, McCarthy's vocational education plan presented educational reform that would combat the dead-end jobs often sought by school children entering the workforce following the fifth grade (Buenker, 1998; Paris, 1985). Moreover, it would be La Follette's autonomous leadership style, in support of Charles McCarthy, that would continue progressive reforms well past La Follette's tenure as Governor, as the eventual vocational system idea supported La Follette's mission of educating all Wisconsinites (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). Examined further in chapter seven, McCarthy's initial support for the development of the university Extension Division would introduce post-secondary education to citizens across the state where education could "go to the people" (Paris, 1895, p. 9). Consequently, formal legislative support for the Continuation School Law of 1911 would produce a State Board of Industrial Education, which would require the school board of every city over 5,000 residents to develop a local board of industrial education that would promote industrial interests (Paris, 1985). In turn, education would support industrial needs and skill growth of citizens in an effort toward economic progressivism.

As progressivism was active nationwide during this period, La Follette's progressive foundation would continue its life within the Wisconsin Idea; providing influential concepts that would establish similar "ideas" across the country that would promote the progressive ideology of states such as Iowa, New Jersey, Oregon, and others (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944). While each "Idea" would focus on the progressive roots of economic concern and corruption by businesses, the goal would be to improve civic politics through democratic means to support the people (Buenker, 1998). In turn, La Follette's leadership would go on to become synonymous with progressivism on a nationwide scale, which would elevate his political prowess and social status (Buenker, 1998).

The social investment of citizens was La Follette's primary focus, and during his tenure, this philosophy would make lasting contributions to the development of social capital throughout the state (Buenker, 1998). While La Follette's accomplishments were vast in scope, much of his energy would focus on tax reform. From his perspective, tax reform meant spreading the responsibility of taxation proportionately across businesses and classes of citizens (Buenker, 1998). In many ways, this was his progressive message: that the needs of Wisconsinites came first, and big business should pay their share (La Follette, 1960; see also Buenker, 1998). In turn, La Follette's government would aim to be socially efficient, transferring much of this ideology to the premise of the Wisconsin Idea, which would establish Wisconsin as a "full-blown social service state" (Buenker, 1998, p. 591).

While La Follette was well-known across the state for his warm personality and social prowess, he was not without opposition (La Follette, 1960; see also Thelen, 1972). Self-titled the "Stalwarts," those opposing La Follette's reforms feared that big business would leave Wisconsin for neighboring states with more tax incentives (Buenker, 1998, p. 460; La Follette,

1960). In turn, the Stalwarts believed that La Follette would forever change the relationship between business and industry, which had driven the political landscape in decades prior (Buenker, 1998). The Democratic stronghold in Milwaukee would prove troublesome for La Follette as he aimed to secure the support of its labor unions as he successfully did in cities such as Eau Claire and La Crosse (Fulda, 2013). La Follette believed that the way to the unions would be through Milwaukee's vast German population; thus, he would go on to appoint several German-born citizens to his team (Fulda, 2013). The result would eventually score La Follette enough votes to succeed in the 1902 election; leading to the eventual perception of machine politics that would drive the political and social ideology of the Badger State for decades to follow (La Follette, 1960; see also Fulda, 2013).

### **Summary**

Wisconsin's political landscape shaped its progressivism and presented a foundation for altruistic-themed reforms that would provide for economic and social change that would forever distinguish the Badger State. The ability to establish educational reforms that centered on the democratic citizen presented a response to economic, agricultural, and manual training needs that aimed to meet the industrial growth Wisconsinites predicted. In many ways, the mugwumpery that was exhibited in Milwaukee prior to the Progressive Era established a vision for Populist politics to overthrow the corporate-led politicians and corruption that would proceed with the era. By holding politicians to a higher standard, Milwaukeeans would prove that the needs of citizens could drive civic politics.

The theme of this chapter centers on the discourse of Milwaukee's grassroots reforms that set the stage to establish a new civic consciousness within education, politics, and labor as a means of societal improvement. By meeting the needs of the proletariat, Milwaukeeans sought to

develop strong advocates that would spread the word, while ensuring that the needs of labor would be met. Milwaukeeans were concerned about the power that the elite held over labor. By connecting educational reforms to the social issues of citizens, Milwaukeeans could pursue the needs of the workers to drive economic mobility and civic consciousness. Through the development of an informed citizenship, and with the labor unions in close alignment, the intimate connection to schooling would be inevitable.

Milwaukee's strong socialist leadership demonstrates the successes of a Marxist approach to a city that aimed to ameliorate poverty through egalitarian reforms that centered on growing the middle-class (Reese, 2002). While Milwaukeeans did not want to witness a repeat of the economic decline of 1893, they were also not afraid of failure, as their citizens would be in a better position for stability through education and training. The discourse that was derived from interest-based groups such as the Mugwumps, the Woman's School Alliance, and the Federated Trades Council demonstrate the various perspectives that were active in Milwaukee during the Progressive Era. This combination, along with the active Sewer Socialists, led a level of collaboration between interest-based groups that had not been witnessed within other cities nationwide (Reese, 2002). In turn, the ability to infuse the interests of the working-class in these conversations was plentiful and would aid in the development of school reforms such as vacation schooling and manual training (Reese, 2002).

Milwaukee's change agents made considerable progress within the social order that would aim to change education and labor within the city. William Reese (2002) compares Milwaukee to Toledo during this period due to their political alliances between the Socialists and Independents, respectively. However, Milwaukee's long-standing Socialist leadership would

outweigh Toledo's Independent reign, and the Cream City's labor ties with the Socialists would become stronger than any other (Reese, 2002).

The establishment of Milwaukee's vacation schooling would demonstrate the ties between social discourses as a means to provide education where it was missing. Although short-lived, the vacation school experiment displayed Milwaukee's strong alliance between social actors for civic betterment and immediate action. Chapter seven illustrates the egalitarian premise that would resonate throughout the state and would make contributions towards the removal of child labor and the development of formal methods of vocational education within the continuation schools.

## Chapter 7

### Schooling and the Development of a Labor Pipeline

Wisconsin's vast agricultural resources and industrial workforce prepared citizens for a life of labor and craftsmanship that would mirror the hard work from their ancestors of the European homelands. Many jobs of the late nineteenth century required little to no training and skill, as youth commonly sought work following elementary education as a means to provide financial support for their working family (Buenker, 1998; Gavett, 1965; Reese, 2002). Most of this industrial work would be within dangerous, unsanitary conditions (Buenker, 1998; Korman, 1967). In addition, workers often labored long hours for very little compensation, as the need for businesses to produce the most from their workplace investment was commonplace (Buenker, 1998; Korman, 1967).

While the work was often hazardous in nature, workforce demands and poverty required nearly every family member to contribute once physically able, and in most cases, the alternative, schooling, was deemed inadequate due to the lack of a financial payoff for families. Due to dangerous conditions and a lack of maintenance, workers in Milwaukee experienced poor lighting, ventilation, exposure to fumes, and extreme dust that would often contribute towards workplace accidents and injury (Korman, 1967; see also Buenker, 1998). Due to the capitalist nature of production and the need for profit concerning high employee turnover, business leaders lacked a commitment toward safety measures for employees (Korman, 1967; see also Buenker, 1998). As the late nineteenth century witnessed changes in labor as a result of vast industrialism, the need to increase efficiency and quality became commonplace (Kliebard, 1999). In turn, the demand for a skilled workforce rose to prominence, while leaders began to address a workplace crisis as a result of industrial accidents (Buenker, 1998; Korman, 1967).

By the turn of the century, accidents in the Badger State's industrial factories were commonplace. In 1906, 53 percent of all recorded incidents took place in these facilities (Buenker, 1998). Many of these accidents could be attributed to the unskilled worker and repetitive handwork required of the period (Buenker, 1998; Korman, 1967). In Wisconsin, workplace accidents were on the rise; by 1902, the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics reported 2,043 industrial accidents, an approximate 560 percent increase from the 309 reported in 1894 (Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, 1893-1894; 1903-1904). While industrial accidents were often underreported during this time, by 1905, Wisconsin would institute a plan to require physicians to report the data rather than employers (Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, 1905-1906; see also Buenker, 1998).

The workplace tensions that appeared in Milwaukee were a result of the job conditions, wages, and insecurity of employees and would call on the need for reform as the "industrial working conditions were closely bound to the general health of the urban population" (Korman, 1967, p. 113). In 1900, Robert M. La Follette would secure support from Wisconsinites across the state, becoming governor (Buenker, 1998; Korman, 1967). In response to the widely known inadequacy of workplace conditions during the period, La Follette's campaign would center on the need to help improve the lives of citizens across the state (Korman, 1967). In Milwaukee, a similar perspective was formed as the relationship between the Federated Trades Council and the Social Democratic party would call attention to the harsh labor conditions of citizens (Korman, 1967).

Consequently, the demand for improvements toward the social well being of citizens became common within the discourse of the city, and education would appear as the primary



factor towards amelioration of workplace concern through industrial education and training of youth (Korman, 1967). By focusing on the needs of youth, Wisconsin's legislative leaders could paint a picture of economic mobility and long-term success through the preparation for school and work. While most workplace training would take place in the union halls and factories during this time, grassroots leaders, such as Charles McCarthy, Robert L. Cooley, and H. E. Miles, would focus on altruistic efforts that would transform industrial communities within the Badger State for decades to follow. The result would be a new Wisconsin, primed for education, work, and a sustainable economy.

### **Child Labor and Schooling During the Progressive Era**

For decades, Wisconsin's conflict with child labor sought economic mobility for youth and relevancy for schools. While the history of Wisconsin's child labor laws is no more unique than other states during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Wisconsin's support for industrial education and the economic mobility of the child in response to the labor problems of the period would contribute to the development of an industrial education plan that would prove to be a model of success nationwide (Ensign, 1921; Kean, 1985).

The year 1879 would become the first year that Wisconsin would require children to attend school due to "the alarming non-attendance of at least one-third of the children upon the schools" (Ensign, 1921, p. 208). Led by a set of laws that lacked enforcement, youth who were not excused by the school board for work would be required to attend school for twelve weeks per year (Ensign, 1921). While statewide school attendance would grow, the result of a two percent increase would not prove to be successful, as work often took priority for youth throughout the Badger State (Ensign, 1921; Kean, 1895).

Often working jobs that were undesirable for adults, the few child labor laws that were in place were ignored; even by the Commissioner of Labor, due to the inability to determine an accurate age, as most parents would claim that their child was over the age of twelve (Ensign, 1921; Kean, 1985). In turn, a battle between youth and schooling would occur, leading the Commissioner to turn a blind eye to the employment of youth (Ensign, 1921). The jobs for youth would prove difficult for economic mobility and promotion (Kean, 1985). To address these tensions, in Milwaukee, the goal would be to grow the pipeline of industrial workers, and schools would become the primary means to accomplish the task (Kean, 1985).

While compulsory schooling laws would begin decades prior, 1889 would become the first year that significant changes regarding school attendance and child labor would produce noticeable results, leading to immense controversy (Ensign, 1921; Thelen, 1972). Based on legislation enacted by Governor Hoard, youth thirteen and older could attend work, however, permits for youth ten and older who could read and write English would be issued as a means of providing work to youth for the poor families across the state (Ensign, 1921; “Still After Hoard,” 1890; Thelen, 1972).

Angered over the limited number of youth attending school, Governor Hoard provided additional enforcement to the laws requiring children to attend school; requiring that instruction of reading, writing, and arithmetic be delivered in English (Ensign, 1921; Thelen, 1972). With the establishment of German and Scandinavian schools throughout Milwaukee and Wisconsin, the English language was often not spoken in classrooms, leading to children being often ineligible for English-speaking jobs (Ensign, 1921; Thelen, 1972). Eventually becoming what would be known as the Bennett Law, Hoard’s English language legislation would come under attack from the prominent churches of German-Catholic and Lutheran faith, as a state inspection

unit would be established to enforce the law within elementary schools across the state (Buenker, 1998; Ensign, 1921; Thelen, 1972).

The Democratic opposition to the Bennett Law was fierce, as Milwaukee's German population would take the lead in establishing a force that would respond to the attacks on their culture and faith (Buenker, 1998; Ensign, 1921). While the Bennett Law would be short-lived, the Democratic appeal of the law in 1890 would produce a near halt to compulsory education laws, as politicians feared future opposition and association with the failed legislation (Ensign, 1921). As a result, by 1890, 31,993 youth were not enrolled in school (Ensign, 1921). In turn, school leaders began to point the finger at the Commissioner of Labor and Governor Hoard for their lack of leadership and enforcement of compulsory school laws ("Still After Hoard," 1890).

While the depression of 1893 increased poverty in Milwaukee and throughout the state, the need for youth to be in school so that they could gain the adequate skills and education that would prepare them for their future began to permeate the discourse within the city. However, while child labor had proven to keep the costs of production low and business profits high, the tensions between schooling and labor would rise ("Millions of Toiling Little Ones," 1893).

Work prospects were scarce, as the need to work increased dramatically in Milwaukee and other industrial cities across the Badger State ("Tyrants of this Day," 1893). In addition, leaders recognized the harsh conditions of child labor as youth often were injured on the job earning little money to assist their family during this period ("Tyrants of this Day," 1893). The year 1897 would witness an increase in the minimum age to work, from twelve to fourteen (Ensign, 1921). In turn, legislators would begin to focus their attention on compulsory education laws, eventually requiring youth between seven and fourteen to attend school for at least eight months every year by 1903 (Ensign, 1921). While enforcement remained a concern, many issues

were limited to rural areas or towns with limited resources (Ensign, 1921). By 1905, between three and four percent of employed youth were under fourteen years of age, demonstrating enormous progress from decades prior (Ensign, 1921).

Wisconsin's long battle between business leaders over child labor would call attention to the many deficiencies of schooling during the period. Wisconsinites wanted safe, wage-sustaining jobs for youth entering the workforce, and the factory, mine, and workshop were practical locations to gain manual training existed. While legislation in 1895 supported the development of manual training in high schools, many children were leaving school much earlier (Ensign, 1921; Kean, 1985; Kliebard, 1999). The establishment of trade schools and the development of industrial education would provide a formal means to educate youth in the practical skill-based training that industry would require at an earlier age (Ensign, 1921).

### **Developing the Trade School**

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would witness local support for the establishment of trade schools across the country. The brief success of manual training within the vacation school would pave the way for reformers to consider the same within public schools. While manual training was taught in many private schools and union halls across the country by this time, the need to establish industrial education within the public schools presented an opportunity to link education with compulsory education regulations that would meet the needs of business and industry as well as the working youth (Ensign, 1921; Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). By establishing industrial education within the public schools, the ability to provide oversight and modification to the curriculum through the school board would serve as a viable answer to the pressures from business leaders and politicians (Korman, 1967).

The year 1895 would witness the establishment of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) as a means to address pressing economic and labor issues across the country (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). Focusing on emerging industries and job growth, NAM directed their efforts to the importance of skilled labor jobs that, they argued, created a workforce demand (Kantor, 1988). The most effective means to provide this skill-based training would be through the establishment of vocational schools that would provide practical education and apprenticeships (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999).

In addition to job growth, NAM leaders sought the need to re-train dislocated workers and better prepare them for the workforce (Kantor, 1988). Established by their Committee on Industrial Education, NAM leaders argued that industrial education would produce tangible experiences for youth that would allow them to connect concepts learned in school with workplace skills (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). In turn, a new pipeline of skilled workers could be established as a means to combat union-driven apprenticeships and training that sought only specific workers they approved (Kantor, 1988). Modeled after the German trade and technical schools, the committee sought private schools separate from public education, as they feared opposition from the trade unions (Kantor, 1988). These schools would be funded by private donors and would provide the training and equipment needed for immediate skill-based work and manual training (Kantor, 1988).

NAM's love affair with the private trade school would last until 1912 when it would be determined that the costs to maintain the schools and the equipment were higher than projected (Kantor, 1988). By transitioning the training to the public schools, vocational education could expand beyond the limited scope that the NAM leaders envisioned while providing the concept of vocational guidance that functioned as a means of career advice and direction for youth

(Kantor, 1988). By this time, cities across the nation, such as Philadelphia, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Cincinnati, would have well-established private trade schools serving their communities (Kliebard, 1999). A standout among the NAM leaders would become the trade schools of Milwaukee, and its leader, Fred W. Sivyer, who had great respect for the hard-working teachers within his school (Kliebard, 1999). It would be Sivyer and his trade school that would begin the movement of vocational education in Milwaukee and throughout the Badger State.

### **The Milwaukee Trade Schools**

Milwaukee's initial test of trade schooling began with the development of a cooking school for girls in 1887 (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). While many women's clubs were formed in the city by that time, Fannie J. Crosby and her peers founded the Milwaukee Public School Cooking Association to provide support for the development of a school curriculum that would introduce the skill of cooking for young women (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). With industrial workers spending long hours at the factory, the need for the skill of homemaking became necessary, however, only a few possessed such skills. In a letter to the editor of the *Sentinel*, one citizen wrote, "This to them is a trade, the knowledge of which will render many a home pleasant, and be a source of pride in the future" ("Trade Schools," 1890, p. 2). The school board would eventually accept the Cooking Association's plea for space within the Seventh District school building to begin free classes to twenty-four women in 1887 (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

The manual training offered by the Cooking school delivered a curriculum that provided "perfect and most economical preparation," which would produce a homemaker who would waste very little, producing a low-cost solution to home life (Kliebard & Kean, 1999, p. 63). By learning to cook frugally, the women would promote a low cost of living that would become commonplace for many following the depression of 1893 (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). The

popularity of the Cooking school would produce many interests from other schools to develop a similar curriculum and facilities. After just two years, the school board decided to introduce the cooking school curriculum officially within the public schools, leading to 550 young women being trained in twenty lessons of the culinary arts (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

The science of cooking became a leading factor in the acceptance of the cooking school curriculum in Milwaukee (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). The proven methods of cooking and its tangible product would become a timely curricular response to the “scientific age” that was upon the nation during the time (Kliebard & Kean, 1999, p. 67). A curriculum in cooking could produce immediate results, tracked by data, regarding its outcomes. The Woman’s School Alliance would go on to support the manual training efforts of the Cooking Association, leading to further expansion in 1897 (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). However, while the schools expanded, by 1900, there still was no formal manual training within the public schools for boys (Kliebard & Kean, 1999; “Trade Schools,” 1890). In many ways, the efforts of the Cooking Association and the development of the school for girls would lead to a demonstration of practical vocational training that worked (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). In turn, the citizens of Milwaukee turned its efforts to the development of a similar school for boys (“Trade Schools,” 1890).

The support for the establishment of public trade schools would be led by private driving forces that supported the discourse of business interests, similar to what was demonstrated within the cooking schools in the years prior (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). The Milwaukee Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ Association was one such organization that sought to develop special interests on behalf of business and industry throughout the city (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). In close alignment with prominent industrialist, Fred W. Sivyer, the Merchants’ and Manufacturers’ group would hear Sivyer’s call for trade schooling as a means of industrial education and business growth for

Milwaukee (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). Charged with leading a committee to determine how trade schooling could impact Milwaukee, Sivyer called on the assistance of business and educational leaders from throughout the city and nation for assistance (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

Milwaukee's School of Trades opened its doors in 1906 in an effort to provide skilled workers for Milwaukee's vast manufacturing industry (Gavett, 1965). The Milwaukee school would begin as a means to combat the many labor strikes that took place in year's prior, which left manufacturers in constant turmoil with the labor unions (Gavett, 1965). While the Federated Trades Council would publicly oppose the opening of the school due to its strong labor union ties, the Merchants' and Manufacturers' would appeal to the Wisconsin legislature for aid to continue running the school. In turn, the legislature would agree, and in 1907 Wisconsin would become the first state to permit trade schools as part of the public school system (Milwaukee School Board, 1909; see also Gavett, 1965; Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

With ample support from Madison, Milwaukeeans would be in a position to ruffle the feathers of the labor unions in response to concerns over mismanaged apprenticeships and union control over training (Gavett, 1965; Kliebard & Kean, 1999). Designed with a curricular focus on the metal trades, the Trade School was led by Charles F. Perry, mechanical engineer, and faculty at the University of Illinois (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). The instructional design gave students the ability to begin practical experiences within the areas of study on day one, mixing theory with practice so physical skills could be developed almost immediately (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). By producing tangible examples within the instruction, the student could compare their design to that of the instructor with a full understanding of their shortcomings for improvement (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).



Admission into the School of Trades would be for boys age sixteen or older who had a “natural aptitude for the trade he wishes to pursue” (Kliebard & Kean, 1999, p. 94). Boys selected for the trade school would commit to attending eight hours per day for twelve months per year, with evening courses running seven months out of the year (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). With this method of instruction, a focus on vocational training would be the primary means of education at a tuition cost between \$35 and \$90 per course (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

It is important to note that the discourse surrounding the establishment of public trade schools would appear in direct conflict with the union halls and apprenticeships that had dominated the skill-based training by the period. This discourse would produce concern from the union-backed Socialists who feared that trade schools would produce skilled workers as a means to combat labor strikes, and the Federated Trades Council would use this angle to publicly oppose the trade school plan in Milwaukee (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). However, shortly following the 1907 legislation that would allow school boards to establish trade schools within the public school system, the Socialists would recognize the support the schools would provide towards their Marxist goals (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). Within an article of the *Social Democratic Herald*, it was written that:

The trade school under the public control is now in working shape and will probably prove an advantage to the cause of labor now that some objectionable features have been abolished. The school in the hands of, and under the control of, local manufacturers did not appeal to the labor organizations. The argument was advanced that that school might make use of its members to break strikes and otherwise assist interested concerns in defeating labor. . . . Under the new conditions, the school is under the control of the school board exactly like any other school in the city. (“The Trade School,” p. 5)

Moreover, the newfound public support for the trade school would mean that youth would receive free tuition for trade school education, a concept that would be widely supported for its altruistic position (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

The success of the trade school and the delivery of the manual training curriculum would require the Milwaukee School Board to prove that citizens have received a return on their tax dollar investment. In turn, the school board would develop an ideology of vocationalism that would promote schooling for the preparation of work as a means of social mobility and economic stability (Milwaukee School Board, 1909). In his 1909 annual report, Superintendent Carrol G. Pearse wrote:

Greater earning power on the part of the skilled laborers in the community means greater spending ability; and the ability to command greater skill in the factories which turn out goods to be sold from the city means a greater income to the city from the sale of the product. Therefore the citizens of any city should not look upon their investment in a trade school from the purely personal or selfish standpoint, but as a thing which it is worth while [sic] for the city to do whether or not the citizen who pays his trade school tax, receives direct benefit through the training of his own children or by being able to command better skilled labor in his establishment. (Milwaukee School Board, 1909, p. 80)

For the first time, Milwaukee's school board leaders established a position on vocational education that would include methods of industrial education and manual training, connecting the employer, the student, and his or her parents (Kliebard & Kean, 1999; Milwaukee School Board, 1909). While employment would be the end goal, Pearse made clear the expectation that it would not benefit the student or the city if employers gave youth jobs before completing their

instruction at the School of Trades (Milwaukee School Board, 1909). In turn, education would provide the foundation for social mobility and economic stability, and the skill-based training offered by the trade school would provide immediate opportunity for earnings.

Milwaukee's trade school success would establish a Supervisor of Manual Training and Industrial Education, with Charles F. Perry as its first leader (Kliebard & Kean, 1999; Milwaukee School Board, 1909). In the same year, Milwaukee would establish a trade school for girls with the support of Lizzie Black Kander that would deliver a curriculum of sewing, cooking, art, and design in a similar structure as the boys' school (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). In turn, with Perry as the leader, a commitment to the administration of vocational education would match the ideology displayed by Pearse and the school board. By 1917, the School of Trades would become the Boys' Trade and Technical High School, linking secondary education with vocational training to establish a four-year curriculum in shop work and liberal arts education (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

Once again, Milwaukee's commitment toward the establishment for formal industrial training within the trade schools can be attributed to the strong and outspoken women activists of the Cream City. The early establishment of the cooking schools would prove that vocational education could work within the public schools and served as a pilot for what would become trade school education. While many cities had established manual training and trade school education during the Progressive Era, the school board's strong argument for vocational education would bring statewide attention to a means of preparation for work. In turn, a vast expansion of vocational education would occur as Milwaukee and Wisconsin would double down on their commitment to youth and business leaders.

### **The Wisconsin Idea: Forming an Egalitarian Badger State**

Following the depression of 1893, Wisconsin's economic landscape was rife with poverty and limited mobility (Fitzpatrick, 1944). The successes of trade school training presented an opportunity to educate youth at an early age; however, incumbent workers and those who never attended school would be ineligible for these opportunities. Dr. Charles McCarthy, leader of the Legislative Reference Library, carried a keen interest in ensuring that democratic education was an "essential foundation for an effective working of the democratic political process, and for a sound economic structure, serving both consumer and producer" (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. vi). In turn, McCarthy sought a fair balance between rural and urban citizens, and envisioned education as the primary means to develop a "sound economic structure, serving both consumer and producer" (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. vi). McCarthy's own experience as a child gave him the perspective of the laborer and the position to influence change due to his education and wish to be a servant leader for the people (Fitzpatrick, 1944).

In 1901, Wisconsin passed Chapter 168, which served to support the Free Library Commission established prior in 1895 (Fitzpatrick, 1944). The law led to the cataloging of public documents within a library that would be housed within the state capitol. Even though La Follette would sign the bill that would support the establishment of this library, Fitzpatrick (1944) importantly illustrates that "While supposedly making an appropriation for the Legislative Reference Library, the bill actually did not make one" (p. 44). It would be La Follette, who would eventually establish \$1,500 for the library, with \$1,000 budgeted annually for maintenance (Fitzpatrick, 1944). La Follette would then appoint McCarthy to lead the library when its doors opened in 1901 (Fitzpatrick, 1944).

By housing public documents, the Reference Library would serve as an information source for Madison's legislators when drafting bills that would benefit the state. McCarthy would often refer to this as "clerical, subordinate, [and] technical" assistance that would be provided, issuing no recommendations as to bill contents (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 49). In doing so, McCarthy and the Reference Library would serve as a repository for the creation of policy, which would, in turn, establish an ideology of the state, outlined within the Wisconsin Idea (Buenker, 1998).

As the work of the Reference Library would establish the framework for the Wisconsin Idea, Buenker (1998) importantly illustrates that:

Even during the Progressive Era, "the Wisconsin Idea" was never the product of a single mind or entity, any more than it was the platform of an organization or political party.

The Wisconsin Idea was, and remains, a broad, emotive descriptor for a general attitude or approach to public policy - not a set of carefully enunciated precepts. (p. 569)

While McCarthy, John Bascom, Charles R. Van Hise, and Edward Ryan apparently all made contributions toward the Wisconsin Idea, Buenker (1998) also illustrates the fact that La Follette only wrote briefly about the public policy reforms in his autobiography, giving no credit to the aforementioned authors of the policy (see also La Follette, 1960). Moreover, McCarthy's book on the policy, *The Wisconsin Idea* (1912), gave the nod to the faculty of the University of Wisconsin, and the Badger State's economic wealth at the time, which he attributed to the "German ideas and ideals, early instituted in the state" (p. 31; see also Buenker, 1998, p. 570). In many ways, that while the Wisconsin Idea did not have a sole architect, it would be the leadership of La Follette and the research of McCarthy that would provide the framework for its successes.

The premise of the Wisconsin Idea was to ensure that the distribution of wealth would serve Wisconsin's citizens across the state, from the industrial center of Milwaukee to the rural farms of the north woods (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944). In support of this democratic ideology, state resources would be utilized at the University of Wisconsin to ensure that reforms were thoroughly researched to establish the best policy for the citizens (Buenker, 1998). In turn, public investment could be put to the best use, demonstrating that taxpayer funds are working for the people. In this regard, the state government would act within an efficient and effective means, following in the footsteps of recommendations from scholars supporting social efficiency and scientific management strategies during the period (Buenker, 1998).

In response to the economic depression and political corruption of decades prior, the Wisconsin Idea aimed to establish a frugal governmental body that would serve the investments of the taxpayer within the most equitable means (Buenker, 1998). One way to accomplish this was to ensure that education was available and accessible for all within a democratic foundation that would produce a return on the taxpayer investment (Buenker, 1998). In turn, education reform became a critical means of action for McCarthy and the legislative leaders of Wisconsin to invest in the citizens of the Badger State towards the goal of economic prosperity (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944). While nearly every aspect of education from rural schooling, continuation schools, agriculture schools, extension centers, and apprenticeship programs were evaluated and improved, McCarthy and the framework of the Wisconsin Idea would be leveraged to establish governmental oversight to ensure that efficiency, effectiveness, scientific management, and democratic egalitarianism was part of the core of each reform (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944).

Given the educational successes established by the framework of the Wisconsin Idea, it would be McCarthy's development of a system of continuation schools that would teach manual training and industrial education to citizens across the state that would become, arguably, his most successful educational accomplishment (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). The well-received vocational plan would achieve national recognition following its passing in the 1911 state legislature (Fitzpatrick, 1944). In turn, this would lead to McCarthy's involvement as a consultant for several drafts of what would become known as the Smith-Hughes Act of federal legislation in 1917; the first national legislation for vocational education appropriations and oversight (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Kliebard & Kean, 1999; Paris, 1985).

Of the hundreds of laws established with McCarthy's support at the Reference Library, the use of scientific methods as a means to develop them presented Wisconsin as unique, and it was McCarthy's leadership that would ultimately receive credit (Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944). La Follette (1960), known for his lack of celebration for his staff, lauded the successes of McCarthy and the Reference Library by stating:

Many of the university staff are now in state service, and a bureau of investigation and research established as a legislative reference library conducted by Charles McCarthy, a man of marked originality and power, has proved of the greatest assistance to the legislature in furnishing the latest and best through of the advanced students of government in this and other countries. He has built up an institution in Wisconsin that is a model, which the Federal Government and ultimately every state in the Union will follow. (p. 15; see also Buenker, 1998, pp. 594-595)

President Theodore Roosevelt applauded the Reference Library's support for legislation and its efforts to establish an egalitarian Badger State (Fitzpatrick, 1944). Writing the forward for

*The Wisconsin Idea* (1912), Roosevelt identified Wisconsin's successes, which separated the Badger State from other state reforms by stating, "In Wisconsin there has been a successful effort to redeem the promises by performances, and to reduce theories into practice" (p. vii). Roosevelt goes on to write how many politicians across the country have sought information on the successes in Wisconsin as a means to establish similar reforms in their states (McCarthy, 1912; see also Buenker, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 1944).

### **An Architect of Vocationalism: Charles McCarthy**

To best understand the rise of vocationalism in Wisconsin, we must understand its architect, Dr. Charles McCarthy. While trade school training would provide skill-based education to industrial cities, such as Milwaukee, McCarthy examined how to provide education to those who had left school at an early age (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Kliebard & Kean, 1999). In McCarthy's view, "When some new invention comes into being, legislation must deal with it; when some new situation arises through the growth of new industries, some new law must be made restraining, encouraging or in some way regulating these conditions" (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 59). His democratic philosophy ensured that education would touch every citizen of the state, as the taxpayer supported its funding; it would be the job of the state to ensure that education would serve citizens through social mobility while serving the state through economic prosperity (Fitzpatrick, 1944). In his biography of McCarthy, Fitzpatrick (1944) writes on his democratic philosophy:

He thought in terms of the old chain image, that the social chain was only as strong as its weakest link - or in this case as its numerous weak links. To these weak members of society he did not want to give merely skills or a higher rate of productivity; he wanted to make them better workmen, better citizens, better men. (p. 260)



Born in Brockton, Massachusetts, in 1873, to Irish immigrant parents, Katherine and John, who worked as an engineer in a shoe factory, Charles was raised with a great appreciation for reading and athletic competition (Fitzpatrick, 1944). Anticipating that he would follow his father's footsteps working in a shoe factory, Charles sought education as a means of upward mobility and opportunity (Fitzpatrick, 1944). McCarthy explains further, "I had an idea in my head that there was somebody needed between the great mass of workers and the educated people and I tried in every way to prepare myself to be that somebody if I could" (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 7).

While his father labored at the shoe factory, McCarthy experienced the challenges of early industrialism as an observer of labor strikes and financial struggles of the period (Fitzpatrick, 1944). In addition, his mother led the boarding house for the immigrant workers of the shoe factories, serving food and shelter to the laborers, becoming known as "Mother McCarthy" (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 8). In turn, McCarthy grew up with a perspective of labor and struggle that would eventually transform his mission, dedicating his life to an altruistic ideology of democracy (Fitzpatrick, 1944). As an example, McCarthy used the opening pages of *The Wisconsin Idea* (1912) to dedicate his work to the citizens of Wisconsin who "broke the prairie, hewed the forests, made the roads and bridges, and built the little homes in the wilderness" (McCarthy, 1912, np; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 9).

McCarthy attended Brown University, working odd jobs between classes and semesters to earn money for his tuition (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Paris, 1985). Bringing his athleticism with him from his early years, McCarthy played football for the University's Bears, battling Ivy League rivals such as Yale and Harvard (Fitzpatrick, 1944). While McCarthy was popular on the football field for his tough play and dedication to the game, Fitzpatrick (1944) describes him as

an introvert, with few close friends; his passion was education and his altruistic mission to help others. Of those friendships was a close relationship with John D. Rockefeller, which would continue throughout his professional life until his eventual death (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Paris, 1985).

Following a two-year stint as head football coach of the University of Georgia Bulldogs, McCarthy sought the need to continue schooling (Fitzpatrick, 1944). Arriving in Madison in 1898, McCarthy enrolled in courses of history, economics, and political science, seeking a doctorate in philosophy degree with under the direction of Richard T. Ely and Frederick J. Turner, who attracted him to the institution (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Paris, 1985).

Receiving his Ph.D. in 1901, McCarthy began his career in state politics as a document clerk to Frank A. Hutchins, secretary of the Free Library Commission (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Paris, 1985). Reviewing legislative matters regularly, McCarthy would become immersed in the politics of the era, which served big business over the progressive politics of La Follette and the Badger State (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). Armed with his democratic ideology, McCarthy sought to battle big business as he was appointed his role at the Legislative Reference Library later in 1901 (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Paris, 1985). As would be observed in the years that would follow, McCarthy's fusion of educational, political, and personal experience would place him in an ideal position for political prowess. Often pushing himself to his limit to meet his altruistic goals, McCarthy would keep a busy schedule in the years that would follow, which would be attributed to his death in 1921 at the age of 47 (Fitzpatrick, 1944; see also Paris, 1985).

### **Vocationalism for All**

Intrigued by the continuation schools of Germany and many industrial cities on the East Coast, McCarthy along with Senator Edward Fairchild of Milwaukee, led a resolution, which

was submitted to the state senate in 1909 that would develop a committee to study the need for part-time schooling for youth working throughout the state (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). By leveraging the needs of the citizens, Wisconsin could effectively serve its communities through education and training, which McCarthy believed had been a failure of previous reforms (Fitzpatrick, 1944). His concern was that “only about one of every thirty of those who entered school around 1910 ever graduated from high school” (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 261). Quite simply, many of Wisconsin’s poor lacked education, as the need to work at an early age became paramount. The plan was to establish a continuation school program that would, in turn, provide schooling for youth already working to meet their “social, economic, and moral” needs (Fitzpatrick, 1944, p. 261). Consequently, McCarthy sought to meet the needs of those who had limited access to education through a new system that would provide a close tie between education and work as a means of developing their abilities (Fitzpatrick, 1944).

In 1910, armed with an extensive plan for vocational training, McCarthy presented his proposal to the then President of the University of Wisconsin, Charles R. Van Hise (McCarthy, 1910; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944). Within his plan, McCarthy proposed the development of an educational department that would be dedicated to manual training and industrial education and would reside within the office of the state superintendent of public instruction (McCarthy, 1910). In addition, McCarthy’s allegiance to the German continuation schools appeared throughout his proposal, highlighting its successes in meeting the labor needs of communities throughout the country (McCarthy, 1910). McCarthy’s continuation school plan called for evening schools that would serve the needs of workers age 14-16 by requiring school attendance and adjustment to the compulsory education laws (McCarthy, 1910).

McCarthy's vision was that the continuation school would serve an identified gap within education, similar to that of the German model; however, he importantly illustrated that the German model alone would not produce effective results in America (Fitzpatrick, 1944). In this plan for Wisconsin, McCarthy sought to meet the needs of the masses while keeping costs to a minimum (McCarthy, 1910). In turn, the school would serve a position of support for youth who wanted to enter the workplace, however, required schooling as a means for eventual upward mobility (Fitzpatrick, 1944, Paris, 1985).

McCarthy believed that the plan to deliver vocational education required administrative control that included both public school administrators, business leaders, and labor leaders who understood the needs of their community (McCarthy, 1910; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). In turn, vocational education would incorporate the needs of education and labor as a means to ensure that the connection between schooling and work would be transparent and consistent. The agreement would be that the governor would establish an advisory board of industrial education that would promote vocational curriculum under the state superintendent's authority (McCarthy, 1910; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). In addition, a Superintendent's assistant was appointed by both the State Board and the Superintendent to oversee the schools (McCarthy, 1910; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). Fitzpatrick (1944) describes how this form of "dual control" would eventually present concerns for Superintendent, C. P. Cary, as business interests were often pitted against educational goals (p. 270).

What would become known as the "Continuation School Law," Chapter 616 of the 1911 Laws of Wisconsin would approve the establishment of a State Board of Industrial Education appointed by the governor (Cary, 1912; see also Fitzpatrick, 1944; Kliebard & Kean, 1999; Paris, 1944). The first statewide continuation school law in the nation would establish appropriations

for schools to begin operation, with the curriculum overseen by State Superintendent, C. P. Cary (Fitzpatrick, 1944; Paris, 1985). Moreover, the law required cities with greater than 5,000 citizens to establish a local board of industrial education that would consist of both employers and employees as well as the superintendent of public schools (Paris, 1985).

Accompanying the Continuation School Law were four supplemental pieces of legislation that would contribute towards its success. The first was Chapter 522, which required youth employed over the age of 14 who were illiterate to attend continuation school (Paris, 1985). The second was Chapter 505, which was a compulsory law mandating employers to schedule youth between the ages of 14 and 16 to attend continuation schools on a part-time basis of five hours per day for a minimum of six months per year (Paris, 1985). Serving a similar apprenticeship model of today, the hours of the worker while in school would count towards their total work hours for the week (Paris, 1985). The third was Chapter 347, mandating that written agreements be established for each apprentice, clearly identifying the training that would be needed (Paris, 1985). This requirement included five hours of instruction per week that would be provided by the public school system in the form of industrial education or manual training (Paris, 1985). In turn, a physical copy of the agreement was to be sent to the State Industrial Commission, which would oversee the agreements and administer penalties to employers that did not comply. This vital provision linked the Commission to apprenticeships as a means to ensure quality and overall success, which quickly eradicated previous concerns related to apprenticeships within the state (Paris, 1985).

### **Educating the Youth: The Continuation School**

Following McCarthy's push for the continuation school laws within the Badger State, cities would begin to establish a local board of industrial education that would support the

instruction within the vocational schools. While the legislature required the opening of the schools, Kathleen Paris (1985) importantly illustrates that “there was no pattern to follow for the new continuation schools. Yet local boards of industrial education had to find facilities, instructors, and curricula” (p. 18).

The city of Racine would be the first to establish a continuation school, opening its doors in October of 1911 for 325 students (Paris, 1985). Milwaukee, however, was in a more strategic position. The industrial capital of the state, the Cream City, had a well-established trade school in place, which was led by the public schools (Kliebard & Kean, 1999; Paris, 1985). In response to the 1911 laws, Milwaukee established a Board of Vocational and Adult Education in May of 1912 that consisted of two employers, two employees, and the public school superintendent as the ex-officio (Tarbell, 1958; see also Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

Led by Superintendent Harold S. Vincent, the Milwaukee board aimed to align education with the skill-based needs of employment throughout the city (Tarbell, 1958). Their first order of business was to hire an educator to lead the Milwaukee Vocational School. The board appointed Dr. Robert L. Cooley, a Wisconsin native, teacher, and principal to lead the school in 1912 (Tarbell, 1958; see also Kliebard & Kean, 1999; Paris, 1985). The board quickly looked to Cooley for his guidance and leadership as they sought to develop an educational policy that would lead to the success of the school (Tarbell, 1958). A well-established leader in the nation’s industrial trades, the board began to develop instructional plans within the school around the metal trades; however, one of his most significant initial challenges was to determine the hours of the school week in conjunction with the compulsory labor laws of the students (Tarbell, 1958).

With the labor laws requiring youth between 14 and 16 to attend vocational courses for five hours per week, the academic schedule would be split into two half-day sections: 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Cooley, 1914; see also Tarbell, 1958). These long school and workdays, coupled with the fact that many youth working on a labor permit would work several jobs beyond the vocation they were learning at the vocational school (Tarbell, 1958).

The curriculum of the Milwaukee Vocational School was assigned to students based on their skill level and age (Tarbell, 1958). In designing this plan, Cooley made his curricular philosophy widely known by stating, “The needs of the students shall determine the curriculum” (Tarbell, 1958, p. 34). Career exploration began early in what was called a “tryout experience,” where youth would take classes in many different vocations before choosing their primary path towards work (Tarbell, 1958). In turn, the curriculum would revolve around the students’ needs with, “No two students...alike” (Tarbell, 1958, p. 34).

Similar in educational philosophy to McCarthy, Cooley presented a democratic perspective on education and his role as the leader of the Milwaukee Vocational School stating:

All kinds of honorable work are necessary to society. Whatever one’s job or position may be in industry, one should become acquainted with what goes before or comes after the particular task upon which it is engaged. (Cooley, Rodgers, & Belman, 1930, p. vii)

Consequently, Cooley gave the city what it needed: educational attainment and human capital. Most importantly, for the people of Milwaukee, the return on investment would appear after the first few classes of youth would come through the Vocational school doors, producing a prepared workforce under Cooley’s leadership (Tarbell, 1958).

The Milwaukee Vocational School would serve four types of students; with the largest body of those ages fourteen to sixteen on work permits (Tarbell, 1958). While students would attend school one-half day per week due to the compulsory education laws, administrators often heard from parents of the youth who expressed concern over lack of payment for time in school over time they could spend working (Tarbell, 1958). While many sought economic mobility, Tarbell (1958) illustrates how some wanted to continue their current work stating, “Judgment and maturity in thinking had not to them as of yet” (p. 46).

While the design of the 1911 vocational education laws aimed to educate approximately 5,000 youth in Milwaukee alone, Cooley (1914) sought to meet the needs of employment within the areas of carpentry, cabinet-making, pattern-making, tinsmithing, sheet-metal work, plumbing, steam fitting, electrical work, masonry, machine shop work, concrete work, power plant operating, drafting, bookkeeping, store clerking, stenography, printing, baking, and painting and decorating. In this effort, Cooley and his team also delivered education to youth between the ages of 14 and 16 who were unemployed. Approximately 2,000 unemployed youth attended school in the first years of its opening, attending on a full-time basis until they obtained employment (Cooley, 1914; Tarbell, 1958).

Immaturity was commonly how teachers and administrators identified students wishing not to attend school, and teachers often became frustrated by their lack of engagement and performance (Tarbell, 1958). Cooley (1914) recognized that most of the boys enrolled at the Vocational School lacked vocational guidance towards future jobs and what job opportunities lie ahead for them past schooling. His solution was to provide boys with courses in woodworking, metalworking, and electrical work in a “shop” format supervised by instructors (Cooley, 1914, p. 615). These boys would also be taught mechanical drawing, with the final hour of each week in



liberal arts academic work (Cooley, 1914). In Cooley's (1914) perspective, learning the fundamental skills from these disciplines would provide them with the guidance necessary to choose an occupation for their future. While Cooley and his staff would associate youth with job training for which they seek an interest, Cooley (1914) illustrated his philosophy further by presenting an example of a boy wishing to become a plumber:

It is a well-known fact that chance, in spite of all we may do, will be a large factor in determining where the boy will land in seeking a job. He may be seriously wanting to be a plumber, but chance gives him the opportunity to be a sheet-metal worker. Our work must be of such a nature that it will help him even in that event. (p. 617; see also Kliebard & Kean, 1999, p. 111)

In Cooley's view, youth must be prepared for multiple fields and job readiness over passion and dedication to an industry to be well prepared for their role as citizens (Cooley, 1914; Tarbell, 1958).

Apprentices were the third group in attendance at the Milwaukee Vocational School. In the early years, this group consisted of approximately 300 students who would attend day classes on behalf of an employer who would teach them the fundamentals of the job (Cooley, 1914; Tarbell, 1958). In this respect, the apprenticeship classes often did not overlap with the traditional industrial education that took place within the continuation school. Apprentices required specialized training at a shorter time frame than the permit students, requiring specialized classes (Tarbell, 1958).

The final student group was those not required to enroll. Considered "voluntary" students, these students would attend evening classes in the trades as a means of upward mobility towards higher earnings (Tarbell, 1958, p. 46). The voluntary students would seek the "duties

and obligations of good citizenship” as a means of economic stability, job security, and personal enrichment (Cooley, 1914, p. 616; see also Tarbell, 1958). In many instances, these students were women who sought the skills of typing and homemaking to better support their families at home (Tarbell, 1958).

In 1914, the Milwaukee Vocational School enrolled 1,600 girls and 2,000 boys on labor permits in 31 classrooms (Cooley, 1914). The girls were taught skills in homemaking such as sewing, cooking, taste, design, typewriting [sic], stenography, bookkeeping, decoration, and an introduction to the public library (Cooley, 1914). With these skills, girls would be considered self-sufficient, seeking additional information from the library as needed. In turn, Cooley (1914) boasted, “That nine hundred books were drawn from the library during one month by these young girls, practically all of whom had not been in the habit of reading at all” (p. 615). This proud moment of success for Cooley would demonstrate the potential of the continuation school.

Although the school had its successes, it also had its fair share of problems. The vocational reforms that brought the continuation school law in 1911 sought to change the culture of education and work in Milwaukee and across the state that had existed long before, which asked youth to work to contribute toward the family income (Reese, 2002; Kliebard, 1999; Tarbell, 1958). In many instances, this culture of work was deeply rooted in the family heritage from the homelands of their ancestors (Tarbell, 1958). In addition, youth would leave their place of work every week to attend school, which placed a burden on employers to fill the gaps for an unskilled workforce (Tarbell, 1958). In turn, student engagement and planning beyond schooling became a difficult task for school staff and administration, as youth perceived the law to be more about governance than job attainment (Paris, 1985; Tarbell, 1958). Consequently, some students sought overtime hours with their employer, missing classes at the school (Tarbell, 1958).

The State Board of Industrial Education recognized these problems as a failure to deliver vocational guidance to youth, especially those considered to be mentally deficient (Reber, 1912). Secretary Reber (1912) would articulate a vital need to develop “useful citizens” through vocational education as “the worker overcomes his handicap and gains a normal interest in self-improvement” (p. 11). Moreover, vocational leaders placed emphasis on the differences between those primed for academic work, dubbed the “schoolboy,” and those who enjoyed industrial labor dubbed the “shopboy” (Reber, 1912, p. 15). Secretary Reber (1912) illustrated the differences between the two classes of youth that attended the school by stating that the schoolboy seeks direction for the instructions of work, while the shopboy comes equipped with problem-solving and personal judgment skills, bringing a level of confidence to the workplace (Reber, 1912).

Cooley (1914) illustrated the path toward upward mobility for his students by calling on the fact that many were not earning a living wage from their employer. He went on to say, “Many have no idea of what is before them, are not thinking ahead, and have no conception of the various trades or occupations available in this community which might afford them a way up. (Cooley, 1914, p. 615; see also Kliebard & Kean, 1999, p. 110) In this respect, vocational guidance became an important foundational structure of the school, since the continuation school was the only educational opportunity for youth between the ages of 14 and 16 (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

With Milwaukee well engaged with trade school training prior to 1911, the industrial leader within the state was in an excellent position to begin the continuation school plan following the passing of its legislation. From the perspective of the taxpayer, Cooley, and his administrators, we able to keep the costs of the school considerably low, which undoubtedly

aided the public perception regarding its overall success (Miles, 1915). While Cooley would rent the Manufacturers' Home Building on Mason Street, and eventually the Stroh Building on Michigan Street, rent and overall expenses would be minimal for their budget, leading to the eventual building of their own school building in 1920 on Sixth Street (Tarbell, 1958).

President of the Wisconsin State Board of Industrial Education, H. E. Miles (1915), would write, "It is only right to measure the Wisconsin movement in terms of its advantage to the great body of the working people, and in that respect it is necessary" (p. 489). In turn, leaders in vocational education from Chicago, such as Edwin G. Cooley, Superintendent of Public Schools, and Frank M. Leavitt, Professor at the University of Chicago, would visit the Milwaukee Vocational School to learn about Cooley's educational policy (Tarbell, 1958). Moreover, public figures such as David Prosser and David Snedden would visit the school in 1915 to learn from Cooley's innovative work of placing industry professionals on the faculty versus following the common practice of hiring trained educators as teachers (Tarbell, 1958; see also Kliebard & Kean, 1999). Tarbell (1958) illustrates the importance of Snedden's visit, stating, "By his own comment he felt reassured in his program after conferring with the administration of the vocational school in Milwaukee" (p. 220).

As educators sought innovative approaches to vocational education, the notion that skill-based practical learning was the most effective method to achieve education and preparation for work would grow with leaders across the country (Tarbell, 1958). While Milwaukeeans were often divided over their political allegiance between the Socialists and Progressives, among other parties during the era, they were most proud of their achievements in vocational education as "progressive reform" (Kliebard & Kean, 1999, p. 117). The fear of economic decline following the depression of 1893 resonated with Milwaukeeans during the Progressive Era, as future

trepidation over dying industries, technological innovations, and the training needs for emerging jobs would reign paramount during the early twentieth century (Kliebard & Kean, 1999).

### **Summary**

The history of vocational education in Wisconsin posits schooling as a social force for economic stability and citizenship. This chapter illustrates the emergence of democratic education as a means of preparation for work through an egalitarian premise that attempted to improve the social order of citizens. This theme demonstrates the development of trade and continuation schools as a means to become an efficient producer of labor and social mobility during a time of industrial expansion.

This examination of Milwaukee helps us understand the adoption and design of formal methods of vocational education that would contribute to the national discourse. While Charles McCarthy would make Wisconsin famous for its legislation in response to the Wisconsin Idea, the Badger State's system of vocational education would come well before the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 and the appropriations from a federal plan. As discussed in chapter six, Wisconsin's grassroots reforms undoubtedly paved the way for this legislation to take place. While most in the industrial east coast would anticipate that continuation schools would come first in states such as Massachusetts and New York, Wisconsin's establishment of continuation school legislation in 1911 would surprise many, as it would become the first of its kind (Kliebard, 1999; Kantor, 1988; Paris, 1985).

Egalitarian thought was a practical goal for reformers of the period to meet the industrial business needs of the community. Disparities between the working-class and middle-class were vast, and the goal of egalitarian reforms to improve working-class conditions and earning potential made for a practical approach during the Progressive Era (Thelen, 1972). In

McCarthy's view, education sought a means of societal transformation similar to that of John Dewey (1966) in *Democracy and Education*. Education stood to challenge the status quo through this transformation that would serve to meet business and industry needs while ensuring buy-in from Marxist reformers in response to the needs of laborers. Herbert Kliebard (1999) suggests that this genesis of vocationalism served "generally as an instrument for perpetuating and reinforcing race, gender, and class lines" during this period (p. 225). In turn, vocational education sought economic mobility for those eligible for education during the period and further hindered blacks from education and training due to their place in society (Kliebard, 1999). Suggested further in chapter eight, the egalitarian nature of McCarthy's plan for vocational education perhaps functioned, in a general sense, reasonably well in Milwaukee and Wisconsin due to the relatively small population of blacks that lived in the city and state during the period. With industrial leaders and labor unions excluding blacks from many occupations and organizations, the egalitarian focus for vocational education in Wisconsin would focus primarily on the economic stability of the vast population of white, European immigrants that resided in Milwaukee.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion**

This study has illustrated several constructs that have established vocationalism in Milwaukee during the Progressive Era. The establishment of vocational curricula for manual training and industrial education sought to introduce the unskilled to skill-based work that was desperately needed. The grassroots reforms of established citizens called for a more informed and relevant workforce. Education sought to meet socially efficient methods that shifted public belief regarding the purpose of education in an effort to become practical and exciting for youth. In turn, education sought an egalitarian premise to invest in the human capital of society.

This final chapter serves to deconstruct these constructs of vocationalism that were illuminated within chapters four through seven of this study. This chapter goes beyond the initial introduction of these themes to examine their meaning, importance, and significance within society during the Progressive Era and today. I conclude with a discussion on the four research themes and provide a final analysis based on the findings, directing scholars toward future opportunities to examine vocationalism within this context.

### **Summary of the Findings and Implications**

This study began with the central research question: How has ideology shaped education within the context of vocationalism in Milwaukee? Wisconsin's political landscape at the turn of the Progressive Era positioned Madison's politicians against Milwaukee's metropolis of industrial labor at a time of vast expansion. Within a period of immigration and industrial growth, Wisconsin would become a "laboratory for democracy," as foundational ideals paved the way for longstanding reforms and a statewide alliance toward an educational vision that would

grow to astonishing heights during the period (Kaufman, 2018, p. 6). In the sections that follow, I highlight the themes from chapters four through seven that resonate within the findings of this study in response to the central research question (see Table 5).

**Table 5 Research Themes**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Tensions Between Vocational and Academic Interests	Engaging youth in schooling meant an opportunity to prepare youth for work beyond dead-end jobs, providing stability and upward mobility. Access to education was limited and most working-class youth would leave school prior to high school to earn for their family.
The Altruistic Education of the Social Order	An egalitarian ideology that aided in the resurgence of the working-class and attempted to bridge the gap between the economic elite and the poor.
The Discourse of Grassroots Reforms and a New Civic Consciousness	Grassroots reforms of the Progressive Era demonstrate the ideological perspectives and discourse of citizens that sought to transform the working-class through education, politics, and labor.
Democratic Education and an Egalitarian Preparation for Work	Formal models of vocational education emerged through methods of democratic education as a means of preparation for work through an egalitarian premise that attempted to improve the social order of citizens.

### **Theme 1: Tensions Between Vocational and Academic Interests**

Chapter four illustrates that the Progressive Era demonstrated a time when educational interests were among continuous debate. By the late 1800s, 80 percent of youth nationwide would not finish public high school, and while they would enter the workforce, the jobs available were often unskilled, dangerous, and limiting (Kliebard, 1999; Reese, 2002). The need to work



and contribute to the family financially was paramount, as the working-class made up a vast number of citizens throughout the nation during this period. Poverty was rampant in many cities, including Milwaukee, and schooling was deemed as the first answer toward amelioration of economic disparity and crime; however, engaging youth in schooling proved difficult.

Interests in vocational schooling focused on an ideology of social efficiency that was witnessed in the early developments of manual training and trade schooling. Proponents of vocational education, such as David Snedden and Charles Prosser, sought to mirror the industrial plant in organization and structure as a means of effective engagement and translation to an environment of work. Differing opinions on the method to achieve academic efficiency reigned throughout the discourse of the Progressive Era; however, the separation between vocational and academic interests would remain a central theme in response to the tensions of the period.

Engaging youth in schooling meant an opportunity to prepare them for work beyond dead-end jobs and provided stability and upward mobility for future tasks. While child labor was commonplace within industrial cities nationwide, it remained clear that the stability of child labor would not last with the innovations of the era, and trade schooling sought to meet society at its needs regarding manual training and overall interest.

While the Milwaukee School of Trades for boys would open its doors in 1906, Detroit's Cass Technical High School would begin to serve students six years later in 1912 (Kliebard, 1999; Mirel, 1999). Widely known for its interconnection between vocational schooling and the auto unions, Detroit's story presents an interesting comparison to industrial Milwaukee. Detroit's association between labor and politics was not as strong as Milwaukee's during the early twentieth century, and would not influence the curriculum of the Motor City's public schools until years later (Mirel, 1999).

Detroit's love affair with socially efficient solutions for education, such as Wirt's Gary plan of platoon schooling, would eventually begin in 1918 with the opening of two platoon-style elementary schools (Mirel, 1999). While Wirt's Gary plan was widely controversial, New York City began to experiment with a similar plan in 1916, which lasted only a short time (Mirel, 1999). It is important to note that while the Gary plan was widely controversial for its integration of scientific management methods, its successes in Detroit would come in response to publicized support from the Michigan Socialist party who praised the Gary plan as a fit for Detroit's schooling (Mirel, 1999). Consequently, it can be suggested that the ideology and political discourse that permeated communities throughout this era made contributions towards these decisions.

The widespread promotion of social order argued for citizenship and democracy within manual training and labor as a means to contribute toward society in response to the dramatic decline witnessed in the depression of 1893. While socialist politics were prevalent throughout the nation, the political influence that the Social Democratic Party would establish within the Milwaukee School Board was forceful. Serving a platform of social reform in the footsteps of her husband, Meta Berger was elected as school board director in 1909 (Swanson, 2001). Her influence within education and the women's clubs of Milwaukee would impact future reforms and vocational schooling beyond Progressive Era Milwaukee. In close alignment with the working class, Meta's leadership would establish numerous educational and social reforms that fought for women's suffrage, penny lunches for youth, and fought against the establishment of a platoon system of schooling (Swanson, 2001).

Meta's argument against the establishment of the efficient platoon schooling plan that was in place in Gary, Indiana, asked for measurable outcomes in comparison to non-platoon

schools (Swanson, 2001). In turn, this debate would derail the plans of the school board, ensuring that efficient methods of education, which would take place in other cities across the nation, would not appear at full scale in Milwaukee. The establishment of Milwaukee's educational reforms that were influenced by Meta, and the educationally-progressive Socialists, conflict with Bowles and Gintis' (1976) argument that the establishment of vocationalism was purely in response to the need for communities to produce a workforce pipeline. Carol Kean (1983) illustrates the perspective of Milwaukeeans during this period further by stating:

From the beginning, Milwaukee liked to think of itself as on the frontier, pioneering and progressive in most facets of community life. The public schools were pointed to as a prime example of the enlightened spirit and energy of the city's citizens. (p. 284)

Milwaukee's established vocationalism goal can be attributed to the social efficiency movement and the ability to develop an industrial curriculum in response to rapid economic change (Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999). Vocationalist ideology would permeate society in Wisconsin for decades following the Progressive Era, and with its well-established roots in industrial training, the need to support the ever-growing demands of manufacturing would continue.

In 1933, the Milwaukee Vocational School would survey 1,757 graduates from Milwaukee's public schools to determine their status in schooling and employment. Of those surveyed, the most significant percentage of students enrolled in educational institutions following high school were students enrolled in the Milwaukee Vocational School (29 percent) (see Table 6; Milwaukee Vocational School, 1934). It was clear that Milwaukee's vocationalism was both relevant and timely, as it would stand in a position to continue for decades to follow.

**Table 6**  
**Enrollment of Milwaukee High School Graduates, 1933**

<b>Education</b>	<b>Number Enrolled</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Universities	250	26.5
Colleges	205	21.7
High Schools (Post-Graduate)	111	11.8
Milwaukee Vocational School	277	29.3
Other Schools	101	10.7

Source: Milwaukee Vocational School, 1934

While the tensions between vocational schooling and academic preparation may have been at a high point during the Progressive Era, it is suggested that these tensions continue today in the relationship between community colleges and four-year universities. W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson (2004) suggest that the vocationalism of the community college illustrates the commonalities between education and work that appear within the various forms of schooling. While education has adopted the principles of vocationalism, the tensions between the vocational interests of the community college and the academic interest of the four-year university demonstrates the egalitarian debate that existed during the Progressive Era. Moreover, I suggest that the almost complete vocationalization of the community college of today represents the early adoption of the vocational curriculum and manual training that occurred within the Progressive Era, as demonstrated in Milwaukee.

Today's community college aims to serve a near-immediate solution of education and preparation for work. While most community colleges are considered academically comprehensive, providing an option for transfer to baccalaureate degrees, they continue to serve what can be considered as terminal degrees related to specific vocational interests driven by

community demands. While the years following World War II demonstrate the immense growth of the community college (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004), Milwaukee represents an early adoption toward this approach well prior to this era within its egalitarian ideology established within the Wisconsin Idea.

While the baccalaureate degree has separated itself from the stigma of the utilitarian community college associate's degree, the establishment of Wisconsin's Technical College System of comprehensive post-secondary education demonstrates the shift of vocationalism to remain relevant in today's marketplace. Wisconsin's legislative structure that began as the Continuation School Laws of 1911 remains today. While Wisconsin's expansion of its extension centers has since introduced the more comprehensive community college to the state, the vocational-technical colleges, established from the industrial roots of the Continuation School Laws remains. The hierarchal stigmas, once associated with trade and industrial schooling during the Progressive Era, now appear within these vocational-technical colleges as the shift in vocationalism has focused on its role within higher education. It is in this lens that I suggest that we are reliving the once Industrial Era through the vocational tensions that began during the late nineteenth century.

## **Theme 2: The Altruistic Education of the Social Order**

Chapter five discusses the altruistic reforms that sought education as a means of societal improvement following the depression of 1893. While Milwaukee certainly encountered economic ebbs and flows before this period, these declines would not produce the vast levels of poverty and unemployment that were witnessed following the depression of 1893 (Thelen, 1972). For Milwaukeeans, this newfound economic burden is best illustrated by the fact that many residents would not report that they were unemployed (Thelen, 1972). While aid for

unemployment was available, civic pride would often trump public declaration by middle-class residents who would become poor in response to the decline (Thelen, 1972). In turn, this has also become evident by the lack of accurate depression statistics (Thelen, 1972).

The theme of altruistic reforms within Progressive Era Milwaukee resonates from an egalitarian ideology that aided in the resurgence of the working-class and attempted to bridge the gap between the economic elite and the poor. With estimates of the unemployed reaching 40 percent of the workforce, Milwaukeeans sought immediate change in response to a growing fear of decimation (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972). Quite simply, citizens needed to combine efforts to ensure that the community remained intact for future generations. In turn, several economic, civil, and educational reforms would call attention to the misappropriation of funds, disparities in wealth, and inadequate schooling as barriers to future success (Reese, 2002; Thelen, 1972).

The economic panic of 1893 would divide Milwaukeeans based on varying levels of economic stability. While it has been said that Wisconsin's progressivism would not have been likely to flourish without the social impact from depression of 1893 (Thelen, 1972), I argue that the same could be said for vocationalism in Milwaukee. Milwaukee established a push for vocational education as a Marxist means to support a workforce within a capitalistic society. The ideological shift that would take place in response to economic unrest would point the finger at many politicians, bankers, and economists alike; however, public schooling would become the pivotal scapegoat for underprepared citizens and an unskilled workforce. This study of Milwaukee helps us to understand how concepts such as social capital and social reproduction solidify this argument, as both are produced as a result of levels of economic wealth and access to education. In turn, education in industrial cities like Milwaukee was primed for reform, and vocational schooling delivered in various forms throughout the era aimed to support the taxpayer

and the youth, as students were guided and tracked according to their ability (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004).

Economic declines throughout past centuries demonstrate a similar shift in altruistic behaviors in response to workforce demands. The drastic increases in community college enrollments during and following periods of vast unemployment and economic decline demonstrate the efforts to educate dislocated workers in response to a period of decline (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). While the curricula of the community college serves the primary interests of entry-level to mid-level employment, the efforts toward educating the working-class have been deemed altruistic in comparison to its four-year university counterparts (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004).

The practical, utilitarian premise of the community college posits a safety net for societal needs and improvement that the four-year university cannot replicate. With the majority of students working while in school and responsible for other obligations such as children and caring for elders, the community college presents a cafeteria-style education within a flexible schedule that meets the needs of many (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). Recent community college reforms such as college promise programs that consist of first-dollar and last-dollar scholarships to promote “free” tuition constitute similar altruistic efforts to educate communities of citizens in response to the increase in the “skills gap” that has appeared due to a decline in high school graduates and a skilled workforce (Perna & Leigh, 2018). In addition, second-chance job training programs that provide access to education for welfare recipients and incarcerated individuals presents similar efforts to rehabilitate indigent citizens and link them to a labor force (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004). Programs such as these demonstrate the power of vocationalism as a method to fast-track education and training to meet immediate workforce needs.

I suggest that the anxiety that has grown through the discourse regarding the “skills gap” demonstrates similar concerns established during the late nineteenth century in response to the economic decline witnessed in Milwaukee and other industrial cities. The establishment of college promise programs illustrate a new wave of vocationally-led reforms that center on meeting specific industrial priorities of a community to answer workforce demands while providing opportunities for upward mobility (Perna & Leigh, 2018). Demonstrated within Milwaukee’s vocational school, Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) (previously the Milwaukee Vocational School), their similar last-dollar scholarship program makes an altruistic-based effort to reduce the Cream City’s own “skills gap” (MATC Promise, 2019). With a vision to *transform* lives within the community through comprehensive technical education, MATC, in many ways, attempts to continue the altruistic legacy of Charles McCarthy and Robert L. Cooley through its comprehensive mission today (Mission, Vision and Values, 2019).

### **Theme 3: The Discourse of Grassroots Reforms and a New Civic Consciousness**

Chapter six illustrates an era of grassroots reform that aimed to establish a new civic consciousness within education, politics, and labor as a means of social improvement. During this period, education became the primary means for personal improvement as access to public education increased, and supplemental methods of schooling, such as the vacation and extension schools, were introduced. While the Progressive Era witnessed several political shifts in Milwaukee, they demonstrate the ideological perspectives and discourse of citizens that sought to transform the working-class through education, politics, and labor.

The link between ideology and vocationalism can be best illustrated by Ryan Pfleger’s (2016) study of vocational discourse. While his study examines the discourse and ideologies that promote vocationalism on a national scale, it importantly highlights the public view regarding



the purpose of schooling. Pfleger's (2016) study suggests that the discourse around the purpose of schooling is not described, but rather, is implied as a known fact. By not allowing others to engage with the discourse through an implied purpose of education, Pfleger (2016) argues that a strong vocationalism exists within modern society. Pfleger (2016) emphasizes this point further, stating:

The content and structure of strong vocationalism is ideological because it provides conditions for thinking narrowly about economic outcomes of education and, simultaneously, hides what history and scholars shown to be the relative economic impotence of education. (p. 145)

I suggest that by looking back on the reforms of Milwaukee during the Progressive Era, we may establish how one community perceived education and the purpose of schooling from a vocational perspective.

Milwaukee's brief but essential experimentation with non-partisan politics through mugwumpery illustrates a period of antebellum reform that centered on an allegiance to family and the citizens of the city (Thelen, 1972). The belief that the best and most noble individuals should lead the community drove the Mugwumps to establish an elite leadership to command society in what they considered to be its purest form (Thelen, 1972). In this regard, politics would function for the people, and the discourse sought to represent their interests accurately.

Progressive Era Milwaukee would witness a shift in civic consciousness that would aim to support the needs of the working-class. While the economic impact of significant Progressive Era reforms influenced most industrial cities, Milwaukee arguably stood to lose the most from economic instability, as evidenced by the impact the depression of 1893 had made on the city (Thelen, 1972). In turn, its proximity to the industrial giant and metropolis of Chicago proved

influential, as both competed for the production of commodities and distribution due to their vast shipping ports (Still, 1948).

In 1850, with 20,061 residents to Chicago's 29,963, Milwaukee would desperately need to not only recruit a workforce but, most notably, keep the workforce in order to remain economically relevant (U.S. Census, 1850). Bayrd Still (1948) illustrates this further stating:

In addition to attesting the exuberant self-confidence of the expanding West, the rivalry between the two cities is chiefly significant as evidence of the beginning of geographical position upon the urban promise of the two competing communities. (p. 199)

Vying for relevancy in the region would add fuel to the need for Wisconsin's progressive politicians to ensure that the discourse would support its deep-rooted union labor vote (La Follette, 1960). Milwaukee's labor strikes during the late nineteenth century would close most factories, often leaving a bloody trail of laborers who battled for their interests (Buenker, 1998; Kaufman, 2018). The proletarianization that would begin to occur within the Badger State would need to be met by a democratic education that would be fit for the worker.

Milwaukee's support from the labor unions had arguably one of the most significant impacts on its successes in the Cream City (Reese, 2002). The influence of the Union Labor Party in 1887 and a love affair with socialist politics would have a dramatic influence on schooling, as business and industry needs were attended to (Buenker, 1998; Still, 1948). With its opposition to child labor and promotion of free public education, the union-led politics would make similar strides in cities nationwide; however, Milwaukee's influence would provide the most significant successes, establishing a foundation of interest-based educational ideology that would continue well into the twentieth century (Gavett, 1965).

Progressive Era interest groups sought supplemental education as a means of progression and social change for communities. Milwaukee's elite progressive women sought a way to leave a lasting mark on education through altruistic behaviors and discourse that would demonstrate their selflessness during a period of vast economic disparity (Reese, 2002). Milwaukee's Socialists would follow a similar path to improve the social order to meet their ideological perspectives in support of the laborer. The agency of these individuals illustrates Milwaukee's vast network of citizens that sought education as a means to drive civic change. Each of these reformers instituted forms of vocational education that would provide a near-immediate impact on youth during the period. While similar reforms were active in other industrial cities during the period, Milwaukee's experimentation with these reforms demonstrates the malleable nature of schooling during the period and the influence of reformers to formalize education to meet an economic need.

Today's educational interest groups are vast in scope and are no stranger to city and state politics throughout the nation. The mobilization of various parties for the educational interests of a community has become commonplace and strives to meet the many concerns of social reform. In recent decades, America's public and political concern has questioned the efficiency and accountability of public education (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rury, 2013). Defined as neoliberal reforms, the discourse of today's interest groups has attempted to privatize and control education based on its potential for economic production (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Pfleger, 2016; Rury, 2013).

While more overt than its Progressive Era predecessors, today's modern discourse is often steeped in vocational intent (Pfleger, 2016). Widely cited is the report by the United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for*

*Education Reform* (1983). With a focus on public perception of educational meritocracy, *A Nation at Risk* (1983) challenged schools to increase the achievement and performance of students (United States National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; see also Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rury, 2013). In turn, the federal government positioned the importance of schooling as a paramount goal in the economic and social well being of the country (Rury, 2013).

The one-sided discourse from *A Nation at Risk* (1983) used statistics laden with academic underachievement and direct recommendations for improvement to push a vocationalized agenda. The report included a basic high school curriculum similar to the recommendations brought forth by the Committee of Ten decades prior, which argued for a curricular standard for every student prior to their completion of secondary education (NCEE, 1983; see also Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rury, 2013). Additionally highlighted were secondary schooling data emphasizing the increased student matriculation from vocational and college preparatory programs to “general track” coursework in college. The findings from the report argued the perceived negative increase of students seeking a “general track” college education by those who were considered to be “on track” for vocational or specific college-preparation programs by 30 percent from 1964 to 1979 (NCEE, 1983).

While the aim of the discourse from reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983) has been dramatic, their outcomes have been successful in capturing the attention of politicians, philanthropists, and the public (Grubb & Lazerson; Rury, 2013). Consequently, its result has produced several follow up reports such as the Secretary of Labor’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1991), and reforms such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2008) that would follow, arguing a discourse of human capital theory as a means of global economic

growth (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rury, 2013). The importance and influence of reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983) have served as political fodder and discourse, which has made longstanding contributions towards public opinion and educational reforms that, continue to this day (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Rury, 2013).

The examination of Milwaukee's Progressive Era interest groups helps us to understand the power of discourse during an argument for an egalitarian path of educational standardization. While the discourse of vocationalism continues today, it has since shifted to meet the demands of a global economy versus only local needs. Political alliances aside, each have sought what was assumed as best for youth concerning the perceived purpose of schooling. With a shared goal of increasing the responsiveness of schooling to meet the economic demands of society, the vocational nature of this discourse cannot be ignored, as it has driven an implied purpose of schooling as a commodity for the preparation of work and profit from its achievements.

#### **Theme 4: Democratic Education and an Egalitarian Preparation for Work**

Chapter seven discusses the specific events that made contributions toward the establishment of formal models of vocational education in Milwaukee during the Progressive Era. These events highlight the theme of democratic, egalitarian education that appeared by reformers during the period. McCarthy's message in the *Wisconsin Idea* (1912) was that of equality and education for citizens across the Badger State. Edward A. Fitzpatrick's (1944) modest portrait of McCarthy in his biography illustrates this perspective further, citing his childhood, upbringing, and early identification of the labor problem. In many ways, McCarthy's philosophy was unique to his perspective as a child, and his optimism and passion for education as a means of human capital cultivation were revolutionary (Fitzpatrick, 1944).

McCarthy's mission would eventually be bestowed to Robert L. Cooley and his leadership at the Milwaukee Vocational School when its doors opened in 1912 (Tarbell, 1958). Seeking to educate the "forgotten groups in education," it was Cooley's vision that his school would meet the educational and training needs of youth as a means of upward mobility and economic stability (Tarbell, 1958, p. 1). While deemed egalitarian, the hegemonic perception of educational equality during the period was rather specific and limiting. Louis Reber (1912), Secretary of the Wisconsin State Board of Industrial Education, illustrates this in his characterization of the type of students who would attend the continuation schools into three classifications:

- Youth deficient in elementary educational skills that are interested in surpassing their level of education and skills that will help them obtain employment;
- Youth deemed intelligent, but are unskilled, and have a want to improve themselves mentally;
- Those employed, however, have "retarded mental development" and do not wish to improve themselves (Reber, 1912, p. 10).

In Cooley's vision, the continuation school served as a "life preserver" for the unskilled, focusing on the development of social and industrial knowledge to improve their well being and "repay the community many fold for the opportunity" experienced at his school (Cooley, 1914b, p. 52). In this outlook, the governance of a vocationalized curriculum would serve as a cornerstone of the community through citizenship and labor that would meet specific workforce demands.

While Cooley's discourse of the Continuation School students promoted an egalitarian premise, more present analyses of Progressive Era reforms demonstrate the vast educational

inequalities that occurred during the period (Reese, 2002; Rury, 2013). Of the unskilled workforce during the early twentieth century, blacks would make up a vast majority, and most would labor in agricultural, domestic, and personal service work during the period (Trotter, 2007). Racial discrimination was widespread and commonplace, which kept blacks out of the labor unions, thus creating a barrier for employment and relegating them to segregated jobs (Trotter, 2007). In turn, Milwaukee's black population had little option for anything beyond unskilled work in the most dangerous and unstable jobs that would not be sought by any white resident (Trotter, 2007). Joe William Trotter (2007) describes this further by stating, "Milwaukee labor leaders desired to keep Milwaukee white and free of low-wage black labor" (p. 55).

Since blacks were ineligible for industrial labor, it would be deemed that they had little to no need for industrial education, and a common Darwinist perspective of the period was that "like all other peoples of the world [they] must start at the beginning - with the soil" (Lilley, 1916, p. 87). While Milwaukee's black population was only two tenths, the population of the total residents during 1910, the proportion of black residents that migrated to Milwaukee would be the smallest compared to other industrial cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Cleveland (Trotter, 2007). The proximity of Milwaukee to Chicago most likely played a factor in the late migration to the city (Trotter, 2007). In turn, I suggest that the success of the egalitarian mission for vocational education in Milwaukee and Wisconsin can be partially attributed to its vast population of white European residents during the period.

Race relations were distressful for blacks, as whites feared job loss at the hands of blacks for much lower earnings (Trotter, 2007). The Socialist Democratic Party leader, Victor Berger, would refer to blacks as an inferior threat to Europeans as a means to side with the local unions labeling blacks as a "lower race" (Trotter, 2007, p. 55; see also Anderson & Greene, 2009).

Against the advisement of fellow Socialist Eugene V. Debs, Berger aimed to exclude blacks from the Socialist Democratic Party, although Milwaukee would already have an established group of black Socialists within the city (Anderson & Greene, 2009). Consequently, this made it clear that Milwaukee's black population was not eligible for the opportunities of industrial education due to the Socialists' strong ties with the labor unions.

By 1930, Milwaukee's black population had grown, although its proportion to the population of the city was just 1.6 percent (Trotter, 2007). In comparison, blacks would make up a much more significant percentage of the total population within industrial giants such as Detroit (9.2 percent) and Cleveland (9.6 percent) during the same year (Trotter, 2007). In 1939, the Milwaukee Vocational School (MVS) surveyed the vocational status of Milwaukee's youth to determine their success in the labor market. MVS received responses from just 630 black youth between the ages of 19 and 24 within the city (Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942). While continuation school was supposed to meet the democratic needs of citizens, it was clear that disparities in education attainment were widespread, as just 25 percent of Milwaukee's black youth had completed the twelfth grade by this time compared to 46 percent of white youth (see Table 7; Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942).



**Table 7**  
**Grade Completion of Milwaukee Youth, 1939**

**Total Surveyed: 47,349**

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>White (n=46,654)</b>	<b>Percent of Total for Whites</b>	<b>Black (n=630)</b>	<b>Percent of Total for Blacks</b>
6th or less	259	0.6	44	7
7th	690	1.5	33	5.2
8th	5,994	12.8	121	19.2
9th	3,787	8.1	82	13
10th	4,564	9.8	73	11.6
11th	4,282	9.2	91	14.4
12th	21,321	45.7	155	24.5
13th	1,718	3.7	4	0.6
14th	1,559	3.3	14	2.2
15th	1,136	2.4	5	0.8
16th	982	2.1	5	0.8
17th or higher	360	0.8	3	0.5

Source: Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942

School attainment beyond the twelfth grade was limited for many youth; however, 12 percent of white youth had completed a grade beyond twelve during 1939 compared to fewer than five percent of black youth (see Table 7; Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942). Putting this into perspective, one year later, the 1940 Census record would report 6,950 blacks age 14 or older resided in Milwaukee, with 17 percent unemployed, compared to just .06 percent of whites (U.S. Census, 1940; see also Trotter, 2007, p. 153). Of the black youth surveyed by MVS, a mere 12 percent were enrolled in school during 1939; however, it was evident that black youth had a desire for education, as 83 percent of those surveyed indicated an interest in education beyond their current level (Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942).

Keeping his mission to serve Milwaukee's youth for 28 years, Cooley would leave a legacy in 1939; however, it would remain clear that work for educational equality would remain. By this time, Cooley's vocationalization of the curriculum had spread throughout the community, ensuring that youth would know that the MVS would support them to meet their educational and economic needs. Of the youth surveyed in 1939, 23 percent were planning on attending vocational school and sought schooling in preparation for work, advancement, or upward mobility (Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942). Moreover, just 17 percent of youth sought education at a higher level than the vocational school (see Table 8; Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942). It was clear that McCarthy's vision for the cultivation of human capital had been successful within the framework of the *Wisconsin Idea* (1912) and the Continuation School Laws.

**Table 8**  
**Plans of Milwaukee Youth, 1939**

<b>Total Surveyed: 47,349</b>		
<b>Plans for the Future</b>	<b>Number of Youth</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>
Higher Education	8,240	17
Vocational School	10,864	23
Secure Employment	3,451	7
Advance in Present Job	4,035	9
Secure a Better Job	1,364	3
Household Responsibilities	4,617	10
Get Married	3,844	8
Enter Business	2,518	5
Enter Civil Service	720	2
Other Plans	139	0.3
No Plans	7,557	16

Source: Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942

Similar to the industrial giants of the upper Midwest, deindustrialization during the decades of 1970 and 1980 impacted Milwaukee's community significantly. With 35 percent of the population once employed in manufacturing, blacks in Milwaukee would continue to suffer without civic investment towards human capital (Levine & Zipp, 1993). Marc Levine and John Zipp (1993) illustrate this further by stating, "[In] 1980, however, over half the potential labor force in Milwaukee's inner-city neighborhoods was either unemployed or not looking for work" (p. 57). Following the mission of McCarthy and Cooley, access to education and training became paramount means for social improvement within the model of vocationalism. Quite simply, economic stability cannot survive without education, as the outcomes of social reproduction remain plausible.

Segregationist housing and a lack of inner-city stabilization would add fuel to the increases in economic disparity that would plague the Cream City (Levine & Zipp, 1993). By 1990, Milwaukee would possess the worst rate of black suburbanization among the largest cities in the U.S., as options for upward mobility would not extend beyond the initial enclaves that early black residents had secured within the city by the end of the Progressive Era (Span, 2002). To illustrate this point, Marc Levine's (2002) study of economic mobility between 1990 and 2000 further illuminates the disparities within the Milwaukee region, citing that Milwaukee residents gained an adjusted gross income of 4.3 percent during this decade, while residents within the Milwaukee County suburbs gained income at 11.9 percent. Highly segregated neighboring counties would fair even better, with residents in Waukesha County gaining income at 20.7 percent and Ozaukee County residents gaining an adjusted gross income at 37.0 percent during this same period (Levine, 2002).

Today, Cooley's legacy continues as Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC), one of sixteen comprehensive vocational post-secondary schools in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Offering practical, vocational training, its curricular alignment with academic general education provides a credential to graduates within its offerings in Associate of Science and Associate of Arts degrees within a multitude of career pathways. While the racial makeup of MATC is much more diverse today than that of the early twentieth century (MATC Fast Facts, 2017), the driving force for youth to attend school continues within the egalitarian premise for the amelioration of poverty and the promotion of economic mobility (MATC Graduate Career Report, 2018).

Milwaukee's democratic, egalitarian mission of vocational education helps us to understand how a city sought to grow through a shared mission to promote the working-class. While the discourse of interest-based political groups such as the Socialists and the Progressives each had their perspective on education and its purpose to educate the community, Cooley and McCarthy's dedication to the unskilled presented an avenue to invest in the human capital of a city and state to ensure economic stability and future political goals were met through a consciousness of citizenship and pride for the production of labor.

It would be overly simplistic to conclude that the history of Milwaukee's vocationalism has had little impact on the reskilling of the workforce in response to the present economic status of the city and region. As historians have called attention to the disparities in vocational guidance concerning the ideologies of the Progressive Era, perhaps xenophobic belief and inadvertent inequality resonated throughout the reforms of vocationalism observed in Milwaukee as outlined in this study (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004; Kantor, 1988; Kliebard, 1999; Watkins, 2001; Winfield, 2007). Cooley's (1914) perspective claimed that youth haphazardly chose an interest in subjects

of work and that the staff at his vocational school would direct youth toward economically mobile careers as a result. Surveys such as *Milwaukee Youth Report Their Status* (1942) may suggest that youth gained an interest in fields related to the economic status of their family or the job opportunities that would be available to them based on race, as these data align with the work of Trotter (2007) and other scholars (see Tables 3, 4, and 9). Consequently, further research regarding the vocational guidance of youth before and following periods of emigration to Milwaukee is needed to determine the outcomes of this democratic egalitarianism in relationship to the discourse of industrial education during the period.

**Table 9**  
**Occupation of Youth, 1939**  
**Total Surveyed: 47,349**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Number of White Youth</b>	<b>Percent of White Youth (n=46,654)</b>	<b>Number of Black Youth</b>	<b>Percent of Black Youth (n=630)</b>
Professional Person	1,606	3	10	1.6
Farmer	16	0.03	0	0
Proprietor/Manager/Official	407	0.8	2	0.3
Clerk	9,276	20	18	3
Skilled Worker	1,033	2	5	0.8
Semiskilled Worker	8,009	17	16	2.5
Farm Laborer	101	0.2	1	0.2
Other Laborer	1,005	2	37	6
Servant Classes	2,244	5	59	9
Undermined	2	0.004	0	0
Unemployed	22,955	49	482	77

Source: Milwaukee Vocational School, 1942

Moreover, examination regarding the impact of poverty, race, and economic disparity within the Cream City in relation to the vocationalism goal is necessary. While it can be assumed that racial tensions, access to education, and ideology have contributed toward social

inequalities, examining Milwaukee's mission of egalitarian vocationalism within these contexts would stand to offer researchers a platform of measurement concerning the social outcomes observed within Milwaukee today.

### **Final Discussion**

The history of vocationalism in Milwaukee tells a story of fear, pride, resilience, and democratic credence that embodied the soul of Milwaukeeans during the Progressive Era. Educators stand to learn from the chronicle of Milwaukee's love affair with vocationalism, as it eloquently illustrates the connections between school and work, which continue to influence political and social change within the twenty-first century. As long as work continues to be the primary means to make a living, the concept of vocationalism will be a central method to deliver education and training for the development of human capital.

While vocationalism was established as a response to develop personal identity within a society rooted in economic capitalism, its efforts toward the promotion of social equity are admirable. The egalitarian goals of Cooley and McCarthy sought social harmony and economic benefit for a city and state that pursued an identity beyond agricultural significance. Milwaukee helps us to understand the ways that formal methods of vocational education made contributions towards educational change through the meaning of schooling and work. In turn, this examination illustrates the tremendous value that citizens placed on school-based preparation for work during the Progressive Era. Appearing front and center was the promise of the educational payoff, which has since matured to become a global commodity in society today. This story of Milwaukee suggests that its citizens had a strong faith in the vocationalism goal and that the establishment of school-based preparation for work would provide a solid foundation to transform a fragile industrial community.

Milwaukee's love for vocationalism demonstrates efforts to link work and schooling within a democratic society to address inequalities within a community. Milwaukee's history challenges many of the simplistic historical perspectives that scholars have made regarding vocationalism that highlight the creation of a labor force primarily for the preparation of work. The role of Milwaukee's community in the development of vocational education during this period was not only key to its success; it demonstrated a Marxist perspective of working-class labor that resonated throughout the community. A well-established industrial base coupled with political alliances, grassroots reformers, and the response to an economic crisis cultivated a foundation for vocationalism that would not be witnessed on a similar scale beyond the Cream City. While other cities had similar experiments with vocational education, Milwaukee's strong Socialist base would provide an alliance with labor that would resonate through much of its community during the Progressive Era.

In their twenty-first century discussion on the future of vocationalism, Grubb and Lazerson (2004) describe the need to develop a "Foundational State," where the goal to support a thriving economy and democracy through the promise of vocationalism presents the ideal conditions for vocational education and skill-based learning (p. 24). Milwaukee's historical perspective on education demonstrates the establishment of a Foundational State and its broad support for the preparation of work through vocationalism. During the Progressive Era, no other city would establish such a strong political and social foundation in support of school-based preparation for work as Milwaukee. McCarthy's ingenious "Wisconsin Idea" would become the basis for civic pride throughout Wisconsin that would, in turn, produce a pipeline of labor that was needed within industrial communities. The argument for vocationalism was not *if*

vocationalism would be the best for society, but rather *how* it would best be established in order to support the needs of a fragile, but growing workforce.

While the connection between work and schooling was limited prior to this period, the dangerous and dead-end work that was witnessed by grassroots reformers and philanthropists would shift the need for Milwaukeeans to combat poverty and crime through socially mobile methods of education and training. In turn, work needed to become meaningful for citizens. With a manageable population size and the backing of local businesses, the way for Wisconsin to control the public concern for employment and social mobility would be to establish legislation for continuation schooling. By requiring youth to gain workforce training at the Milwaukee Vocational School, Milwaukee would invest in the future of its citizens and city. Of all the vocational reforms during this period, Wisconsin's establishment of these laws best demonstrates its commitment to schooling and work in response to the educational and economic tensions of the period.

Milwaukeeans were not afraid to take social risks. The widespread public concern for financial instability, increased support for the poor, and a surging crime rate as a result of the depression positioned public officials with no other option but to consider the grassroots reforms of the period as solutions for the betterment of the community. As Grubb and Lazerson (2004) contend:

A key responsibility of the Foundational State is to create the preconditions for developing human competencies, not only by supporting the *supply* of the right kinds of education and training but also by stimulating the *demand* for these competencies. (p. 264)



While Milwaukee's grassroots reformers would make several contributions toward the development of requisite knowledge and skill for its citizens, including business leaders early in the establishment of these reforms was an ingenious step toward its Foundational State, as the demand would attempt to meet the urgent concerns of the public. By establishing a connection between the social concerns of citizens and school-based preparation for work, reformers were able to impact social change at unprecedented levels through a foundation that was rooted in egalitarian reform. Ever since, Milwaukee's commitment to school-based preparation for work has grown from this Foundational State as this model of vocationalism continues to educate and train citizens to meet immediate workforce needs today.

Milwaukee was pioneer on many fronts during the Progressive Era, and vocational education quickly put the city on the map as a laboratory for workforce training following the opening of the Milwaukee Vocational School in 1912. The tensions that appeared between economics and education during this period would establish an important link in the continued development of a democratic society for the public good. Milwaukeeans realized the need for citizens to establish a workplace identity in response to the pride of their work and community. In turn, its vast European immigrant population would prove to be a contributing factor in establishing this goal as upward mobility and social capital became primary interests for citizens.

It is without doubt that the early German models of industrial education played a critical role in the establishment of vocationalism, as many of Milwaukee's citizens had close connections to the educational and labor successes of their homeland. Milwaukee's Socialist working class took aim at early models of schooling as a result, pushing for policy and reforms that would forever change the educational and economic landscape of the city. The advocacy between the well-established tensions of schooling and work would produce a public debate

surrounding schooling and the preparation for work that would call attention to the discourse and the establishment of a new civic consciousness.

The reforms that would establish vacation and trade schooling provided support for the establishment of the vocationalism goal, as citizens demanded financial training and industrial education beyond public schooling and child labor. The economic depression of 1893 would set the foundation for future democratic engagement as Milwaukeeans came to believe that their community was more fragile than previously imagined. Social and political progressivism in Wisconsin would establish a strong connection between business and labor as philanthropists, politicians, and influential business leaders led many of the committees and organizations during the period (Thelen, 1972). Through shared goals and a tight connection to labor, Milwaukeeans and Wisconsinites alike came together to combat the economic and educational concerns of the period in ways never witnessed before.

On their own, the progressive reforms of the period would prove influential, however, it would be La Follette who would famously popularize the discourse during this time. In turn, it would be the local issues of the period that would be at the center of political rhetoric, as Milwaukeeans joined together in support of a collective civic belief. Thelen (1972) describes Wisconsin's political cohesion further:

They realized that their mechanism for change ran counter to the natural identifications that accompanied the spread of cities and factories. Because they could not appeal to natural economic divisions or interest groups, they had to build a new mass of politics that reached all citizens across the traditional political barriers of ethnic and interest groups. (p. 311)

In turn, the early tensions of the period between economics and education would establish a common interest regarding schooling and the preparation for work. The return on investment for the taxpayer would be an important factor in response to the financial crisis. Coupled with McCarthy's well-established plan for vocational schooling, the social tensions of cities like Milwaukee stood to combat the elite influences that were blamed for the crisis in the first place.

Today's political and social support for "community college for all" initiatives double down on the vocationalism goal in an effort to develop strong ties between education and the development of human capital. As Grubb and Lazerson (2004) importantly illustrate, employers must be just as committed to providing advisory support and hiring practices to support these forms of education without producing market oversaturation and empty promises of job preparation and career readiness. While employer support has been widespread for such efforts in response to declining high school graduation and birth rates, the egalitarian promise of these efforts has not been demonstrated for all individuals as concerns regarding educational and job inequities remain. In turn, it is left to the administrators, faculty, and staff to commit to their community through an accurate understanding of public need and interest.

Comprehensive community college programs that place an emphasis on liberal arts curriculum, in addition to skill-based technical training, provide a foundational basis for education that supports the malleable nature of work and innovation. While the notion of "community college for all" is admirable, it comes in response to business and educational demands that must be truly committed to socially mobile jobs and careers for citizens. Without this, the vocationalism goal is no greater, as the tensions between economics and school-based preparation for work will continue.

While the Progressive Era established many competing ideologies during the period, the commitment to a democratic consciousness became commonplace, as citizens identified with the economic inequalities that existed following the depression. Milwaukee's close proximity to Chicago played an important role in establishing this foundation, as it was without question that the Windy City had well-established roots and similar economic interests. Competition bred civic engagement and Milwaukee's experimentation with manual training, industrial education, and vocational curricula would go on to demonstrate a collective unity toward civic pride that positioned education as a pivotal means of upward mobility.

The collective support for schooling during the Progressive Era carried a message of education for the betterment of youth in cities nationwide. Milwaukee's story demonstrates this cohesive collaboration on a greater scale than most cities during this period, as its strong Socialist ties to politics and union labor brought civic unity toward the working-class and the goal to develop an equitable society. While Milwaukee's grassroots reformers would call attention to the social inequalities of the period, it remained clear that action needed to be taken as citizens agreed that continued financial support for the indigent would be unsustainable. By establishing a means for citizens to support themselves they would make economic contributions toward the growth of their community. In response, the Wisconsin legislature would ensure that vocational schooling was publicly funded (Kliebard & Kean, 1999). In turn, Milwaukee's business and labor synergy became critical toward its vocational successes. The decision to publicly support vocational education would place the interests of business and labor above all other educational goals in connection with the trade and vocational schools.

Cooley's mission to educate the "forgotten" youth demonstrated an egalitarian basis for education in response to the Continuation School laws (Tarbell, 1958, p. 30). During a period of

time when inequality surrounding race and gender was commonplace, Milwaukee offered little upward mobility for its small black community. Much of the inequalities that would be identified during the time would be in response to the skill deficient and financially unstable. While the Milwaukee Vocational School would provide little support to the black community, it remained evident that blacks wanted skilled-based training and education in an effort to seek upward mobility and job stabilization. In this regard, it was recognized that inequality existed, however, coupled with eugenic belief of human ability and the fact that Milwaukee's black population was a small fraction of the community, its priority was of limited concern for reformers during the period. In turn, Milwaukee's strong ties to union labor would ensure that the majority of its white, European population remained socially and financially stable.

Grassroots reformers such as the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Association, the Woman's School Alliance, and others drew on the influential work of Milwaukee's leaders who used their social capital to drive unity and support for the greater good of the majority of its citizens. While racial and ethnic inequalities existed throughout cities nationwide, the inequalities that surrounded financial stability stood front and center for Milwaukeeans in response to the civic mismanagement that led to the severe impact of the depression. In turn, the foundation of education for the greater good that would be established would go on to provide the framework for what would become a democratic education that would be witnessed decades later.

Perhaps vocationalism would not appear at the level that it had within Milwaukee if any of the four themes that have been examined in this study were not actualized. Each theme is chronologically contingent upon the next, as the emerging tensions of schooling led to an

altruistic ideology in response to an economic decline that established grassroots reforms for the initiation of democratic education and school-based preparation for work.

In some ways the historical tensions between economics and education continue today. Recent discourse surrounding the vocationalism goal has positioned politicians and business leaders to call attention to the “skills gap,” instilling fear and panic as a driving force toward school-based preparation for work and job readiness skills. While the argument for the Foundational State calls for business leaders to prepare for and hire individuals within the concept of vocationalism, educational institutions also need to ensure that curricula remains relevant and comprehensive to provide broad skills that extend beyond narrow career paths. As specialized skill-based training continues to thrive in response to business and industry needs, comprehensive models of vocational education remain the most meaningful for society, as they serve as sincere champions for egalitarian vocationalism through support from liberal arts curricula and skill-based training (Grubb & Lazerson, 2004).

Focus must not be lost on the democratic foundation of education as historical outcomes have demonstrated. This investigation into Milwaukee’s enthusiasm and support for vocational education illustrates the importance of democratic education toward successful economic outcomes. As educators, attention must be paid to the discourse of education that embodies vocationalism to ensure that school-based preparation for work remains steadfast toward social equity. Doing so requires educators and business leaders to work together for the common good. Only then will education positively support economic and social mobility through the constructs of vocationalism.

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