Cambridge Studies in the Comparative Politics of Education

Editor

Terry M. Moe, Stanford University

Education and its reform are matters of great political salience throughout the world. Yet as Gift and Wibbels observed, "It is hard to identify a community of political scientists who are dedicated to the comparative study of education." This series is an effort to change that. The goal is to encourage a vigorous line of scholarship that focuses squarely on the politics of education across nations, advances theoretical thinking, includes a broad swath of educational terrain – from elementary and secondary education to vocational education to higher education – and explores the impacts of education on key aspects of society. The series welcomes books of very different types. Some may be grounded in sophisticated quantitative analysis, but qualitative work is welcome as well, as are big-think extended essays that develop agenda-setting ideas. Work is encouraged that takes on big, important, inherently messy topics, however difficult they may be to study. Work is also encouraged that shows how the politics of education is shaped by power, special interests, parties, bureaucracies, and other fundamentals of the political system. And finally, this series is not just about the developed nations, but encourages new work on developing nations and the special challenges that education faces in those contexts.

Books in the series

The Comparative Politics of Education:Teachers Unions and Education Systems around the World Edited by Terry M. Moe and Susanne Wiborg

A Loud but Noisy Signal? Public Opinion and Education Reform in Western Europe Marius R. Busemeyer, Julian L. Garritzmann and Erik Neimanns

The Politics of Comprehensive School Reforms: Cleavages and Coalitions Katharina Sass

Making Bureaucracy Work: Norms, Education and Public Service Delivery in Rural India Akshay Mangla

Education for All?

Literature, Culture and Education Development in Britain and Denmark

CATHIE JO MARTIN
Boston University

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Introduction

Education for Some or Education for All?

INTRODUCTION

Once upon a time, two countries traded places. Denmark, an obscure, rural, medium-sized country on the outskirts of Europe – grew up from its ugly duckling past to become an exemplar of the good life with a happy, well-functioning, prosperous society. Meanwhile, Britain – the early leader of the industrial revolution with an unparalleled skilled labor workforce – floundered in its maturation and lost its competitive edge. This book tells the tale of how education choices at the precipice of modern history facilitated the rise or decline of these nations. Danish policymakers developed schools to serve all citizens, and these choices helped Denmark leapfrog into a modern, social democratic powerhouse system. Britain lagged in building schools for the masses; and its failure to craft programs for workforce skills both hastened its economic and social decline and widened the gap between rich and poor.

Fiction writers are the unsung heroes of our story, agents of change whose narratives served as rallying cries for the education campaigns of the long nineteenth century. Fiction writers also gained a special kind of immortality, as their narratives about schooling would be carried forward by their literary descendants and resonate for centuries to come. Yet British and Danish authors used their power of the pen to advocate for very different visions of schooling. In the fictional worlds of Danish writers, mass schools became the foundation for a great society, a tool for economic growth, and a weapon for national security; poets and novelists glorified peasants in words and songs (Korsgaard 2004; Bobe 1895–1931; Jespersen 2011; Reeh 2016; Thaarup 1822/1786, 287). Most British authors imagined a very different reality: mass education would threaten domestic stability, derail work by the lower classes, and contaminate national culture (Malthus 1809, 27–28; Brantlinger 1998).

Literary portrayals of schooling – and the education system choices that they helped to inspire – had real world impacts on the British and Danish political economies. In Britain, schooling geared toward the upper and middle classes, rather than toward "education for all," drastically limited the fortunes of low-skill young people and other vulnerable populations. Even British reformers concerned about equality concentrated on expanding access to academic programs for talented working-class students and later on increasing school equality across districts. Yet they paid scant attention to improving vocational programs and serving the needs of students lacking academic talents (Payne and Keep 2011). Authors' cultural narratives reinforced the idea of educating winners, rather than benefiting the larger population, even when these authors cared about social problems. With their stories of protagonists who overcame structural injustices with individual determination, they made it easier to blame those who failed to seize educational opportunities and to dismiss the youth who were left behind.

In contrast, Danish education system choices served to benefit the working class.[1] Rather than merely relegating workers to second-class education, Denmark's excellent vocational training programs strengthened workforce skills and increased socioeconomic equality (Iversen and Stephens 2008; Busemeyer 2015). Fiction writers' depictions of the needs of a strong society bolstered the mandate to educate all the people: neglecting low-skill youth was a waste of societal resources and a threat to social fabric. Investments in education for the masses were initially intended not to achieve equality but rather to produce productive workers. Nevertheless, those investments did help to bring about high levels of equality and made it easier for social democratic governments to achieve both efficiency and equality.

EDUCATION IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

Throughout the long nineteenth century, many European countries embarked on ambitious projects to build systems of mass public education. These projects were shaped by three major developments unfolding in Europe at the time: nation-building, industrialization, and democratization. Each of these developments required resources and capabilities that mass public education was uniquely positioned to deliver. Nation-building required citizens and soldiers to offer money, manpower, and cultural commitment to the polity for defense, conquest, and other nationalist goals. Industrialization demanded workforce skills and technological acumen. In responding to the pressures of democratization, elites sought informed voters and mechanisms for limiting social instabilities.

Yet countries made vastly different – and often surprising – policy choices in their crafting of early education systems (Benavot et al. 1991; Resnick 2006).

[1] I use the term "working class" to refer to both agricultural and industrial workers.

Despite having few natural resources and enserfed peasants, Denmark was one of the first countries in the world to develop a mass, public primary education system in 1814; in contrast, Britain delayed mass, public primary education until 1870, and working-class students received limited schooling before that time. Furthermore, when agricultural Denmark consolidated its secondary education system in 1903, the system included publicly funded vocational training programs for working-class students in addition to academic tracks for the college-bound. In contrast, with its 1902 Secondary Education Act, manufacturing Britain shifted all funding for vocational programs to a new, single-tiered, academic secondary education system that did little to cultivate technical skills.

British and Danish education systems were forged in the heat of political struggle (Moe and Wiborg 2017), but also by the light of particular cultural conceptions of education, society, class, and state. In Britain, schooling was intended to nurture individual self-development, initially for the upper and middle class; a classical, humanistic secondary-school curricula would offer a path to individual self-actualization. Paradoxically, many British reformers and authors cared deeply about inequality and they lobbied to extend education to the working class. Yet they believed that individual self-development for workers required access to the same knowledge available to elites and they fretted that vocational programs could become a dumping ground for the lower classes. Because they focused on individual rather than societal development, they thought less than their Danish counterparts about what the economy demanded in terms of vocational skills. Moreover, the state's role in the education project was contested sharply along partisan lines.

Danish policymakers acknowledged the moral and cognitive benefits of education for the individual; however, they also placed stock in building society and ensuring that every citizen (including workers and peasants) made a social and economic contribution to the collective good. To this end, they endorsed diverse educational tracks to meet varied societal needs for skills and believed that experiential learning, rather than set lessons, was a better way to teach nonacademic students. The state's role was readily accepted; yet policymakers respected the autonomy of communities and permitted extensive local experimentation with educational forms.

Although cultural conceptions about education seem relevant to British and Danish policy choices, the exact nature of that influence leaves perplexing questions. Where did these cultural frames come from? How were these frames transmitted across time and through shifting economic, political, and social circumstances? How did cultural perceptions interact with class struggle and other drivers of reform? How should we study cultural values from centuries past when empirical assessments of public opinion date back only to the twentieth century? Should we even attempt to formulate theories about these values on a national level, given that earlier generations of political scientists used unfounded claims about national values to assert the superiority

of American political institutions and to defend US political and economic interests (Huntington 1996)? Should we worry that national literary corpora were dominated by white men in centuries past, which is why contemporary scholars search for the alternative voices of women and people of color in constructing the wonderful cultural potpourri of nation-states (Bhabha 1990; Stratton and Ang 1994)?

CULTURE AND POLITICS

Education for All? explores these questions and develops a model to capture how fiction writers and their cultural artifacts matter to political and institutional change. The model includes a level of individual *agency*, which delves into impacts by activist authors in policy struggles, and a *structural* level that investigates the collective development of cultural narratives and symbols in a nation's literary corpora across generations. Armed with twenty-first-century sensibilities and techniques, I seek to uncover new insights about nation-level cultural assumptions and their influence on the development of mass systems of public education.

First, some fiction writers were important political *agents* in struggles over schooling, as they were part of the *avant-garde* within the chattering classes who put distressing social conditions on the political agenda well before policy reforms were taken up within channels of government. Joining political movements to advance education reforms, these poets (and novelists) of the revolution helped to forge new ideologies to win the hearts and minds of both elites and the masses. As spin-doctors in episodes of policy reform, they turned ideas into palatable bite-size pieces that were both compelling and easily digested by nonexperts. Their narratives contributed to what social scientists call "cognitive frames" or a set of assumptions about how the world works, and these helped other political actors develop their educational priorities. Fiction was a medium that was particularly well-suited to imbuing political issues with emotional salience, as one is moved by the suffering and triumphs of protagonists within novels. In contrast, scholarly essayists find it difficult to achieve this level of emotional connection. Some writers, such as Matthew Arnold, H.G. Wells, Ludvig Holberg, Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig, and Bernhard Severin Ingemann, also became leading activists in shaping education policy.

Yet the level of individual agency does not capture all literary influence. Fictional works vary in their impact and message, as some authors praise the powers that be whereas dissonant voices challenge the status quo. Activist authors must compete for influence with other agents; and political struggles among competing social groups have a powerful influence on educational outcomes. Different types of political systems also mattered to educational choices.

Therefore, we must consider a second *structural* level of literary cultural influence, which is referred to in this book as the "cultural constraint." The cultural constraint constitutes the body of cultural artifacts or touchstones

(symbols, narratives, labels, and mental maps) that appears in literature, accords the text with meaning, is specific to a nation and is passed down from one generation to the next (even as new works are added). This collectively generated repository of cultural touchstones provides a *structure* for cultural reproduction across centuries. Authors inherit cultural symbols and narratives from the literature produced by their ancestors; they rework these cultural tropes from an earlier age to address new challenges; and they pass along the cultural tropes to their literary descendants (Williams 1963). British and Danish writers repeat the master narratives of their countries over time; these narratives persist through critical junctures of education system development and echo across transformations in literary genre, economy, politics, and society.

At this aggregate level, we can see clearly how writers across the political spectrum in each country draw from a common pool of cultural tropes. These cultural touchstones are not deterministic and must be mobilized; yet, rather like institutional path dependencies, the cultural symbols and narratives embedded in fictional worlds preference nationally specific forms of political development. Thus, we may observe at the aggregate level of the cultural constraint some resonance between cross-national differences in literary images of schooling and distinctive choices in education system development.

Computational linguistic processes allow us to observe systematic, empirical differences between British and Danish cultural attitudes about education across over 1,000 works of fiction from 1700 to 1920. In doing so, we can assess whether specific cultural symbols and narratives are more plentiful in one nation's corpus of national literature than in the other nation's, while also tracing how other differences between the two countries have developed over time. Quantitative analyses reveal that British and Danish authors had starkly different understandings of education, the working class, and the state. For example, whereas British authors described schools as meeting individual goals, particularly for upper-class youth, Danish authors much more frequently referenced society and the working class in their depictions of education.

A close reading of some of these British and Danish fictional works allows us to probe more deeply into the cultural frames of each nation to validate the quantitative findings. For example, the enthusiasm for practical skills, as well as academic learning, appears in eighteenth-century Denmark, when Ludvig Holberg depicted diverse types of education as necessary to a well-ordered society. In his 1741 international best-seller, *Niels Klim's Journey under the Earth* (*Niels Klims Underjordiske Reise*), Holberg describes a utopian world called Potu in which schools enable each citizen to contribute to society by equipping them with the necessary skills: "students are employed in solving complicated and difficult questions...No one studies more than one science, and thus each gets a full knowledge of his peculiar subject" (Holberg 1845/1741, Loc. 491). Engagement in esoteric debates (e.g. counting angels on the head of a pin) – a stable of universities in the upper world – is tolerated in Potu only as an amusing spectacle, fit for the stage (Holberg 1845/1741, Loc. 310).

When Klim claims to have been an academic star at the university, his landlord replies that Klim's "diploma might be well enough in Copenhagen, where probably the shadow was regarded more than the substance: the bark more than the sap; but here, where the kernel was more important than aught else, it was of no use" (Loc. 333). In contrast, British writers largely celebrate academic learning, rather than practical skills, as the path for individual self-discovery; for instance, the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is transformed into a sentient being by reading books that awaken "an infinity of new images and feelings…a never-ending source of speculation and astonishment" (Shelley 2015/1818, 83).

British and Danish authors also talk about the working class in radically different ways, which carry important implications for each country's collective views on the role of education. Novelists in Victorian Britain were deeply attuned to the tribulations of the working class; however, they do not portray workers as essential to the nation-building project (Guy 1996; Childers 2001; Dzelzainis 2012). Even those Victorian authors who were most committed to a project of social reform and most sympathetic to workers class often rendered workers as an object of fear and suspicion, liable to devolve into a mob at any time. This was certainly the case in Charlotte Brontë's 1849 novel *Shirley*. According to Brontë, the Luddite mob "hated the machines which they believed took their bread from them; they hated the buildings which contained those machines; they hated the manufacturers who owned those buildings." The protagonist, Shirley, has sympathy for the workers' suffering but ultimately vows to resist their rampage (Brontë 1849/1907, 26–27). In contrast, priest and poet Grundtvig depicted peasants and workers as holding an important role in the cooperative societal project. Every person is important and Grundtvig (1832) famously seeks "Freedom for Loke as well as for Thor."

CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

These enduring cultural touchstones, passed down through the ages in the voices of men and women of letters, offer new insights into processes of institutional continuity and change. Relatively autonomous cultural touchstones in forms of art exist somewhat apart from the realm of the political, and these cultural touchstones are recursive and repeating. The transmission of nationally specific cultural touchstones manifest in the cultural literary heritage provides an analytically distinct mechanism from institutional or policy legacies and has bearing on national continuities in the adoption of new policies and institutions.

Thus, cultural symbols and narratives provide a source of continuity even at moments of acute institutional change. Repeating narratives help us to understand the persistence of nationally distinctive ideas about policy reforms, even when paradigm shifts radically transform our ideas about how the world works, and why the *sturm und drang* of pitched policy battles so frequently

results in oddly familiar outcomes (Blyth 2002, Ban 2016). Repeating narratives shed light on enduring ideas about social class, even through shifting power relations (Spillman 2012; Beckert and Bronk 2018). They explain why British elites so often view workers as part of the problem, while Danish elites more consistently consider workers as part of the solution. Repeating narratives reinforce the institutional channels and norms for political negotiation and these narratives reinforce characteristic approaches to problem solving even when the political institutions are themselves transformed (Scott 2001). They explain why issues that are bitterly contested in Britain (where conflict is expected by all parties) are easily negotiated in Denmark (where cooperation is the name of the game).

Granted, the process of reproduction is dynamic, the touchstones change in subtle ways over time, they are mobilized in specific policy struggles and they are not deterministic. By the end of the nineteenth century, education's institutional landscape is densely populated, and powerful interests develop incentives to preserve or to contest the status quo (Ansell and Lindvall 2013). Moreover, fiction writers play a significantly diminished role in contemporary political life, when they must compete for attention with political pundits from think tanks, talk-show hosts, singer-songwriters, comedians, and internet influencers, all striving to define problems according to their cultural and interest-bound world views. Yet, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers wielded remarkable cultural influence in the early origins of modern schooling and the cultural assumptions forged in earlier centuries continue to offer a source of continuity in processes of institutional change.

EDUCATING MARGINAL YOUTH IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The education chronicles from the nineteenth century continue to have meaning for contemporary school reforms. By the twentieth century, nations everywhere struggled to create universal public schools and moved toward greater convergence in their educational institutions (Benavot et al. 1991). Yet twentieth-century British and Danish education choices continued to resonate with nineteenth-century cultural attitudes about the purposes of schooling, views of the lower classes, and the role of government. Despite some attempts to expand vocational training, Britain continued to prioritize academic secondary programs and its limited vocational training programs continued to deliver few certified skills. Denmark expanded its range of secondary vocational education programs, and these elevated workforce skills and increased socioeconomic equality. Paradoxically the British unitary, humanistic secondary schools had received broad support from leftist intellectuals who worried that a two-tiered, class-based system of schooling would hurt the working class. Yet over the course of the twentieth century, countries with the highest levels of educational pluralism had the highest levels of socioeconomic equality and

the best track-record for educating marginally skilled youth; whereas those with more unitary secondary education systems had higher drop-out rates for low-skilled young people (Ryan 2001; Busemeyer 2015).

In recent decades, virtually all western nations have struggled to cope with the diverse educational needs of high-skill knowledge workers and the low-skill, often unemployed precariat. Toward the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, deindustrialization bifurcated work into increasingly segregated high- and low-skill jobs, and western nations confronted the diverse educational needs of both groups. Reformers in both Britain and Denmark strove to balance the goals of education: providing skills for students with a range of competencies while equalizing class disadvantages (Carstensen and Emmenegger 2023).

As British and Danish reformers address these competing aims of education, they seem influenced by the deep-seated cultural predispositions that have appeared in their countries' literature since at least the eighteenth century. British reformers have been leaders in adopting reforms aimed at equalizing educational opportunities among individuals – including national standards, uniform curricula, quality controls, and funding tied to students' test scores (Wolf 2011). Danish bureaucrats have remained more skeptical of these measures, because they fear that these reforms may ill serve societal skills needs. Moreover, they believe that while neoliberal reforms may well give some talented youth from low socioeconomic status backgrounds greater access to quality instruction, these reforms may also exacerbate the educational exclusion of children without strong academic competencies, who require different modes of instruction.

Tales from the nineteenth-century also have relevance for contemporary capacities for collective action, which seem more threatened than ever as cultural wars rock the political foundations for governance across the globe. Neoliberalism, the dominant political ideology for the past four decades, celebrates individualism and the meritocracy, even in this period of rising inequality and resonates with long-standing British cultural frames. Yet mass publics feel excluded from economic gains, unhappy with elite technocratic solutions and blamed by the meritocracy (Mijs 2019). Indeed, populist parties on the right have flourished by using images of traditional societies to attract their frustrated following (Norris and Ingelhart 2018).

Building new visions of society may be necessary for renewed collective action. Nordic cultural images historically were tools for engineering social and economic renewal. Cross-class harmony was rooted in conceptions of a strong society and this overarching commitment to society drove social investments and fortified impulses for cooperation. The incredible power of cultural images encourages us to articulate more clearly the role of cultural touchstones in political contestation and the images that bring people together across class, ethnic, racial, and religious cleavages. Otherwise, the fragmentation of collective identities may be the climate change equivalent of our social world, the biblical-proportioned flood that swamps our political institutions and chances for survival.

A ROADMAP TO THE BOOK

The following chapters present these arguments in greater detail. Chapter 1 explores cross-national differences in education systems and develops a theoretical model to explain how authors help to shape policy reform. Chapter 2 moves beyond the education case to think theoretically about the role of authors in long-term processes of institutional continuity and change. This chapter presents my theory about authors' role in developing national structures of cultural touchstones, how writers act collectively as purveyors of cultural symbols and narratives, and how they transmit these tropes from one generation to the next. Chapter 3 describes how Britain and Denmark began developing mass schooling systems in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Chapter 4 follows these reform efforts through the mid-nineteenth century, as Britain finally developed a public education system and Denmark expanded educational access to non-elites through a private school movement. Chapter 5 explores the creation of secondary education systems at the turn of the twentieth-century. Finally, chapter 6 concludes with a meditation on how cultural values continue to reverberate in struggles to balance efficiency and equality in contemporary education reforms.

1

Culture and the Politics of Comparative Education Policy

INTRODUCTION

Why do some countries form school systems that serve all the people, while others develop systems intended primarily for elites? In some countries, virtually all young students – rich and poor, academic powerhouses and those with nonacademic gifts, folks of different genders and races – can find a program that facilitates appropriate skill formation and pride in their own educational achievements. Other countries create education systems that work only for winners, such as single-track high schools, in which success is contingent on writing the best essay on "To Kill a Mockingbird." Do not get me wrong, Harper Lee wrote a wonderful book; but its reading in eighth grade does not necessarily produce the right skills for the future car mechanic, and this requirement may diminish the spark of curiosity that excites autodidacts.

Examining a country's cultural understanding of education can shed light on this question. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, various countries gravitated toward different cultural perceptions of schooling, and the dichotomy between education for academically minded and/or elite students versus education for all continues to reverberate in education policy today. Policymakers developed schools to support various political and economic projects, such as nation-building, industrialization, and democratization; in addition, conflicts among interest groups and the political institutions defining the rules of the game mattered significantly to how nations achieved their educational goals. Yet beliefs about the purpose of education – should the primary goal of schools be to develop individuals or to build a strong society – also informed choices about the provision of schooling for citizens across social classes. These beliefs, in turn, were influenced by fundamental, cultural assumptions about the role of the individual in society, the contributions of farmers and workers,

expectations of cooperation versus competition in political exchange, and the role of the state in policymaking.

Britain and Denmark offer a compelling illustration of these different cultural assumptions. In Britain, policymakers, intellectuals, and authors from various political persuasions viewed education as an essential tool for the cognitive development of the child and believed that a well-educated individual should master a prescribed curriculum to attain full selfhood. Granted, elites on the left and right disagreed about whether educational opportunities should be extended to agricultural and industrial workers. By the end of the nineteenth century, those on the left argued for equality of educational opportunity, while those on the right remained more skeptical about a state project for uplifting and enlightening the poor. Yet even many politicians and writers on the left worried that educating the working class could "contaminate" the nation's culture. In Denmark, elites also recognized the value of education for individual self-development, but unlike the British, both left and right viewed schools for farmers and workers as essential for a strong society. While Danish reformers also thought more about equality by the end of the nineteenth century, early educationalists were motivated by the older, deeper commitment to a strong society, and this distinguished Denmark from Britain (Korsgaard 2004; Sundberg 2004, 142).

Writers of fiction were political agents in the presentation and perpetuation of these cultural assumptions about education. Authors joined networks of *avant garde* political activists who put distressing social conditions on the political agenda and they fulfilled vital services in political movements to advance education reforms. Fiction writers were spin doctors who provided cognitive frames that influenced the construction of social problems and solutions. Writers popularized social issues with vivid, emotional language. In both countries, politicians, bureaucrats, and other activists associated education with the grand projects of nation-building, industrialization, and democratization; yet fiction writers helped to frame these great movements in nationally specific ways. A chorus of literary voices provided the soundtrack, inspiration, and subliminal messaging for campaigns supporting school development.

To understand the role of these authors as political activists, this chapter will explore three critical junctures of education development in Britain and Denmark: the emergence of public primary schools in Denmark and private, church schools for the middle and working classes in Britain in the early nineteenth century, the expansion of Danish schools and enactment of the British public elementary system in mid-century, and the creation of secondary education systems in both countries in the early twentieth century.

Choices about schooling by nineteenth-century policymakers had powerful implications for the expansion of access to industrial and agricultural working-class children. Early creators of mass, compulsory public schools (e.g., Denmark) brought non-elite students into school more quickly than laggards in education system development (e.g., Britain). Countries with strong

secondary vocational education imparted stronger skills to blue-collar workers than did nations with one-size-fits-all high schools. Experiential teaching methods held greater appeal for nonacademic children than did the rote memorization of facts and figures. Regulatory regimes that accorded control to communities, schools, teachers, and parents provided greater flexibility for instruction geared to the needs of specific populations than regimes with strong quality controls and uniform standards. The following pages tell the story of how British and Danish policymakers viewed education as a means of addressing various political and economic challenges and the role of authors in debates over schooling.

VARIETIES OF EDUCATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Most European countries developed mass public primary education systems (and subsequently secondary education) during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but these systems varied on five important dimensions. The dimensions include how *public* the education systems were, the degree of *access* they offered to all classes, programmatic *differentiation*, methods of *pedagogy*, and mechanisms for *oversight* (administration and regulatory control) (see Table 1.1; for discussions of classification schemes, see Archer 1979; Green 1990; Hopper 1968; Boli et al. 1985; Soysal and Strang 1989; Moe and Wiborg 2017, 5; Busemeyer et al. 2020).

First, the education systems varied in terms of how public they were. We can look to several characteristics to better understand this variance, including the timing of when countries first instituted public primary schools, the level of resources they were willing to commit to these new projects, and the proportional balance between public and private schools (Archer 1979). Prussia, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden were all on the forefront of efforts to establish mass schooling, creating public, compulsory primary schools with participation rates of over 50 percent by 1850. A few other European countries – including Greece, Spain, and Portugal – also developed public systems around the same time, but with lower attendance rates under 50 percent. Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, and Belgium were all laggards in creating public primary education (Soysal and Strang 1989, 278).

Britain and Denmark embodied these two extremes. Royal ordinances established Denmark's system of public primary schools in 1814; but these national ordinances followed on nearly twenty-five years of extensive school-building in the provinces, a project undertaken by a school commission set up by the king. Britain enacted a public, primary school system only in 1870; previously, the responsibility for schooling had been largely left to two private, church-affiliated societies (Evans 1985, 5).

Countries also varied on the amounts spent for public education and the degree to which private schools easily coexisted with public schools. For example, German primary schools were mostly public, while Britain and Denmark

TABLE 1.1 *Dimensions of British and Danish education systems*

Dimensions	Britain	Denmark
Public system		
*Timing	*Created in 1870	*Created in 1814
*Private component	*Voluntary church schools	*Evangelical rural schools
	Private elite grammar schools	State Latin schools, few private grammar schools
	Eliminated alternative schools except for church schools in 1870, much conflict	Little conflict over private schools, strengthened in 1855
Access by workers		
*Enrollments	*Enrollment rates were less than 50 percent in 1850	*Enrollment rates were greater than 50 percent in 1850
Differentiation		
*Class-based schools	*Different private school types	*Public fee for bourgeoisie and public free schools for workers
*Secondary VET?	*Unitary classical secondary track, no VET	*Multitrack secondary system, strong VET
Pedagogical methods		
	*Bell–Lancaster method	*Philanthropinist method But brief use of Bell–Lancaster
	*Set lessons, curriculum theory, rote memorization/ cramming	*Bigger emphasis on experiential learning, not rote memorization. Diverse instructional methods for students with different abilities
Administration and regulation		
*State role	*State role contested, much church/state conflict	*State accepted as legitimate, more limited church/state conflict
*Level of govern.	*Decentralized but contested, left sought centralization	*Decentralized control accepted, left accepted decentralization
*Degree of self-steering	*Assessment regime, standardized tests, quality control	*Local autonomy, few tests, quality through teacher training

both retained a large share of private schools. Yet the Danish government provided multiple tiers of public schools, including superior schools that charged tuition for the bourgeoisie and free schools for workers; and private schools were also available to a range of classes. In Britain, upper-class youth largely attended elite private schools, while lower-class students were largely relegated to state schools, and the politics of private schooling proved more contentious. British reformers on the left unsuccessfully sought to do away with private voluntary church schools when the primary education system was created in 1870, even as their (mostly Anglican) Tory opponents viewed church schools as a last line of defense against Dissenters, Radicals, and Whigs. In Denmark, National Liberal politicians were initially wary of the private evangelical school movement. But they became convinced that offering a choice between public and private schools was the best way to expand educational access in rural communities and passed legislation in 1855 permitting parents to control their children's education (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 66–7).

The second dimension on which Western countries differed concerned the degree of educational *access*. In 1850, Danish students constituted 21 percent of the overall population, whereas British students constituted only 12 percent (Green 1990, 4–15). By 1870, Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Prussia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States all had primary school enrollment rates of over 50 percent (Soysal and Strang 1989, 278). By 1895, Britain (with 55 percent) finally nearly caught up to Denmark (with nearly 60 percent) in the percentage of children aged 7–14 enrolled in primary schools (Flora and Alber 1983–1987).

Third, education systems varied on their degree of programmatic *differentiation*, or the number of diverse secondary education tracks serving students. Throughout the nineteenth century, most countries had dedicated primary schools that served citizens of diverse classes with different curricula. But as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, and as schools were used to address socioeconomic inequality, countries increasingly began to implement a regime of universal primary schools in which all students were expected to master a more uniform set of knowledge (Kliebard 1987, 4–10; Benavot et al. 1991).

At the secondary level, policymakers either created unitary schools with a uniform academic course of study (which were less likely to include working-class youth) or multitrack institutions that included a distinctive vocational training track (with higher rates of attendance by the working class). The English-speaking world, France, and southern Europe fell into the first category, while Nordic and German-speaking countries fell into the latter (Wiborg 2009; Powell and Solga 2010; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011; West and Nikolai 2013; Gift and Wibbels 2014). Thus, the British Secondary Education Act of 1902 created a unitary secondary education system and eliminated secondary vocational training on the grounds of encouraging meritocracy (Evans 1985, 9). Only in 1844 did Britain develop technical secondary education options; however, vocation education remained severely curtailed (Wiborg 2009, 11). In contrast, Denmark provided state funding for vocational training in 1892 and created multiple gymnasium tracks with the 1903 Secondary Education Act (Larsen et al. 2013; Peterson 1973; Glenn 2007).

Countries also offered differing curricula in their upper-secondary academic institutions, as we see with the British grammar school and the Danish gymnasium, both of which served the educational needs of academic youth. British (and American) educationalists were biased in favor of humanistic studies for upper-level students. In this vein, a report by the Yale faculty promoted a curriculum based on humanistic studies over scientific and practical subjects as necessary for human development, because these provided "the discipline and the furniture of the mind" (Kliebard 1987, 5). The British, public grammar schools created in 1902 offered a single humanistic program of study and severely limited the amount of instruction devoted to math and science (Eaglesham 1962, 156–7). Britain did not include any vocational courses for nonacademic students after the completion of lower-secondary education. In contrast, students in the Danish gymnasium, created in 1903, could choose from a variety of different programs of study, including classical studies, modern languages, and a math/science line. The 1903 act also created a "real class," a one-year course of post–lower-secondary schooling for those students going into a vocational education program or entering the workforce ("Lov om højere Almenskoler, April 24, 1903").

The fourth area in which countries' education systems differed was in the principles of *pedagogy* they adopted. Already by 1800, two competing theories of education had risen to prominence and were playing an important role in the expansion and differentiation of mass schooling: the monitorial approach and the "Philanthropinist" model. The monitorial approach, developed by Joseph Lancaster and Andrew Bell in Britain, became particularly popular in the Anglo countries, France, and southern Europe. The Bell–Lancaster approach emphasized rote memorization, stipulated that students should master a specific set of knowledge, and prescribed curricular content in the form of set lessons to this end (Cordner 2016). Educationalists in both countries specified diverse educational content for the various social classes until the twentieth century, when universal schools became more prevalent.

In contrast, the Philanthropinist approach to education initially derived inspiration in Denmark from schools formed by Johann Bernhard Basedow and Baron von Rochow (discussed below), and this approach became popular throughout northern Europe. The fundamental premise of the Philanthropinist theory was that students learn in different ways and that schools should adopt a model of experiential learning to nurture the capacities of students with "diverse intelligences" (to use the current terminology). Experiential methods of instruction would develop students' capacities for reasoning: Students were encouraged to explore the world and master only what they needed to know, rather than to memorize a specific set of

knowledge (Larsen et al. 2013, 50; Schleunes 1979, 329). Early discussions of education reform in Denmark were influenced by a blend of ideas drawing from Philanthropinist theory, new humanism, the works of Rousseau, and Kantian moralism. These theories shared ideas about child development (education should address the whole child), recognized the importance of experiential learning for self-directed discovery of knowledge, and embraced both scientific knowledge and humanistic insights (Bugge 1965, 25–33). The Danish king briefly endorsed the Bell–Lancaster monitorial method in the 1820s and 1830s; however, there was a subsequent backlash against this more mechanistic approach.

Finally, the last dimension on which countries' educational systems differed significantly was in their choice of various types of administrative structures and systems for *regulatory* control over education. Some countries, like Germany and Denmark, readily accepted a strong role for government and for social partners in education, whereas in others (such as Britain), the government's role was heavily contested (Green 1990; Clark 1983). Moreover, some countries concentrated regulatory authority within the national government, while others ceded that authority to decentralized units. France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Spain created systems of centralized control over education in the nineteenth century, while Anglo and Nordic countries placed control in the hands of local communities (Ansell and Lindvall 2013). Countries also devised sharply different methods of measuring students' progress and imposing accountability on school officials. Richardson (2022, 3–5) differentiates between "summative assessment" (which relies on easily quantifiable grades and standardized tests to appraise outcomes) and "formative assessment" (which uses teachers' reports and coursework product instead of exams to evaluate outcomes). Summative assessment meshes better with national level assessment regimes; formative assessment works better when quality assessments are left more informally in the hands of local officials, schools, and teachers. While Richardson's analysis pertains to contemporary assessment procedures, countries diverged in their use of summative and formative assessment mechanisms even in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth-century Britain and Denmark both opted to delegate significant authority over school management to local governments, though in Britain, the role of the state in developing a public education system was more contested. Yet over time, British policymakers developed national guidelines for curricula, assessment criteria, and quality controls, whereas Danish policymakers exerted much less control at the national level (Ydesen and Andreasen 2014). Robert Lowe's Revised Code of 1862 linked funding to students' performance on achievement tests, a move put into place by Margaret Thatcher's Education Act of 1988 (Lee 2019; Porter 1994, 425; Simmons 2008). Contemporary neoliberal education reformers believe that market competition among schools will enhance quality (Gingrich 2011), and Lowe anticipated much of this neoliberal thinking. In Denmark, control over curricula, testing, and quality remained in

the hands of local authorities, schools, and teachers throughout the nineteenth century (Ydesen and Andreasen 2014). The very concept of accountability has its roots in Anglo-Norman tradition and has no equivalent in that of Danish (Ydesen and Andreasen 2014, 3). In the twentieth century, Denmark would eventually develop more national regulations but even then, decisions about curricula continued to be largely left to local authorities, schools, and teachers (Kelly et al. 2018).

A TALE OF THREE MOVEMENTS

Now that we have explored the different ways that education systems differed from one another, we can return to the central question of this chapter, which is *why* countries chose these differing paths. Why did some countries develop systems of education for the upper and middle classes, particularly suitable for academically minded students, while others developed systems of education for all? To explore this question, we might begin by considering three great movements that drove the development of education systems: *nation-building*, *industrialization*, and *democratization*.

First, the development of mass primary education was often at the heart of *nation-building* or state-building projects, as political elites in pre-democratic regimes expanded schooling to inculcate a national culture and a shared set of values, to strengthen citizenship, to train soldiers, and to promulgate norms of obedience (Durkheim 1961; Boli et al. 1985; Soysal and Strang 1989; Green 1990; Benavot et al. 1991; Wiborg 2009; Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Paglayan 2020). Education was a core tool for legitimizing the state, validating the hegemony of the dominant social order, and preparing civil servants for the administrative bureaucracy (Green 1990, 77–9). As nations became more and more socially stratified, universal education provided a platform for socializing individuals from disparate class factions (Boli et al. 1985, 149–61; Benavot et al. 1991).

We can imagine that different countries' nation-building projects had different needs that contributed to variations among those countries' education systems. Countries facing boundary disputes, for example, had a particularly strong need for public schools to foster national language acquisition and cultivate patriotic soldiers (Tilly 1975; Darden and Mylonas 2016). Absolute monarchs in Prussia and Austria launched educational initiatives to shift power from feudal lords to the central state, train civil servants, and achieve social control (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Green 1990, 31; Wiborg 2009, 22).

In our case of Britain versus Denmark, nation-building may well have been a stronger motivation for developing an educational system in the latter. Danish rulers felt compelled to defend national boundaries, catch up economically, and promote Danish language and culture (Korsgaard 2004; Wiborg 2009; Nygaard 2009; Kaspersen 2020). Denmark was at war with Sweden for much of the period between 1523 and 1720, and Denmark

suffered serious setbacks when it lost both its fleet in 1807 and Norway in 1814 – making national security a high priority (Reeh 2016). Denmark's long dispute with the German states over the region of Schleswig-Holstein (which it eventually lost in 1864) reinforced the idea that public education could serve as a mechanism for cultivating a unifying sense of Danishness and consolidating territory (Korsgaard 2004). Although Denmark was initially much larger than it is today (and included the territory of present-day Norway, Iceland, and northern Germany), Danish rulers felt relegated to the periphery of Europe and sought education as a means of building economic strength (Sundberg 2004, 134).

Yet the relationship between nation-building goals and educational outcomes varies enormously across countries (Brockliss and Sheldon 2012), and nation-building alone cannot explain the distinctive Danish and British paths. Danish school-building began in the 1780s, before the Napoleonic war and acute conflicts over Schleswig-Holstein; indeed, the period between 1720 and 1801 was a period of stability not seen since the Middle Ages (Jespersen 2011, 19). Prussia, Saxony, and other states in the Holy Roman Empire (which became incorporated into modern Germany in 1871) developed educational systems similar to that of Denmark, yet they did so with different state forms.

Moreover, Britain had its own strong motivations for nation-building. British rulers faced significant obstacles in their efforts to unify the disparate parts of the kingdom and to reconcile their sharp linguistic and religious differences after 1701; in fact, national consolidation would remain a central preoccupation until 1837 (Colley 2005, 14). While Britain had fewer national security concerns than Denmark in the nineteenth century, such concerns were not entirely absent. While Britain was a victor in the Napoleonic war, the requisites of war-making could have put national education on the public agenda, just as British imperialists later saw merit in enhanced education for future soldiers (Fiduccia 1976). Politicians also faced internal disputes among the regions of the United Kingdom – think of the Irish question – and considered how education could be used to resolve these conflicts (Niessen 1984; Hamer 1972). Colley (2005, 8) suggests that British culture defined itself by fighting, which is different from Denmark's impulse for cooperation and coordination. Britain had a strong sense of mission in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with building empire, fighting Catholicism, and promoting Protestant ideology (Colley 2005, 54), and one could imagine that schools to cultivate soldiers and patriotism would be part of the British government's strategy for fighting the good fight. Green (1990) concludes that British liberal cultural values also restrained the state's role in driving education.

A second movement identified by scholars as driving the development of education systems across Europe was the process of *industrialization*, as schools were called upon to address the twin functions of social integration and skills (Durkheim 1961; Boli et al. 1985). As industrialization took off, more workers became involved in the manufacturing sectors, which required more complex skills than agricultural production, particularly in open economies with traded goods (Wilensky 2002; Ansell 2008; Hanushek and Woessmann 2015). A somewhat different industrializing argument has it that late-developing countries created national education systems to catch up to nations with more established industrial economies (Green 1990; Becker et al. 2011, 97). Some scholars also suggest that the variety of capitalism had bearing on skills training institutions, because countries with coordinated markets had higher needs for workforce skills than liberal market economies. Coordinated market economies were more likely to include strong vocational education in secondary school systems; liberal market economies tended to develop general education (Crouch 1993; Hall and Soskice 2001; Thelen 2004; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011; Anderson and Nijhuis 2011; Martin 2011; Hopper 1968, 32–4).

To some extent, arguments linking school-building to industrialization seem to fit with our cases. Because Denmark developed a coordinated market economy with a skilled workforce, it makes sense that the country developed strong and differentiated school programs for working class students. In contrast, Britain's delayed public primary school fit with its emergence as a liberal market economy with fewer specific skills for the working class. Yet the requisites of industrialization do not fully capture the timing of educational initiatives (Boli et al. 1985; Green 1990, 39, 47). British labor lost skills, in part, because workers were poorly educated due to delayed school development. The largely agricultural Denmark was a front-runner, even though guilds covered a very small part of the Danish labor force. Furthermore, the expansion of and political support for Danish vocational education happened in rural communities in the form of agricultural schools and folk high schools. Finally, high levels of labor market coordination (which foster social investments in education) are not closely associated with patterns of industrialization. For example, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden all had macro-corporatist industrial relations institutions but very different economic structures: The Netherlands was an historical frontrunner in commercial capitalist development, Sweden developed large industrial corporations, and Denmark developed small and medium-sized firms. The countries did, however, share historical cultural values placed on cooperation and skills (Martin et al. 2022).

Third, the creation of mass, public education has been associated with the process of *democratization*. As citizens became voters and were asked to weigh in on matters of national importance, they required a greater degree of knowledge about political choices than citizens in pre-democratic regimes. Additionally, with the expansion of voting rights, citizens found themselves better positioned to voice their demands for a more equal society and, thus, for a stronger system of education (Lindert 2004; Stasavage 2005; Green et al. 2006; Ansell 2008; Gift and Wibbels 2014). As workers sought education as a means to improve their own knowledge and power, elites responded with

programs to calm social instabilities (Bjerg et al. 1995, 31–2). Democratization was certainly an important motivation for the creation of primary education in Britain. Indeed, the 1870 British elementary education act was passed three years after the 1867 second reform act that greatly expanded voting rights. In Denmark, the powerful peasant movement drove school expansion in the nineteenth-century (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976).

Yet the relationship between democratization and the development of public education systems is complicated. Authoritarian regimes have their own reasons for creating mass education and cross-national comparisons suggest that democratization is tenuously connected to early school-building (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Paglayan 2020; Del Rio et al. 2023). Britain and Denmark constitute an odd juxtaposition of cases. Britain established a parliament in 1801, but Denmark was ruled by an absolute monarchy until it created a parliament in 1849. Yet mass primary schools developed under Danish absolutism long before the constitutional monarchy was established in 1849 and before the movements by farmers and workers to develop expanded schooling. Thus, the democratization narrative fits Britain better than Denmark (Archer 1979; Green 1990, 32).

NATIONAL RESPONSES TO FUNCTIONALIST IMPERATIVES

While projects of nation building, industrialization, and democratization undoubtedly motivated education reforms, policymakers across countries made different calculations about the role that schools could play (Archer 1979). For this reason, concerns about nation building, industrialization, and democratization did not automatically translate into specific educational policy choices. To fully understand those choices, then, we must look at other factors that shaped education policy as well.

A core argument of this book is that cultural views contributed to the development of the dimensions of education discussed above: the features of the *public system*, the degree of *access* offered to all classes, the different types of programs (*differentiation*) provided at the secondary level, *pedagogical methods* and mechanisms for administrative, *regulatory control*. Each country's distinctive cultural views of education, class, society and the state provided a backdrop for Britain's creation of schools primarily serving elites and the middle classes, versus Denmark's development of educational programs that also benefit the lower classes.

First, in collectivist Denmark, politicians developed an early, mass, *public education* system with a high level of educational *access* by workers in order to invest in society, nurture useful citizens, instill patriotism, build states, and recruit soldiers (Moos 2017; Wiborg 2009). In individualistic Britain, politicians did not view workers and farmers as societal resources (Harvey 2013), and they only developed a public primary system intended to serve all citizens

TABLE 1.2 *Cultural associations with dimensions of education systems*

Dimensions	Britain	Denmark
Public system (timing, spending)	*Goals of education*	*Goals of education*
*Individual	*Individualism – high	*Individualism – low
*Society	*Society – low but rise with democratization	*Society – high
Access by workers	*References to class*	*References to class*
*Enrollments	*Labor – low	*Labor – high
Differentiation	*References to skills*	*References to skills*
*Class-based schools	*Skills – low	*Skills – high and rises with industrialization
*Secondary VET?		
*Pedagogical variety		
Administration and Regulation	*References to State* (state role)	*References to State*
*State role	*State – low	*State – high
*Assessment, regulation, control	*References to assessment* *Regulation – high	*References to assessment* *Regulation – low

after the legislation of voting rights. Second, Danish educators embraced educational *differentiation* at the secondary level (with a strong vocational component) again with society in mind: Different jobs required different skills, and individual ambitions should be secondary to collective needs. British reformers on the left sought to mitigate stark class differences with a uniform secondary education track, and many rejected vocational programs to assure equality of educational opportunity for working-class youth. But they spent less time talking about collective, societal needs for skills. Third, with respect to preferences for *pedagogical instruction*, British educationalists endorsed humanistic studies and the mastery of a specific curriculum to further individual self-development. Danish educationalists favored experiential pedagogical approaches to prepare Danish children for diverse societal needs (Larsen et al. 2013, 52). Finally, individualist Britain developed *national regulations* to ensure the legal rights of children; collectivist Denmark allowed for local control to meet needs of diverse communities. Table 1.2 presents cultural associations with dimensions of education systems in Britain and Denmark.

These culturally informed choices created certain paradoxes as Britain and Denmark developed their education systems. In Britain, reformers on the left were passionately concerned about inequality, and their desire for equal educational opportunity helped shape the unitary secondary education system (Green 1990, 31). Yet, in choosing such a system, Britain also abandoned any commitment on the part of the state to vocational training, which, in turn,

contributed to the deskilling of the British working class. In Denmark, reformers also came to support universal education at the primary level by the end of the nineteenth-century; however, the additional concerns about societal skills helped to preserve a strong vocational education system and foster a highly skilled working class. The incorporation of a two-tiered secondary education system ultimately produced a highly skilled working class and higher levels of socioeconomic equality than in Britain. Decentralization and voluntarism were hallmarks of nineteenth-century education and private schools drove expansion of literacy in both countries. Yet nineteenth-century voluntarism limited educational commitments in Britain but expanded public support for education in Denmark (Green 1990, xi).

My argument about the role of cultural values is meant to be complementary to other arguments about the nation-specific drivers of education reform; specifically, government institutions, patterns of interest group conflict, and religious traditions were also crucial to education policy outcomes. First, consider how the nature of governmental institutions might shape educational initiatives. Nations with strong state institutions tended to build centralized public education initiatives with strong administrative controls earlier than their peers, and achieved disproportionately high rates of enrollment. Nations with weak governmental institutions tended to be later than their peers in developing public education systems and created more limited mechanisms for administrative oversight (Green 1990, 75). At the same time, federalist governments with their many centers of power offered more opportunities for reform activity and experimentation (Manna 2006, 14).

The absolute monarchy form of government has been associated with higher levels of social and educational investments. The monarch assumed responsibility for protecting the common good and paternalistic kings used education to foster social cohesion and protect their subjects (Damsholt 2000, 80; McDonagh 2015). In the twentieth-century, countries with strong left parties and proportional electoral rules (which encouraged cross-party alliances) were more likely to increase education spending (Boix 1997; Busemeyer 2009; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Ansell 2010; Gingrich 2011; Garritzmann 2016).[1] Countries with many veto points had greater difficulty implementing postwar school reforms against the objections of teachers' unions than those with few veto points (Moe and Wiborg 2017, 17). Unitary governmental systems were more likely to produce centralized school administration than federal systems (Archer 1979). Governmental institutions affected how international reform ideas were adopted in national vocational education (Trampusch 2009).

Small states (such as Denmark) had an easier time finding a consensus on education than large states like Britain (Katzenstein 1985; Graf and Gardin 2018). Yet Denmark was a middle-sized nation and a linguistic potpourri of

[1] Parties on the left may have stronger preferences for spending that is more redistributive than educational investments (Ansell 2010; Jensen 2011; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011, 418).

a country that included Norway (until 1814) and parts of northern Germany (until 1864) (Jespersen 2011, 3). While Denmark's linguistic diversity came under attack in the border skirmishes with Germany over Schleswig-Holstein in the mid-nineteenth century, cultural views toward education were already apparent in the eighteenth-century age of enlightenment.

Cultural values matter to the ways that institutions shape political outcomes and the same institutions often have different impacts in countries with varied cultural norms. Danish absolutism was completely different from the absolute monarchy in France; in particular, the absolute monarch in Denmark was governed by a dual duty to God *and* to the people and this worked against despotism (Damsholt 2000, 80; Jespersen 2011, 49). Similar political parties took divergent policy positions across countries; for example, the Danish liberal and social democratic parties cooperated more on education reforms than comparable British parties and this was partly due to different cultural assumptions by the parties in the two countries (Wiborg 2009). Because Britain had a weaker central government than Germany, it had more fragile national regulations (Green 1990, viii). Yet Denmark's strong state did not develop robust centralized control of education systems, because groups across the political spectrum strongly opposed centralized oversight. Moreover, cultural continuities have persisted within countries through shifts in the institutional landscape. A similar spirit of coordination was found in Denmark in the absolutism-era Chancellery, late nineteenth-century agricultural cooperatives, quasi private corporatist channels and modern national task forces (Martin and Swank 2012).

A second factor that influenced education reform debates was the competition between various interest groups in each nation.[2] Nations with strong labor movements, for example, frequently managed to secure high levels of education spending and social investment (Lindert 2004; Stasavage 2005; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Wiborg 2009; Ansell 2010; Gingrich 2011, 134; Busemeyer 2015; Solga 2014; Moe and Wiborg 2017). Workers with specific skills were more likely to demand social spending than workers with general skills (Cusack et al. 2006; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011, 427). In countries with strong encompassing employers' organizations, firms were more likely than those in weakly organized countries to support educational investments and well-developed vocational tracks relevant to industrial skills (Martin 2011; Boje and Fink 1990, 137–8). Teachers' unions became a powerful force in educational development, especially in the twentieth century, as teachers viewed schools as a source of jobs as well as human capital development (Moe and Wiborg 2017, 1). Denmark had a weaker nobility than Britain, where the public (i.e. private) grammar schools mirrored the deeply entrenched class system (Wiborg 2009, 49).

[2] Archer (1979, 3) suggests attention to the social origins of education systems that tell us not only who wins but looks at how badly the losers lost.

Yet we can again observe the way that cultural considerations creep into the expression of class and interests (Archer 1979; Gonon and Deissenger 2021). Comparable British and Danish groups held different policy preferences. Around 1800, Danish elites proactively sought education to develop peasants' skills to enhance agricultural productivity; whereas, British elites feared that education would increase mass insurrection, viewed the working class as a drain on the economy and rejected social supports as contributing to overpopulation. In the mid-1800s, Danish national liberal elites sought constitutionalism and some new political rights, but they were more concerned with the social and economic well-being of the people than with electoral expansion. British utilitarian reformers supported expanded political rights, and grounded their arguments on conceptions of individualism; however, they expressed Malthusian concerns about overpopulation in advancing social benefits. Workers in Britain and Denmark also held different preferences. Around 1900, Danish unions and the Left Party fully supported a strong secondary vocational education track to build workers' skills (Christiansen 1978). Many among British labor sought a unitary secondary education track, fearing that that vocational education would channel working-class children into inferior courses and would perpetuate class inequalities (Evans 1985, 11). Thus, expressions of class interests were tempered by cultural factors (Archer 1979, 3).

A third factor contributing to varied education policy choices was differences in religious traditions (Evans 1985, 1; Wiborg 2009; Petersen et al. 2010, 39; Cox 2001; van Oorschot et al. 2008). The Catholic church had provided human capital, models of administration and sources of legal thought since medieval times (Møller and Stavnskær Doucette 2022; Grzymala-Busse 2015, 2023). Pastors provided the earliest forms of local government administration in Denmark (Knudsen 2000; Knudsen and Rothstein 1994). Lutheran countries, with their weak church-state struggles, tended to be early educational innovators (Green 1990, 28; Kahl 2005; van Kersbergen and Manow 2009). Countries that developed early mass schooling had a state church and no sizable Catholic minorities (Soysal and Strang 1989; Ansell and Lindvall 2013).

Yet cultural values also seem to play a role in the evolution of diverse religious traditions. Countries responded in very different ways to the Protestant reformation and made diverse choices about the relationships between church and state. Britain and Denmark both adopted an Episcopal model, which included a strong role for a state church in nation-building. Yet despite doctrinal similarities, the relationship between church and state – as well as between the state church and dissenting sects – evolved very differently in the two countries (Nelsen and Guth 2015, 77–8). Both countries had a state church with strong dissenting sects, yet only in Britain did sharp religious cleavages over church schools delay public education. Danish religious leaders preached moderation and policymakers supported state funding for private, evangelical schools ("Danske Skolehistorie").

Public opinion is a final factor contributing to cross-national variations in contemporary education policy; and differences in opinion might well have driven nineteenth-century developments as well. When education becomes a salient issue for the public and the public holds a coherent position on school reform, party institutions and interest group conflict have less influence on educational choices than the powerful pressure of public opinion (Busemeyer et al. 2020). Attitudes toward redistribution shape views on educational subsidies for low-income students (Garritzmann 2016). People's views of the functions of vocational education matter enormously to their opinions about VET systems (Di Stasio and Solga 2017). If public opinion is often crucial to contemporary education reform cycles, it makes sense that it also played a role in the past; yet, assessing historical opinion presents daunting methodological obstacles, as surveys, polls and experimental design research produce data confined to recent decades. Therefore, this book explores alternative routes to understanding historical, culturally informed opinions about education policy.

Of course, cultural values, interest group cleavages, institutions, and religious beliefs undoubtedly coevolve and have a reciprocal influence on one another (Alesina and Giuliano 2015, 928; Macfarlane 1978). Cultural values illuminate why new ideas are interpreted in different ways, why class factions have such different preferences across the two countries, and why Brits are more distrustful of their political institutions than are Danish citizens. Cultural constructs predate the development of contemporary party systems, unions, and employers' associations, and the study of struggles in a single policy domain does not capture the unifying themes of culture that extend across policy areas. Yet, interests and institutions also have a feedback effect on further cultural development; for example, premodern institutions for governance reinforced regional tendencies toward cooperation and conflict (Putnam 1993).

ACTIVIST WRITERS AND CULTURAL WORK

Simply observing that culture plays a role in shaping education policy is not a particularly useful insight. Because of the complicated interaction of cultural values, interests, and institutions discussed above, it behooves us to consider precisely how cultural values are infused in specific education policy debates and how they reappear across time. I suggest a model to explain how cultural values are transmitted; namely, this happens through the *agency* of fiction writers and the *structure* of national cultural symbols and narratives found in literature. This chapter explores how literary authors as *agents* played a salient role in imbuing political challenges with a cultural perspective in episodes of education reform; Chapter 2 presents a theory of how authors' collective narratives transmitted the *structure* of cultural symbols and narratives over time.

Fiction writers participated in struggles over policy reform in several ways that reflected their cultural power. The first was by joining other intellectuals to put neglected issues on the political agenda. In pre-democratic regimes,

the general public – and even bourgeois intellectuals – had few avenues for making their concerns known. But these communities of writers and other intellectuals debated the grand issues of the day in salons and literature became a crucial medium for men and women of letters to debate issues, shape public consciousness and influence rulers (Keen 1999, 29–33; Williams 1963; Foucault 1981, 58; Znaniecki 1952, 26). The relative autonomy of fiction writers allowed authors to serve functions associated with nation-building, legitimizing governance structures and reproducing class structures (Bourdieu 1991, 655; Williams 1963).

Even in the nineteenth century, as parliamentary mechanisms for policy-making developed in Denmark and matured in Britain, authors such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Benjamin Disraeli, Johan Ludvig Heiberg and Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig viewed political channels as limited in their capacities to cope with social challenges. Therefore, authors continued to use their work to influence specific political debates. British writers addressed issues such as poverty to which politicians paid scant attention with stories about women and children suffering from social degradation at the hands of drunken, destitute men, and they led cultural campaigns to nurture the charitable impulse in the upper and middle classes (Poovey 1995, 57; Guy 1996; Childers 2001; Dzelzainis 2012).

To have an impact, fiction needs readers, at least among the political class, and evidence suggests that a mass audience for fiction certainly existed by the mid-1800s. British elites feared the effects of rising literacy among the common man after the Glorious Revolution (Altick 1954, 4–6, 30–1; Feather 1988, 90–1; Watt 2000, 36, 47). Then, as commercial capitalism fueled the expansion of a new, literate middle-class audience for fiction, authors gained more influence (Watt 2000, 12–21, 60). Advanced printing technologies facilitated the proliferation of books, and helped to make inexpensive classics more accessible to the middle classes (Keen 1999, 4). Sales of books soared after 1774, when the publisher John Bell began printing books on coarse paper, creating a cheaper product that was more accessible to the masses (Altick 1954, 54). Writers became so influential that in 1789, Pitt expanded the stamp act on newspaper rentals to limit reading by potentially rebellious middle-class consumers (Keen 1999, 37). By the 1850s, the reading public encompassed between 5 and 6 million people (Altick 1954, 4–6). Dickens's publishers had sold 4,239,000 works by 1882 in England alone (Altick 1957, 384). Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* sold 20,000 copies in the first three months (Altick 1986, 238).

A second way that fiction writers participated in shaping policy reform was by using their artistic works to frame or to ascribe specific meaning to economic, social, and political problems and their solutions (Wedeen 2002, 713). Narratives provide cognitive frames and this gives authors a special power to influence individuals' beliefs about the causes of problems such as poverty and beliefs about social mobility (Lamont 2000; Lamont and Small 2008, 83–4; Poovey 1995; Carney 2017; Childers 2001). Narratives are crucial

to the development of imaginaries that organize economic action, because "fictional expectations" rather than "rational expectations" critically determine action under conditions of uncertainty (Beckert and Bronk 2018, 4; Fourcade 2011). Cultural tools matter to political processes when they help to solve a puzzle, and they are available, forceful, and institutionally supported (McDonnell et al. 2017; Schudson 1989, 160). The shifting cultural interpretation of the Holocaust helped to develop new forms of regulatory control (Alexander 2003, 31). Of particular interest to us is the way that authors create frames that influence how people think about the basic goals of education: to benefit individuals or to serve the broader society. Matthew Arnold has in mind education to facilitate individual self-development when he writes that the "grand aim of education" for the middle class is "largeness of soul and personal dignity"; culture brings to the lower classes "feeling, gentleness, humanity" (Kuhn 1971, 53).

A third way that authors influenced policy debates was by using fiction to make powerful emotional appeals that elevate the salience of political issues (Swidler 1986). For British political economists, individual self-interest drove social processes and fiction writers explored these themes with an intimacy unavailable to philosophers (Gallagher 2006, 10–12). Beginning with his work on the Poor Law Commission, James Kay (Shuttleworth) described poverty as a social disorder resulting from a disorganized culture (Kay-Shuttleworth 1832). Elizabeth Gaskell gave his ideas emotional power with her best-seller, *Mary Barton* (2011/1848). Gaskell believed that it was the role of thinkers like Kay-Shuttleworth and Thomas Carlyle to research objective conditions, while her own role was to teach people sympathy rather than political economy by recasting their ideas through fiction (Pollard 1965, 34–41). Dickens anticipated that *A Christmas Carol* would have "twenty thousand time the force" of a pamphlet on child labor laws (Henderson 2000, 140–3). Benjamin Disraeli explained that he wrote *Sybil* (1844) as a follow-up to nonfictional work calling attention to dysfunctional party politics and to the troubles of the working man (Disraeli 2020/1845, 454). In the United States, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* did not cause the Civil War yet it fanned the outcry against slavery (Guy 1996, 11).

A fourth way that activist writers exercised their influence was by participating in coalitions with political allies to win policy battles; within these coalitions, fiction writers specialized in using cultural touchstones to popularize esoteric policy ideas among the wider public (Poovey 1995, 15; Keen 1999, 2). Because fiction writers often appear to be one step removed from politics and therefore somewhat neutral, they can help to legitimize policy proposals. Indeed, eighteenth-century members of the "state nobility" increasingly derived their legitimacy from cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991, 655; Spillman and Faeges 2005). In this regard, Herman Bang in *Tine* credits, blames and implicitly recognizes the role of the old poets who with patriotic words brought Denmark to the disastrous 1864 war: "It is the poets who have filled

us with fresh visions and heralded the new age…it is his visions that have carried us to this day…even if they were only illusions…his is the responsibility" (Bang 1984/1889, 48).

Some writers publicly worked with political parties and movements, served in Parliament, and openly participated in networks with political leaders (Carney 2017). Danish enlightenment-era author Ludvig Holberg, for example, helped to revitalize the Sorø Academy, an important school for educating future statesmen, and used the Academy to alter the course of education in Denmark. The Danish poet and priest, NFS Grundtvig, helped to draft the 1849 constitution and inspired the people's high school movement (Martin 2018). Other writers hid behind their art, claiming political neutrality; this perhaps contributed to the relative lack of attention to their role in political change within the political science profession. In Britain, Arnold reviewed drafts of his brother-in-law's Education Act of 1870 (establishing British mass education) and lobbied extensively for his view of education reform both behind the scenes and with his public essays and fiction; yet Arnold publicly demurred when asked to take explicitly political positions. As he wrote to his mother on October 17, 1871, "things in England being what they are, I am glad to work indirectly by literature rather than directly by politics" (Arnold 1900, 7vc7). Hardy argued for necessary political neutrality in a letter to Robert Pearce Edgcumbe on April 23, 1891: "the pursuit of what people are pleased to call Art so as to win unbiassed attention to it as such, absolutely forbids political action." Coleridge vigorously participated in the Tory, Anglican school-building effort, yet he wrote to Beaumont in December 1811, "I detest writing Politics, even on the right side" (Coleridge 1956, 352).

Some caveats are in order. Most importantly, authors and their narratives were themselves subject to control by the powers that be, as power relations permeated the production of books. Publishers, the state and other elites had the means to promote or suppress literary voices, and while the barriers to publishing were lower in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, publishers gave a platform to chosen authors (Altick 1986). Powerful actors and institutions (such as markets, laws, industrial structures) controlled what commentary was printed, what texts were published and who was allowed to engage in discourse (Foucault 1981, 52–6; Peterson and Anand 2004). Fiction may have inspired social activism, but social movements also brought authors to attempt new genres of fiction (Isaac 2009). Authors themselves experienced an essential antagonism between their autonomy (based on their relative autonomous worlds of the ivory tower) and their political engagement (Bourdieu 1991, 658).

Moreover, individual authors chose either to reinforce or to challenge elite power structures, and assessing writers' influence presents a challenge when they supported opposing sides of a debate. Groups and diverse fields competed over the formation of national identities and offered diverse national myths to claim legitimate political authority (Poovey 1995, 15; Keen 1999, 2). Some authors legitimized coercive institutions, as when their stories held

victims responsible for structural failings or when bildungsroman conveyed cultural norms of appropriateness (Apol 2000, 62). Yet others challenged dominant power relations, by drawing attention to the contradictions and cognitive dissonance inherent in governing institutions (Claybaugh 2003–2004, 45–6). Tensions also divided generations. Romantic writers held the poets of the French revolution in contempt for the terror associated with the so-called age of reason; and Romantics harkened back to religious and emotional themes. Romantics, in turn, lost favor with the failure of progressive reform after 1848 (Bourdieu 1991, 657). Modernists across Europe rebelled against the social norms of the prior age: They challenged organized religion, and in some countries such as France, they protested patriotism and nationalism (Bourdieu 1991, 658).

Yet despite political and generational cleavages among authors, common threads often brought together opposing sides. Both political camps in Britain at the dawn of the nineteenth century agreed that society was an amalgamation of individuals. British radical utilitarian thinkers – against the protests of their conservative countrymen – fought for the rights of individual workers; in contrast, Edmund Burke resolutely rejected individual rights and viewed the French Revolution as an assault on traditional British culture. But he also considered the historical construction of a people to be a "wholly artificial" construction entered into by individuals forming the social contract (Williams 1963, 9). Burke and William Cobbett, were at opposite ends of the political spectrum, but both attacked industrialization (Williams 1963, 3). Later, British authors on the left and right worried about the culture of poverty.

If authors systematically came from different class backgrounds in Britain and Denmark, this could also contribute to cross-national differences in the cultural expressions of the literary world. For example, if Danish writers could more easily develop within the agricultural and industrial classes than British writers, we might expect Danish authors to be more supportive of education for workers. Yet, writers from both countries largely came from the bourgeois class until the late nineteenth century, although Charles Dickens and Hans Christian Andersen were obvious exceptions to this general rule. In mid-nineteenth century Britain, working class journalists and some fiction writers sought to challenge the cultural hegemony of the middle class by disseminating their ideas through periodicals. The autodidact movement provided an enthusiastic audience for their products (Murphy 1994, 7–31). But many of those who most prominently championed the working class came from the bourgeoisie; for example, Percy Shelley was educated at Eton and expelled from Oxford. Novelists had close links to their publishers in the nineteenth-century and this tended to reinforce the hegemony of the middle class (Feather 1988). In Denmark, a working-class literature developed only at the end of the nineteenth century with the appearance of Martin Andersen Nexø, Jeppe Aakjær, and Johan Skjoldborg (Lund 2020, 51, 56).

Finally, fiction writers undoubtedly wielded greater influence in the early days of education expansion, before political institutions and interest groups were fully established. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, trends toward mass education accelerated as economic and political globalization took off, and these likely reduced cross-country differences in authors' depictions of education. With time, writers also became more supportive of mass education, and this was particularly true in Britain, where authors once divided by diverse political perspectives came to share views about the powerful social and political forces driving educational expansion.

This model for understanding how education systems developed suggests that cultural frames provided context for struggles among social actors. Movements of nation-building, industrialization and democratization broadly inspired expansion of schooling. The western world experienced periods of individualism/liberalism (such as the mid nineteenth century and the late twentieth century) and collectivism/coordination (such as the late nineteenth century and period after the second world war). Changing paradigms in education policy set off new trajectories, and coalitions of authors, politicians, and other agents competed to advance their preferred solutions to educational problems. Dynamics of political contestation, labor power, business organization and party politics all contribute to educational outcomes. Yet beneath these very real power struggles, cultural frames, marshalled by activist authors, slyly informed the articulation of interests and the interpretation of ideas. These frames persisted even through periods of individualism and collectivism, and they had a bearing on the fault lines of contestation.

AUTHORS IN POLICYMAKING EPISODES

The following section of this chapter will explore how writers engaged in reform episodes as political agents and how they used cultural tropes to advance specific educational solutions to pressing economic, political and social problems. Danish and British writers were active at three critical junctures in the development of education systems: the establishment of initial primary schools in the early nineteenth century, the expansion of primary schools in the mid-nineteenth century and the enactment of secondary schooling in the early twentieth century. In each case, challenges associated with nation-building, industrialization and/or democratization broadly inspired educational initiatives. New ideas about education often precipitated reforms in both countries; however, these reforms were picked up in somewhat different ways. Networks of authors and intellectuals advanced specific approaches, lobbied for change with political allies, popularized educational appeals, and helped to unite other social actors from diverse class fractions around educational strategies. These cases are developed at much greater length in Chapters 3 to 5. Chapter 2 also reports quantitative findings showing us that British and Danish authors collectively depicted education in nationally distinctive ways and suggest that these provided broad context for education policy choices.

Primary Schools in Denmark, 1720–1820

Mass education became a project in both Denmark and Britain around 1800, and both countries made choices about expanded educational access (to workers and farmers), pedagogical methods for instruction and the role of the state. Denmark developed a national school system in 1814 with a series of Royal proclamations that required seven years of compulsory education. For example, the Proclamation for Common Schools in the countryside of July 29, 1814 (Anordning for Almue-Skolevæsenet paa Landet i Danmark 1814) was designed to serve children outside of the capital city, while Copenhagen had its own ordinance. The push for mass public education began in earnest after the crown prince and progressive estate owners staged a bloodless coup in 1784, removing the mentally ill king from the throne. The progressive estate owners who were involved in the coup played important leadership roles in the new regime: They included among others Andreas Peter Bernstorff (President of the Danish Chancellory, in effect prime minister, and minister of foreign affairs), Christian Ditlev Reventlow (who also became prime minister), Christian's brother Johan Ludvig Reventlow (leading educationalist and supporter of land reform), and Ernst Schimmelmann (minister of finance). The new rulers immediately created commissions for land, education, and poverty reforms that produced far-reaching social experiments. The Great School Commission launched a massive school-building campaign across the country that culminated twenty-five years later in the 1814 act creating a national system (Christiansen et al. 2010).

The journey toward mass education, however, was marked by political struggle. First, while educating agricultural and industrial working-class children was more widely accepted in Denmark than in Britain, conservative and progressive forces had different motivations for expanding *access* to schools. Military ambitions and religious duty had driven the crown's development of rider schools in 1721 and a royal decree for mandatory schooling in 1739 (reversed in 174), and these concerns continued to motivate conservatives to support education reforms at century's end (Reeh and Larsen 2015, 42–3). But the progressive civil servants who helped to engineer a coup and played a leadership role in the new regime supported education for additional social and economic reasons. The progressive reformers sought land reforms to improve agricultural productivity and believed that expanded mass primary schooling was key to obtaining peasants' participation in this growth strategy (Holm 1900, 33–40; Lundgreen-Nielsen no date; Larsen et al. 2013). Education would enhance the collective good and contribute to the nation-building project (Sundberg 2004, 141–6; Markussen 2014). Both conservatives and progressives wished to prevent revolutionary unrest of the French ilk, and even those amenable to the objectives of the French revolution were also sympathetic to the Danish monarchy (Damsholt 2000, 96).

Second, factions held to different views of the content and *pedagogical* methods for educational instruction. The reform faction supported the new

Philanthropinist pedagogical ideas promulgated by Basedow and Rochow that endorsed experience-based education rather than rote learning; in contrast, some conservative voices continued to favor the memorization of religious tenets. The reformers faction wanted to create happy and useful citizens; to this end, education should encompass courses on history, mathematics and natural sciences in addition to religious instruction, and schooling should combine the practical with the theoretical. In contrast, Bishop Balle sought to scale back the expanded curriculum and to focus instruction instead on religious topics and on practical methods for agriculture (Larsen et al. 2013, 75–86).

Third, the role of the state was more settled in Denmark, an absolute monarchy, than in Britain; yet conflict remained. Within the commission, the Reventlow brothers and their allies wanted national education experts to administer the new school system; however, the more conservative Bishop Balle wanted the church to retain control and to keep school oversight fixed at the local level (Larsen et al. 2013, 83; Reeh 2016, Loc 2846). Moreover, commission members began the march toward a national system by encouraging school-building within local communities and commissioners had to persuade conservative estate owners to engage in the school-building effort (Bobe 1895–1931, XLIV; Larsen et al. 2013, 84–8). Both farmers and conservative estate owners did not want education to interfere with peasant children's work (Larsen et al. 2013, 84–8).

Writers contributed both to the conceptual framework of mass schooling and to securing support for the education project. Most importantly, Ludvig Holberg's writings in the mid-1700 were an inspiration to the later generation of enlightenment reformers such as Johann Bernhard Basedow, who taught at the Sorø Academy before moving to start his school in what is now northern Germany. Holberg offered vivid representations of the importance of education to society, emphasizing the positive contributions of workers, the importance of social investments and the necessity of state leadership. Additionally, Holberg institutionalized his educational ideas by his bequeathing his fortune to the Sorø Academy and encouraging the academy to instruct with his methods, such as teaching in Danish and encouraging the study of history, literature, and old Nordic myths. Sorø hired Holberg's former students such as Jens Schielderup Sneedorff (professor of law and politics and later tutor to the crown prince), who wrote that peasants should be honored members of society, and Andreas Schytte, who sought peasant education for the sake of the common good (Plesner 1930, 20–8).

Sneedorff (professor of law and politics) was the most important transmitter of Holberg's ideas at the academy and trained young nobility to be political leaders or civil servants for the fatherland (Plesner 1930, 115–6, 20–8). Like Holberg, Sneedorff passionately argued for peasants and a conception of individual freedom that instilled in all the right and duty to participate in society. Sneedorff had a major impact on the thinking of Count Johann Hartvig Ernst von Bernstorff, the minister of foreign affairs, uncle of reforming politician Andreas Peter Bernstorff and a leader in land reform on his own estate. Sneedorff also influenced the educational thinking of Johann Bernhard Basedow (a close friend, fellow teacher at Sorø, and husband of Sneedorff's cousin). Basedow transported the Sorø educational ideas from Holberg and Sneedorff to Germany, where he started the earliest alternative school (Plesner 1930, 32–3, 81). The academy educated estate owners, such as Christian Ditlev and Johan Ludvig Reventlow, who reported being deeply influenced by their training at the Sorø Academy (Bobe 1895–1931, I, xxx–xxxi; II, i) and who would go on to head the Poverty, Education, and School commissions set up in the 1780s (Larsen et al. 2013, 54–69).

Later romantic writers contributed to education reform and other nation-building projects by providing crucial support to the postcoup government. They gathered at the Drejer's Klub in Copenhagen to discuss the reform agenda and formed the Society for Future Generations (which included civil servants) to nurture citizenship and disseminate useful knowledge. When conservative estate owners from Jutland mobilized to oppose reforms, writers intervened with a war of words in *Minerva* and other venues to ardently support the new regime and the end of serfdom (Bokkenheuser 1903, 24–5, 116–8, 177–82).

Thus, authors were deeply involved with debates over education and more broadly in the nation-building project to construct a modern Denmark. Holberg inspired new ideas about education and funded an academy to use experimental methods; later romantic writers participated in coalitions with civil servants leading the reform efforts. While the 1814 royal proclamation scaled back many progressive elements of the education agenda, the progressive reformers and their literary allies left a legacy for future generations: to view the (largely agricultural) working class as a partner in society and to cultivate useful citizens with both practical skills and humanistic knowledge.

The Great School Commission was deeply influenced by these ideas, although divisions between progressives and conservatives grew sharper when an economic and military crisis broke out in the country after 1800. Denmark joined the wrong side of the Napoleonic war, saw its fleet destroyed by British, and finally declared bankruptcy in 1813. Consequently, the 1814 royal proclamations emphasized religious instruction and practical methods for agriculture more than the expanded educational program favored by enlightenment progressives (Larsen et al. 2013, 75–86; Reeh 2016). Yet the themes of the enlightenment would resurface and continue to influence educational thought throughout the nineteenth century.

Primary Schools in Britain, 1720–1820

The British government failed to develop a public mass education system during this period; however, two charitable societies built primary schools for the middle- and some lower-class children. Radicals and Dissenters formed

the British and Foreign School Society in 1808 to support a network of monitorial schools inspired by Joseph Lancaster. Then, in 1811, the Anglicans formed the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor to build schools embracing Andrew Bell's monitorial school model. Few of the figures involved in these efforts had any interest in a state system of primary education (National Society 1812; Doheny 1991; Kaestle 1973).

As in Denmark, British policymakers, writers, and other intellectuals debated questions of how much access workers and farmers should have to education, what pedagogical methods should be used for instruction, and what role the state should play. Significantly more disagreement about working-class *access* to education existed in Britain than in Denmark. British elites were intensely worried about economic and political instability, as the French Revolution raged across the English Channel. Yet Tories (largely from the Anglican landed gentry), Whigs, and Radicals (more frequently drawing from urban commercial interests) often disagreed about how best to resolve social instability. Radicals such as Thomas Paine and Thomas Holcroft (novelist and publisher) believed that workers had a human right to education. Many Tories and Whigs feared that education would only give rise to revolutionary impulses among workers (Brantlinger 1998; Parille 2011, 25). This skepticism was reinforced by the writings of Thomas Malthus (1809/1797), who argued that giving resources to the poor would simply lead to overpopulation. Religious devotees such as children's book writer Sarah Trimmer saw education as a means of saving children's souls to bind them to the Anglican Church.

On issues of *pedagogy*, there was broad support for the Bell–Lancaster method and the versions of monitorial teaching by Bell and Lancaster were quite similar: both used an instructional pedagogy that followed a specific curriculum and asked that students engage in rote memorization to master this curriculum (Kaestle 1973; Foakes 1989, 197–204). But the National Society (associated with Bell) and British and Foreign Society (associated with Lancaster) disagreed vehemently about whether Bell or Lancaster was the true architect of the monitorial method. During this period, there was also substantial agreement that the church societies rather than the *state* should take responsibility for education, and only Radicals on the left favored a national system. Schools became a weapon in religious wars for the souls of the poor, and neither the mainstream Anglican Church nor Dissenting sects were willing to cede this instrument for religious victory to government (Pachori 1983).

Writers provided a cultural lens to frame the educational debates. They touted education as a boon to individual self-development among the upper and middle classes and they helped to neutralize fears of working-class literacy by depicting education's contribution to social stability. Yet all but some Radical writers questioned the advantages of a public system (Stone 1969).

Authors also participated in the educational societies' school-building drive; indeed, Coleridge's Royal Institution speech in 1808 was a galvanizing force around poor people's education (Pachori 1983, 26–31). Both Coleridge and Wordsworth had insider connections to the National Society, as Coleridge's brother, George, and Wordsworth's brother, Christopher, were both vice-presidents of the society (National Society 1812, 95–162). Coleridge favored romantic notions of individual self-discovery in upper-class education, but he thought that the Bell system would work well for lower-class children (Pachori 1983, 26–34). Wordsworth sought learning for the middle-classes, was more pessimistic than Coleridge about also educating the poor and campaigned tirelessly against a national education system (Wordsworth/Knight 1907, 180). Trimmer was another great proponent of the Anglican schools, although she died before the formation of the National Society (Dunn 1848, 47).

Some Radical and Whig writers – such as philosopher Jeremy Bentham and the poet and Radical politician Lord Byron – endorsed the British and Foreign School Society, although their role was more muted than that of authors supporting the National Society (Bentham 1818, 53; British and Foreign School Society 1814). Bentham was impressed by the efficiency of the Lancaster method (Bentham 1818, 53). Lord Byron (poet and Radical politician) was on the board of the British and Foreign School Society (British and Foreign School Society 1814). Byron also favored education as essential for self-development; in *Don Juan*, he ridiculed Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, who focused instruction narrowly on religious themes (Byron 2007/1819–1824).

To summarize, Danish progressive and conservative factions largely agreed on the importance of educating young people of all classes and on the role for the state in schooling. British elites, on the other hand, were much more divided over the appropriateness of working-class education and over the legitimate role for the state. Danish authors helped to build support by celebrating worker education, and casting it as essential to a strong society. While some British authors on the left supported education for workers as a human right, writers largely remained unconvinced that extensive working-class education would be a boon to society.

Expansion of Primary Schools in Denmark, 1820–1870

In the mid-nineteenth century, both Denmark and Britain expanded mass education, and politicians, fiction writers, and other intellectuals in both countries pondered questions about educational access for the lower classes, pedagogical methods, and the role of the state. In Denmark, the king promoted a monitorial system of instruction shortly after the 1814 proclamations. Yet subsequent widespread dissatisfaction with Bell–Lancaster prompted a private school-building movement and renewed enthusiasm for experimental learning methods. The Danish Law on School Freedom of 1855 (Friskoleloven af 1855) gave parents the right to develop their own schools and to organize instruction around local needs for child labor. Another school reform in 1856 made administrative changes that enhanced local power over the evaluation and assessment of state schools, funded agricultural schools and improved

teachers' salaries. An 1855 reform expanded the curricula of the Latin Schools from their sole focus on classical languages to include tracks studying modern languages and mathematics (Skovmand 1944, 124, 112–13; Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 125).

Fiction writers joined in political struggles over the path to education reform both by framing the debate and by participating directly in political encounters. Two groups of writers and intellectuals were particularly noteworthy. One influential group of novelists, playwrights, poets and other intellectuals coalesced in Copenhagen around National Liberal political ideas and the playwright Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Heiberg was the director of the Royal Danish Theatre, a prominent National Liberal activist and an editor of the *Monthly Journal for Literature* (*Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*) (Larsen 2006, 29). This group included such figures as the novelist Thomasina Gyllembourg and the poet Henrik Hertz. Another group consisted of authors (from the provinces) associated with priest and poet NFS Grundtvig, novelist Bernhard Severin Ingemann, novelist Steen Steensen Blicher and novelist/fairy-tale author Hans Christian Andersen. They belonged to the new romanticism school and embraced educational realism.

Policymakers, writers and other intellectuals engaged in debates about access, pedagogy and state control during this period of state expansion. There continued to be broad support for expanding *access* to education by lower-class children; however, the reasons for this commitment varied. King Frederik VI (who moved to the right over time) was increasingly alarmed about national security threats after the Napoleonic War and viewed the robust implementation of the new mass school system as essential to getting farmers and workers to rally to the defense of the realm (Reeh 2016). In contrast, both the National Liberal and Grundtvigian factions of writers and other intellectuals largely regarded mass education as crucial to "dannelse," a Danish term that may roughly be translated as "cultural formation." Both camps imagined an organic society that transcended individuals and rejected any conception of education that did not place central importance on the historical life of the people (Nygaard 2009, 93–6; Larsen 2006, 98).[3] Heiberg advocated for elite-led cultural formation and Grundtvigt favored a bottom up approach; but no one argued that the cultural formation of the working class would detract from Danish culture, as was the case in Britain. Some National Liberals also argued for education to be an individual right, although rights-based arguments were less popular in Denmark than in Britain (Kålund-Jørgensen 1953–1956, 453).

Despite the widespread enthusiasm for expanded access, policymakers and educationalists disputed the best *pedagogical* practices. King Frederick VI and his allies determined that the monitorial system ("Den indbyrdes Underviisningsmethode") would cultivate obedience and discipline, qualities needed for military purposes; they rejected the older enlightenment-inspired methods favored by Basedow and the Reventlow brothers (Reeh and Larsen 2015, 41–6). The rigid methods of Bell–Lancaster, meanwhile, sat uneasily with many writers and other intellectuals, who worried that the new techniques would destroy students' capacities for independent learning and would fail to provide for dannelse (Bugge 1965; Reeh and Larsen 2015, 49). Grundtvig and Ingemann promoted the idea of a secondary "real school" at the Sorø Academy to teach Danish language, history, sciences, mathematics and practical skills. It was hoped that such a program of instruction would cultivate a strong sense of society among youth (Hørby 1967, 76).

[3] Dannelse is similar to the German conception of "Bildung," but whereas Bildung has more to do with forming the individual, Dannelse also refers to evolving collective society.

Finally, questions about the *role of the state* in education became salient in the wake of the failed monitorial system experiment. Dissatisfaction with the methods endorsed by the state system inspired a powerful movement for greater parental freedom in education and intensified the desire to retain school regulation at the level of community (Reeh 2016). The desire for greater freedom also gave rise to the development of private free schools and folk high schools by Grundtvig-disciple Christian Kold. The schools instructed students in Danish literature and myths and used narrative and experiential techniques to stimulate the imagination (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 117–19). The folk high schools also became important venues for exposing people to literature, and Ingemann, Blicher and Andersen all supported the schools (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 117–19; Skovmand 1944, 416–17; Kålund-Jørgensen 1953–1956, 453).

While National Liberal politicians initially resisted the private schools, all political parties eventually recognized that private schools would advance schooling for rural children (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 66–7). Politician Anders Sandøe Ørsted circulated a survey among local school officials to solicit views on the "freedom principle." A county representative responded that greater freedom would result in expanded school participation: "freedom versus compulsion in schools – that is the main question on which everything else turns on...If you give up compulsion, all other favorable improvements will come by themselves, everything will fall easily into place with little help from and adjustment by the state" (Larsen 1899, 200–1).

Expansion of Primary Schools in Britain, 1820–1870

The 1870 Elementary Education Act in Britain finally created a public primary education system and created new local school boards to oversee schooling. In decades proceeding the act, reformers had experimented with various forms to expand educational access; however, while the 1870 act protected the church-based voluntary schools, it effectively eliminated the rights of localities to develop alternative school forms. The bill's architect, William Forster, strongly favored uniformity and strong national capacities for school inspection (Roper 1975, 185–202; Marcham 1973; Shuman 2000, 12).

Policymakers, writers and other intellectuals confronted issues of access, pedagogy and state control in the decades leading up to the 1870 reform. Elites on the left and right continued to disagree about working-class *access* to primary school education until at least the mid-1800s; opponents feared that schooling would prompt workers to question class inequities. At the same time, social unrest associated with industrialization, free trade, landless agricultural workers created by the Corn Laws and worker movements (e.g. Chartists and Luddites) caused mounting alarm among elites (Kestner 1988, 58). The Second Reform Act of 1867, which greatly expanded suffrage and democratic controls, also helped to persuade skeptics of the benefits of public education, as many came to view schooling as a boost for social stability. Robert Lowe (Vice President of Committee of Council on Education) expressed this logic when he famously remarked that politicians must educate their "future masters" (Marcham 1973).

Victorian fiction writers and intellectuals helped to expand an interest in educating the poor. Although writers such as Matthew Arnold, Thomas Hughes and Charles Dickens continued to depict education as crucial to individual self-development; many Victorian social reform novelists also emphasized that expanded *access* to schools for the working class could aid in solving social problems and societal unrest. Authors such as Dickens, Gaskell and Charles Kingsley depicted the working class as enveloped in a destructive culture of poverty. Authors used their work to nurture a charitable impulse in the upper and middle classes, and to show that education constituted a means of combatting this culture and ameliorating social ills (Goodlad 2001, 593–5; Armstrong 1986, 642–3). Yet unlike their Danish contemporaries, British authors generally did not draw attention to the poor's economic contribution and to how an underinvestment in the skills of workers might detract from the collective good.

Politicians and writers also deliberated questions about best *pedagogical* methods. The assumptions of the monitorial system were deeply entrenched. Students should master a specific set of information with set lesson plans using rote memorization, and a cramming culture permeated education at all levels (Cordner 2016). Yet some critics found fault with the mechanistic methods of the Bell–Lancaster model and supported the development of other types of schools, in part, to expand access. One result of this experimentation was the "ragged school" movement, which created schools for the poorest children; teachers taught practical skills such as carpentry, shoemaking and tailoring in addition to religious instruction (Schupf 1972, 165).

Ultimately, standardized curricula with fixed lesson plans remained the standard model for British education, and experiments with alternative schools were largely cast aside with the 1870 reform (although voluntary church schools remained very much part of the system) (Schupf 1972, 168). Writers played a part in this process, because many set a priority on quality over access. Some British authors such as Dickens ridiculed the cramming culture and the mechanistic set lessons that defined most primary school teaching. Yet many defended the standardization of curricula and showed less enthusiasm than their Danish counterparts for experiential learning techniques. While Dickens made fun of cramming, he joined novelist William Thackeray in lambasting cheap schools on the grounds that these did not meet quality standards and failed to cover essential knowledge (Gargano 2008). Some authors such as Charles Kingsley joined biologist Thomas Huxley in promoting Darwin and the study of natural sciences in education (Hale 2012). But many authors also followed Matthew Arnold in celebrating the use of a humanistic curriculum and the study of classic works to elevate British culture and foster self-development (Farrar 1867).

Policymakers, intellectuals and writers also disagreed about the appropriate roles for the *state* and the church in education, and on mechanisms for administrative oversight. Partisans bitterly contested the role that the church would play in public education: Tories insisted on preserving the church schools, while the Liberals sought a truly national, nonreligious education system (Roper 1975, 185–203). In lieu of a national education system, Whigs/Liberal policymakers developed regulations for government oversight of local and private schools. A Committee of the Privy Council on Education was established in 1839 to formulate national education policy, carry out school inspection for quality control, and make grants to local and voluntary schools (Doheny 1991; Smith 1923; Ross 1967, 275). Mechanisms for government oversight became further institutionalized with the Revised Code of 1862 that set up a system of payment by results in which government funding would be contingent on students' performance on exams (Midgley 2016).

Writers worked to sway public opinion in the lead up to the 1870 act. Kingsley gave a famous lecture in 1870 entitled, "The Human Soot," in which he argued that elementary education could cure social problems (Wilson-Bates 2015, 388–90). Arnold wrote a series of hilarious letters to the Pall Mall Gazette (later published as *Friendship's Garland*) in which his ignorant and inane alter ego defends the inadequacies of the British education system to a German visitor (Arnold 1883/1871).

Arnold also worked tirelessly behind the scenes to directly advocate for education reform. His brother-in-law, William Forster, was the architect of the 1870 bill, which Arnold helped to shape by reviewing and commenting on successive drafts (Connell 1950, 88–9, 112). In an 1868 letter to his mother, Arnold wrote "I am being taken into their secrets, *very confidentially*, by three different centres of educational power at once" (Matthew Arnold, January 18, 1868).

To summarize, in the mid-nineteenth century, British and Danish policymakers sought to expand educational access and experimented with new forms of schooling to this end. Denmark moved away from the monitorial method, endorsed parental control over schools, permitted the growth of alternative school forms, and continued to leave control over education in local hands.

Britain continued to emphasize the rote memorization associated with the monitorial method, fought over private church schools and sought to centralize oversight in national bodies. Britain's 1870 act ended alternative school forms such as the ragged schools. Whereas British policymakers strengthened central oversight with the Revised Code; Danish political elites affirmed local autonomy and parental rights

Danish Secondary Education System Development, 1870 to 1920

At the turn of the twentieth century, concerns about industrialization and global trade drove an interest in the development of secondary schooling. In addition, politicians and writers grappled with how to use education to build citizenship and reduce inequalities, on the one hand, and to create skills, on the other. Yet while the Danish system included vocational education in its new secondary education system, Britain developed a one-track secondary education program that focused on classical, humanistic studies and ended secondary vocational training.

Denmark's 1903 Act on General Secondary Education established multiple tracks within the new upper secondary schools (later called the gymnasium) to serve the diverse needs for academically oriented youth; the act also created new free middle schools (at the lower secondary level) that linked primary and secondary education. A one-year "real course" was made available to nonacademic youth, who were not headed for gymnasium (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 94). The earlier Law for State Support for Folk High Schools and Agricultural Schools of 1892 made a significant commitment to technical education at the secondary level, by establishing government funding for technical, agricultural and folk high schools. Concerns about educational inequities contributed to the passage of the Primary Education Act of 1899 that created the universal Danish folk schools, providing free education to children from all social classes and ending the earlier system of distinct public schools for different social classes (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 65).

By the late nineteenth century, the politics of education policy encompassed a broad field of actors and institutions that did not exist in the early days of school development. Party politics had grown increasingly important to political outcomes and fierce conflict between the two major political parties, the ruling Right Party (Højre) and the Left Party (Venstre), created political stalemate during the 1880s and early 1890s, causing few acts to be passed during this period (Henrichsen 1911, 67–72). Early institutions for school administration had also been set into place and teachers' unions played an increasingly important role in politics (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 55–6; Moe and Wiborg 2017). Yet despite the acute partisan conflict that immobilized Danish governance at the end of the nineteenth-century, the secondary and primary education initiatives came to be broadly supported by all of the major parties (Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 65).

Fiction writers became very important in this climate of political unrest. A network of modernist/realist authors in The Modern Breakthrough movement, led by the literary critic Georg Brandes and his brother, the novelist (and future finance minister) Edvard Brandes, struck new ground in literature. Writers attacked the earlier generation's romanticization of workers' lives with a new realism that starkly depicted social problems. The modernist authors helped to frame issues about educational access and the differentiation of secondary education. Moreover, they became involved in party politics and helped to build coalitions among interest groups.

Authors contributed to the growing support for *access* to secondary education for all classes (Skovgaard-Petersen 178, 138). In the decades before the key education reforms, modernist authors lobbied for greater access to secondary education for farmers and workers, arguing that cultural formation for the masses (almendannelse) had become as vital as culture formation for elites (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 11–12). Authors celebrated industrialization as a national project to increase growth and portrayed workforce skills, attained through secondary education, as essential to the industrializing campaign.

Writers also weighed in on issues related to *differentiation* of secondary education: the make-up of the curricula and the inclusion of vocational training programs. A major source of conflict during this period concerned reform of the content and structure of the academic secondary-education Learned Schools. Many within Højre sought the continuing strong focus on a classical curriculum; whereas, many teachers and members of Venstre wanted to create a much stronger academic math and science line and to add a course of study in modern languages (Nørr 1979, 196). Modernist novels broadly supported the new courses of study; they cast aspersions on classical studies with unsympathetic, self-indulgent young protagonists, who used Greek and Roman tropes to over-romanticize the world and to alienate themselves from society (e.g. Jens Peter Jacobsen's *Niels Lyhne*).

Modernist authors supported the inclusion of vocational training in secondary education, by contributing to the sense that course offerings at the secondary level had to meet demand for a variety of skills (Skovgaard-Petersen 178, 138; Nørr 1979, 197–8). They supported social investment in skills and emphasized connections between economic growth and a thriving society (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 11–12). While the Venstre Party initially offered the greatest support for technical education, Højre also came to endorse state funding of vocational education (Skovmand 1944, 422). Authors also worked to convince the Grundtvig-inspired folk high schools to provide better skills for the new global economy (Skovmand 1944, 422).

Authors critically entered into the fray of party politics and helped to swing power away from Højre and toward Venstre. The dysfunctional political realm led writers to ascertain that cultural politics was necessary for political change (Frederiksen 2020, 65–6). Modernist writers joined the fight against Højre Prime Minister Jacob Brønnum Scavenius Estrup in November 1878

by developing their own faction of the Left Party (Venstre), which they called "Literary Venstre" or "European Venstre") (Hvidt 2017, 122–8). Edvard Brandes wrote to his brother Georg in 1877 that the problem was not simply Right Party strength but Venstre weakness, and he suggested the authors cooperate with the farmer wing of Venstre to bolster opposition to the right (Sevaldsen 1974, 235–8). Writers worked closely with Venstre politicians to sway public opinion on social rights and education (Frederiksen 2020, 70–1, 114, 166–7). Ultimately, the Literary Venstre helped the Venstre Party forge a new ideological platform that was crucial to the battle for constitutional reform. Venstre leader Christian Berg noted that the Literary Venstre faction allowed Venstre to wage "war with culture more than with the party." Literary Venstre members eventually populated the influential Radical Left party that would provide crucial support to the expansion of the welfare state (Henrichsen 1911, 96). Viktor Pingel, leader of the student society movement and a close associate of Georg Brandes, concluded that the struggle for democracy in Denmark had been very much along cultural lines (Skovgaard-Petersen 1976, 135).

Finally, authors helped to facilitate links between farmers in the Left party and workers in the social democratic party, and this farmer-labor coalition was to become a hallmark of social democracy. Evangelical farmers and urban workers had little contact with one another and few common cultural reference points, but the authors and intellectuals managed to bridge both groups and ended up playing an important role in facilitating connections in advance of democratic change in 1901.

British Secondary Education System Development, 1870 to 1920

In 1902, the British Conservative government passed an act creating upper secondary education, eliminating funding for technical education and strengthening central regulation by establishing New Local Education Authorities (to be monitored by the Board of Education). In the decades leading up to the act, a series of royal commissions had advocated for secondary vocational training and some urban school boards developed postprimary technical classes (Devonshire Commission 1872–5). Parliament passed industrial acts to build skills and permitted county councils to raise rates for technical education (Gowing 1978, 1–12, ff 52, 58). Yet these measures were abandoned when the 1902 bill's architect, Robert Morant, committed Britain to a course of humanist secondary studies to the exclusion of upper-level vocational training and shifted the funding for technical schools to the new upper secondary institutions (Allen 1934). Regulations passed in 1904 developed national curricula guidelines, largely devoting coursework to the humanities and restricting math and science instruction (Eaglesham 1962, 156–7; Vaninskaya 2010, 952). Legislation in 1918 revisited technical education, but the Labour Party distrusted "instrumental" motives for vocational schools for working-class

children (Ward 1973, 38). Paradoxically, the rejection of vocational tracks ultimately limited workers' educational attainment (Vlaeminke 2000, 5).

Politicians from across the ideological spectrum agreed generally on the need for a secondary education system and a more integrated primary education system; yet, there were major power struggles over the degree of *differentiation* within secondary education (such as funding for vocational education) and over the appropriate roles of the church and the *state*. Many Liberal Party politicians (such as Sir James Bryce and Arthur Ackland) and some Conservatives (such as John Gorst) were strong supporters of technical education, but other political figures (such as Education Secretary Robert Morant) sought a uniform secondary education system built on a humanistic curriculum.

Significant disagreements between activists also persisted on the issue of administrative oversight of education and the role of voluntary church schools in the new state system. Many Liberals and Liberal Unionists sought a universal secular education system and rejected funding for religious schools; Conservatives wanted funding for voluntary religious schools (Daglish 1997; Eaglesham 1962). Legislation created a new Board of Education in 1899 and the 1902 act replaced the old school boards with new LEAs and preserved funding for voluntary schools (Robinson 2002, 159–63).

Prominent writers across the political spectrum advanced the case for humanities-oriented secondary education for decades before the 1902 act (even though vocational education had significant support among northern manufacturers and some other authors). Arnold led the charge to improve middle class culture with a stronger program of humanistic secondary education until his death in 1888 (Letter V5P30D1 Matthew Arnold to William Forster May 19, 1879). Arnold (1883/1871) parodied the middle-class philistine views on education and lack of an enlightening humanistic curricula in his afore-mentioned satire, "Friendship's Garland." Liberal Thomas Hardy advocated for classical education for all social classes; Hardy's biographer, Michael Millgate, describes Hardy's goals as "self-education, self-development and self-discovery" (Millgate 2004, 106). Conservative Rudyard Kipling linked humanistic education to Britain's imperialist ambitions; thus, "The White Man's Burden" lauded imperialism and admonished youth to educate themselves in order that they might later run the empire (Gilmour 2002, 127–8). On the left, authors decried global systemic risks and promoted education as antidote to these risks (Crosthwaite 2010, 331). The British Fabians were appalled by the disparities between social classes and many felt that vocational education would only reinforce this state of inequality. Some Fabians (such as Sidney Webb) were sympathetic to vocational education, but others (such as Wells) considered it to be suitable only for substandard jobs (Vaninskaya 2010, 959–60).

Authors were divided about the role of the state in education reform. Some joined Sidney Webb in strongly supporting an enhanced state role for purposes of administrative efficiency (Webb, Diary, 10/1/1901, 93). Others

such as William Morris and Thomas Hardy were more skeptical about governmental institutions and more favorably disposed toward self-education (Cordner 2016).

Authors and intellectuals were animated political actors in the coalition to pass the 1902 education bill, and provided crucial support in shaping the ideology surrounding the act. Fabians backed the 1902 act despite its support for church schools, and provided extensive advice to John Gorst (VP of Committee of Council on Education) and to Robert Morant (architect of the bill). The Fabian Co-Efficients dining club brought authors and politicians together on a weekly basis; for example, Beatrice Webb credited the Fabians for persuading Richard Haldane, a Liberal, to support the bill "breaking from his political friends" (Webb, Diary, 11/10/1902, 2169; 4/20/1904, 2285–6). Kipling greatly influenced the Conservative agenda (Carrington 262, 393), and his support for classical studies resonated in the bosom of John William Mackail, who was the major point person on the 1904 revisions at the Board of Education, the husband of Kipling's favorite cousin and a pallbearer at Kipling's funeral (Coates 1980, 17).

Ultimately, British authors' views on education policy played a significant role in shaping other actors' perceptions but ultimately did little to bridge opposing interests. Fabians claimed that their comparative advantage lay in offering policy advice; and Shaw bragged that the Fabians "were the recognized bullies of and swashbucklers of advanced economics" (Shaw 1892, 16, 3). Yet Fabians remained distant from the labor movement, did little to mobilize workers and made limited headway in persuading Liberal Party members to support the education bill.

CONCLUSION

This chapter probes why some countries created education for all, while other developed schools that primarily served the upper and middle classes, and particularly catered to academically minded students. I suggest that authors played a special role in educational reform episodes and that this cultural perspective expands our understanding of the comparative politics of education. Scholars have championed many different motives for the development of education systems: Arguments centered on the nation-building function of education often emphasize elite calculations (particularly in authoritarian regimes), whereas those focused on industrialization and democratization explore the contributions of class conflict to schooling (Flora and Heidenheimer 1981; Green 1990, 39, 47; Boli et al. 1985; Wilensky 2002; Acemoglu and Robinson 2006; Ansell 2008; Hanushek and Woessmann 2015; Ansell and Lindvall 2013; Paglayan 2020). One may reasonably argue that nation-building, industrialization, and democratization all motivated the expansion of education at different points in time. Yet, cultural views also mediated both policymakers' reform agendas and social groups' preferences for specific educational strategies to realize these

functional requisites. A cultural perspective helps us to understand choices about features of education systems beyond spending levels, a topic that has been relatively understudied by social scientists (Moe and Wiborg 2017).

Such a perspective provides historical context for current battles over education. Strong, coherent public opinion is crucial to contemporary education choices (Busemeyer et al. 2020). But public opinion data became available only in the twentieth century, and this work helps to fill our gap in knowledge about historical views toward education. In the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, privatization has been a rallying cry for neoliberal education reformers, who believe that market competition among schools will enhance quality (Gingrich 2011). This work suggests the historical cultural reasons why private schools take diverse forms and have different cultural meanings in liberal and social democratic countries. My focus on the cultural aspects of education system development complements cross-national and (sometimes) quantitative investigations of education system development and differentiation offered by scholars such as Ansell and Lindvall (2013), Moe and Wiborg (2017), Busemeyer et al. (2020), and Paglayan (2020).

Finally, a cultural perspective sheds light on the historical processes that create complementarities between education and social policy (Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011, 433; Busemeyer 2015; Iversen and Stephens 2008). Cultural constructions of education have meaning for both the historical development of education systems and contemporary cross-national variations in patterns of social investment in education today. Historic cultural debates over education anticipated contemporary discussions about the use of education to promote economic growth, social investment, and equality. Culturally constrained choices in education systems continue to have a powerful impact on the fortunes of low-skill young people, treatment of vulnerable populations, patterns of inequality, opportunities for social solidarity, and social stability (Huber et al. 2020).

2

Culture and Continuity through Institutional Change

INTRODUCTION

Has there ever been a more winsome protagonist than David Copperfield in the universe of coming-of-age stories? David, Charles Dickens' own favorite child, remains plucky against tremendous adversity, sweet-tempered in the face of foul treatment, optimistic against all odds, and triumphal against the injustices of nineteenth-century Britain. The mature David recollects with pride: "I never could have done what I have done, without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence...whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well" (Dickens 1850, 574). In sharp contrast, young Conrad is the architect of his own near demise in Danish author Thomasine Gyllembourg's *Montanus the Younger* (*Montanus den Yngre* 2019/1837). Like David, Conrad is proud of his vision and determination; however, Conrad's arrogance, self-congratulation and disregard for society nearly derail his compelling plans for improvements in textile manufacturing technology. Life improves for Conrad when he submits to the sound judgment of his elders, who share with Conrad a deep regard for industrial progress.

Travel a century back in time and the pattern holds. Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (2011/1719) ignores his father's advice, leaves home without saying goodbye, and succeeds with entrepreneurial ingenuity in becoming wealthy beyond measure. Meanwhile, Ludvid Holberg's Niels Klim (1845/1741) learns to suppress his immature judgments and to accept the wisdom of elders. While British novelists credit the individual's struggle against repression for the victories of their young protagonists; Danish authors locate success in interventions that bring their young heroes back in touch with societal norms.[1]

[1] Authors in both Britain and Denmark recognize structures of repression, and both countries have the *novel of accountability*, in which the protagonists confront their own limitations, and the *novel of empowerment*, wherein they battle external demons. Yet even in British novels of accountability, a personal struggle with morality rather than a process of conforming to society generally enables the hero's coming-of-age (Brown 2013).

This chapter explores how repeating cultural narratives, such as the ones found above, help us to understand how successive generations of education reform resonate with familiar assumptions about educational goals, society, class, and state. First, I consider how cultural touchstones play a role in processes of institutional continuity and change. Repeating cultural tropes in fiction influence the drivers of institutional change: the ways that new *ideas* about education are interpreted in different countries, the ways that *interest* groups imagine their preferences for education reform, and the manner in which *institutional* norms shape processes of negotiation over education. The repeating narratives within a country make it more likely for some types of reforms to be more easily implemented and sustained than others; reforms that align with cultural values tend to be more durable across time. But these iterative cultural tropes also shed light on the continuities within processes of institutional change: Why even at the moment of radical change, new institutions retain some familiar cultural assumptions.

Second, the chapter develops a theoretical model explaining the structure of cultural artifacts as found in literature and the transmission of these symbols and narratives from one generation to another. Cultural work transpires through the *agency* of cultural actors (as was discussed in Chapter 1), but the *structure* of national cultural tropes also plays a role in long-term processes of institutional change. At a structural level, each country has a distinctive "cultural constraint," or a set of cultural tropes (symbols, labels, narratives, and repertoires of evaluation), that appears in the national-level aggregation of cultural products (such as literature), persists through successive epochs, and helps denizens of the country to make sense of the world (Geertz 1973; Swidler 1986; Lamont 2000; Alexander 2003). Fiction writers inherit symbols and narratives from their literary predecessors and are influenced by the core cultural assumptions of these inherited literary narratives as they write fiction addressing new social and political issues (Williams 1963; Jameson 1981). In this way, literary tropes are passed down through generations. These cultural influences do not determine the outcomes of specific political struggles, as the force of cultural interpretations depends on the clash of interest group politics. As was discussed in Chapter 1, writers help to make specific cultural frames relevant when they join forces with other activists in political struggles. Yet from the bird's eye view, clear cross-national differences in the structure of literary symbols and narratives persist collectively over the longue durée. Authors collectively renew and reproduce cultural touchstones that persist across time, differ cross-nationally and resonate with British and Danish educational trajectories.

Third, I develop an empirically quantifiable method of assessing cross-national distinctions in literary depictions of education. The raw materials for this analysis consist of corpora of national literature from 1700 to 1920

Hall 993; Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Pierson and Skocpol 2002; Capoccia and Ziblatt 2010).

Incremental models of institutional change explore processes that transpire over time, often underlie apparent institutional stability, and entail endogenous erosion (rather than exogenous shocks) that undermine the status quo. Bottom up models of change may happen without exogenous shocks and occur as coalitions of actors convert institutions to new purposes. Processes of displacement, layering, drift, conversion, and exhaustion may lack intentional action, yet they may transform radically the status quo through evolutionary dynamics (North 1990; Hacker 2002; Streeck and Thelen 2005; Mahoney and Thelen 2010). While these models describe slightly different processes of institutional change, both incorporate a role for ideas, interests and norms for collective political engagement as drivers of institutional change.

Both punctuated equilibrium and incremental models confront puzzling aspects of institutional change processes. First is why countries differ with respect to the drivers of institutional change: the adoption of new ideas, the expression of interests and the performance of institutional rules. A second puzzling aspect concerns the variation in the scope, durability, and legitimacy of institutional innovations. A third question concerns continuity within institutional change, and this is particularly perplexing when full-scale displacement brings new institutions to diverge significantly from policy legacies so as to constitute a profound redistribution of authority (Orren and Skowronek 2016).

The following section considers how cultural frames provide context for the *drivers* of institutional change, the *endurance* of institutional change processes and the *persistence of continuities* at moments of profound institutional dislocations.

CULTURE AND PROCESSES OF INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Culture and the Drivers of Institutional Change

First, cultural frames help us to comprehend new ideas, interpret our interests, and apply institutional norms during reform moments (Dacin et al. 2002). Cultural symbols and narratives are important to the *ideas* that set new institutional trajectories. New ideas and paradigm shifts inspire institutional change when former ideological organizing principles lose explanatory value, because ideas provide blueprints for diagnosing economic crises, reduce uncertainty, suggest policy solutions, organize collective action and constitute a weapon in struggles over resources (Hall 1993; Blyth 2002, 35; Culpepper 2008). At the same time, however, these new paradigms often motivate *different* policy choices across countries. How can this be? Public intellectuals, pundits and policymakers – the domestic translators of international ideas – develop these new paradigms in accordance with indigenous norms and values of their nations (Ban 2016, 18; Blyth 2002). Of course, culture is not the whole story.

Cross-national variations in the adoption of new policy ideas certainly reflect diverse interests and knowledge regimes for deliberating political problems (Schmidt 2008; Carstensen and Schmidt 2016; Campbell and Pedersen 2014; Morgan and Hauptmeier 2020; Carstensen 2011). But cultural expectations also shape the adaptation of a new policy idea or development of new institutions (Cox 2001; Martin 2004; Griswold and Engelstadt 2008; Edling et al. 2014; Ban 2016), and institutional choices may have different cultural meanings across countries. Thus, private evangelical schools were a triumph for community activism and a means for accomplishing national goals in Denmark, but church schools were a tool for internecine religious wars in Britain.

Béland and Cox (2011, 21, 14) and Hay (2011) suggest that quantitative research on ideas is challenging because most ideas are not repeated occurrences. But cultural narratives do repeat, as I show below, and one must distinguish between transitory policy ideas and longer-term cultural expectations that influence nationally specific articulations of new institutional forms. At fluid political moments, new ideas may constitute oars that set new directions and yet dominant cultural tropes influence the translation of these new ideas and provide anchors that tether policy to the past.

Cultural assumptions also have bearing on the expressed *interests* of political actors, construction of collective social identities and class-cleavages. Cultural work matters to the construction of collective social identities, because narratives and symbols convey expectations about the psychological articulation of "self," the relationship between individual and society, and conformity to the social order (DiMaggio and Markus 2010, 351; Griswold and Wright 2004; Polletta et al. 2011; Korsgaard 2004). Economic imaginaries inform norms of economic exchange, actors' preferences, social cleavages, and the expressions of class interests driving political change (Fourcade 2011; Spillman 2012, 159; Carpenter et al. 2012; Engelstad 2015; Beckert and Bronk 2018) Cultural values constitute systems of meaning that shape micro-level strategic political choices (Morrill 2008, 16); for example, norms of trust enhance strategic choices for cooperation in game theory (Guiso et al. 2006, 29). Macro-social shifts in expressed preferences require attention to the collective origins of preference that transcend the rationalist paradigm (Meyer and Jepperson 2000, 100–2). Culturally constructed collective identities influence patterns of engagement with the social world (Scott 2001; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Beatty Riedl and McClendon 2019).

In particular, cultural assumptions influence antagonisms toward the working class. Industrial relations institutions affect the expression of class interests (Thompson 1980; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Paster 2012); yet cultural attitudes toward workers also have bearing on the evolution of social class (Sahlins 1976; Van Kersbergen and Manow2009; Martin et al. 2022). The characteristics of cleavage formation – the strength of antagonisms, individual attachment to the collective, and distance between core and peripheral groups – may well endure through the shifting power relations driving institutional change.

Cultural views of government, markets, cooperation, and competition also influence *institutional norms and rules* for collective political engagement. Countries differ in their conceptions of state and citizenship (Brubaker 1992); Moreover, cultural constructs legitimize institutions, set boundaries between states and markets, and justify forms of regulatory control (Lacey 2001, 350; Carpenter et al. 2012; Spillman 2012). Cultural projects were essential for nation-building (Anderson 1993; Gellner 1983; Boli and Meyer 1985; Benavot et al. 1991; Soysal and Strang 1989; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Slater and Kim 2015; Spillman and Faeges 2005; Zhang and Lee 2020). Nation states may be thought of as regimes that are consolidated by using cultural repertoires to bolster institutional configurations (Berezin 2009). Cultural beliefs underlie assumptions of coordination and conflict in processes of policymaking (Putnam 1993; Martin et al. 2022).

It is important to note that cultural influences on institutions do not flow only in one direction; rather, economic and political structures have a reciprocal influence on cultural articulations and cultural values and institutions undoubtedly coevolve (Santana-Acuña 2014). Thus, Alesina and Giuliano (2015, 928) posit that cultural values influence choices of institutions, even while institutional choices reinforce cultural values. Differences in conditions at the birth of capitalism lead to differences in perceptions of poverty and the need for government intervention. The medieval church had a crucial impact on the formation of nation states, by providing a vital source of both institutional models of administration and ideas about medieval law (Møller and Stavnskær Doucette 2022; Grzymala-Busse 2023). At the same time, in medieval England, the practice of living in nuclear families (unlike in continental Europe) reinforced norms of individualism and vice versa (Macfarlane 1978). Murrell and Schmidt (2011) suggest a reciprocal interaction between legal statutes and the rising references to Whig cultural norms of freedom and independence in seventeenth-century British pamphlets.

Culture and the Dimensions of Institutional Change

Second, cultural constructs have bearing on the dimensions of both acute and incremental change: the scope, durability, and legitimacy of change. While punctuated equilibria and incremental change models describe somewhat different processes of institutional change, both fall on a continuum in their level of "discredit to the status quo" (Baumgarnter 2010, 239). In discontinuous change models, the *scope* of change captures whether new institutions replace the old or simply duplicate the efforts of other organizations (Orren and Skowronek 2016, 114, 86). In incremental institutional change processes, "conversion" is more likely to constitute replacement while "layering" simply adds to the status quo (Streeck and Thelen 2005, 42). Discontinuous, enduring changes are *durable* when they constitute a stable alteration in governing authority (Orren and Skowronek 2016; Hall 1993). In incremental change processes,

durability depends in part on the enduring strength of coalitions supporting the changes. Perceived *legitimacy* is important to both types of change and to whether transformations seem motivated by considerations of justice and universal as opposed to particularistic principles (Stinchcombe 1997, 5). Change accepted as legitimate is more likely to be driven by substantive (rather than political) motivations, to apply to a broader cross-section of citizens and to rise above ideological divides (Pettigrew et al. 2001, 699–700).

Cultural values have bearing for cross-national variations in these dimensions of change processes. Some cultural values foster a broader *scope* and greater *durability* in change processes, when these encourage ongoing cooperation and solutions for a broad population (Carpenter et al. 2012). Changes are more durable when they are consistent with cultural norms. Culturally inspired norms of cooperation increase the *legitimacy* of institutional choices by inspiring political negotiators to develop value-creating policies that impose short-term costs for long-term gains (Dobbin 1994, 3, 12; Jacobs 2011; Carpenter et al. 2012; Bellamy et al. 2012; Martin 2015). Positive views of the state and norms of trust may foster economic development (North 1991, 97–8, 102; Hall and Soskice 2001; Fukuyama 1995).

Culture and Institutional Continuity and Change

Finally, cultural assumptions constitute a mechanism for preserving continuity within institutional change processes. Historical institutionalists generally attribute continuity within institutional change processes to path dependencies that are established at an early point in time and crucially shape choices of new policies and institutions thereafter, even when exogenous shifts significantly alter the policy terrain (Weir 1992; Sewell 2005, 100–1). Time-based sequencing of reforms is particularly important to the durability of policy legacies (North 1991; Orren and Skowronek 2016, Pierson and Skocpol 2002; Pettigrew et al. 2001, 699). Even in endogenous change processes, when new interests capture and repurpose old institutions, these interests often follow nationally specific playbooks, as is apparent in national experiences with implementing liberalizing reforms (Thelen 2014). Moreover, complementarities across domains bolster institutional stickiness (Hall and Soskice 2001; Berger 1996, 2005; Iversen and Soskice 2019).

Yet at critical junctures, multiple paths are possible responses to challenges (Dobbin 1994; Dunlavy 1994). There is a tension between full-scale displacement (discarding useless elements) and policy legacies (emphasizing the weight of the past), and colliding institutions offer divergent solutions to policy problems (Orren and Skowronek 2016). Specific policy solutions may be vested with very different meanings across countries, and episodes of political creativity may produce new institutional rules and collective identities (Berk et al. 2013).

I posit that cultural frames also provide a source of continuity during processes of change. Institutional elements may be recombined in new ways through

processes of bricolage and creative syncretism (Campbell and Pedersen 2014; Berk et al. 2013); and cultural influences contribute to these processes of recombination. Agents help to forge new directions when economic development and institutional stickiness come into conflict (Orren and Skowronek 2016), and cultural motifs may influence (but not determine) agents' institutional choices. Policy and institutional paths are robust when cultural expectations bolster path dependence and reinforce norms (Berman 1998; Berezin 2009; Steensland 2006; Capoccia 2016). Cultural artifacts even may insinuate meaning when explicitly ideology is absent (Berezin 2009).

Unlike policy legacies that presuppose a historical starting point, interpretive schema come into play every time actors sit down at the table to negotiate. The schema are not deterministic and they leave ample opportunity for political creativity; yet they contribute to the familiarity of political choice. Whereas policy legacies hold both positive and negative lessons, deep cultural values shape the familiar habits of the mind that we may almost subconsciously bring to bear when engaging in political processes and coping with new challenges. Thus, deep cultural values may provide a source of continuity within processes of institutional change.

CONCEPTIONS OF CULTURE

That cultural conceptions have some bearing on institutional design and policy choices seems instinctively true; yet, one wonders from whence these cultural values come and how they are transmitted across time periods and shifting economic, political, and social circumstances. How do we define ideational variables and demonstrate their relevance to institutional change processes (Berman 2013)? How do we study cultural values from centuries past when empirical assessments of public opinion date back only to the twentieth century? Many agree that culture constitutes a system of meaning and suggest that durable dispositions, cognitive frames, and culturally proscribed collective identities – in addition to individualistic materialist interests – shape political preferences and action (Bourdieu 1993; Geertz 1973; Wedeen 2002; Swidler 1986; Lamont and Thévenot 2000). Yet we must understand the precise mechanisms by which cultural influences contribute to political practices.

This section surveys the ways that scholars study cultural work and I then explore the role of literature in cultural analyses. First, as we discussed in Chapter 1, some authors identify cultural agents as vessels of cultural influence. A relatively autonomous, separate stratum of cultural actors (including writers of literature) developed in Europe by the eighteenth century, constituted a social field that was separate from political and economic fields, and established its own set of rules and laws (Williams 1963; Foucault 1981, 58; Bourdieu 1991; Znaniecki 1952, 26; Keen 1999). Cultural actors became increasingly autonomous from power relations rooted in the political economy, and this allowed authors to serve functions associated with nation-building, legitimizing governance structures and reproducing class structures (Bourdieu 1991, 655; Williams 1963). Eighteenth-century members of the state nobility increasingly derived their legitimacy from cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991, 655).[3] Religious actors and ideologies constituted a special group of cultural influence, particularly on social policy and educational development (van Kersbergen and Manow 2009; Kahl 2005; Petersen et al. 2010; Grzymala-Busse 2015, 2023).

Second, others explore cultural values as these are embodied in institutions. Cognitive or symbolic elements (together with social practices and material resources) constitute a core component of institutions (Scott 2001, 48–51; DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Dobbin 1994). The cultural, symbolic element of institutions are crucial to the evolution of public policy regimes (Fourcade 2011, 1724) and modes of cooperation in industrial relations (Martin and Swank 2012; Morgan and Hauptmeier 2020). Yet the manifestation of cultural constructs in institutions does not fully meet the criteria for cultural autonomy posed by Alexander (2003, 13), namely that cultural influences be observed in a medium that is separate from the political institutional manifestations of culture that one wishes to explain.

Third, culture appears as a phenomenon of *everyday practice*, for example, in citizens' civic activity. Cultural practices put into place at revolutionary moments matter to the trajectories of the revolution, to the nature of status quo politics thereafter and to the authenticity of democratic regimes (Fishman 2019). Cultural symbols and narratives help to legitimize new forms of governance; in this regard, they contributed to the development of collective identities in the European Union (Halle 2014; McNamara 2015).

Finally, a view of culture as *code* suggests that symbols and narratives constitute a web of social meaning and have a patterned influence on social interactions (Geertz 1973, 5). For example, culture as code may be observed in the structure and logic of cultural scripts in texts and other media (Sewell 2005, 167).

While all of these approaches have much merit in shedding light on cultural work, Alexander (2003, 13–23) suggests necessary rules for the use of culture as a political variable. One must establish the *relative autonomy* of cultural influences or find ways to assess manifestations of culture apart from their embodiment in political policies and institutions (Guiso et al. 2006; Spillman and Strand 2013, 95). It is also necessary to articulate the *transmission mechanisms* for cultural reproduction. A theory of cultural work should include a role for both *structure* (culture as systems of meaning) and *agency* (users of cultural practices) (Sewell 2005, 156–66).

[3] While Bourdieu (1991, 659–62) assumes that authors have similar interests across societies in defending the autonomy of their field of cultural production, this functionalist assumption neglects the stark cross-national differences in authors' views of their political and social worlds.

MECHANISM FOR CULTURAL TRANSMISSION: THE CULTURAL CONSTRAINT

With Alexander's warnings in mind, I develop a model for the manifestation of culture in literature in the tradition of looking at culture as code; namely, the model analyzes the coded cultural artifacts found in the symbols and narratives of fictional works that appear over time in literature. Certainly, transmission of cultural code operates through *both* the structure of literary code (explored in this chapter) and the agency of writers (presented in Chapter 1). Indeed, writers create cultural artifacts to have a specific impact and their target audiences interpret social and political experiences with reference to these cultural artifacts (Griswold 1987). But the accumulated symbols and narratives have a force that exists somewhat independently of the cultural actors who created these touchstones.

At a structural level, each country has a distinctive "cultural constraint," or an aggregation of cultural symbols and narratives that appears in corpora of national literature and that is produced by all authors as a group. The cultural constraint is predicated on the idea that political and social actors draw from a country-specific "cultural toolkit" – which includes symbols, narratives, labels, and mental maps – to formulate strategies and to ascribe meaning to social problems (see also Swidler 1986, 273–6; McNamara 2015; Wedeen 2002, 713; Idriss-Miller 2018; McDonnell et al. 2017; Schudson 1989, 160). Lamont and Thevenot (2000, 5–6) document the "repertoires of evaluation" – or cultural scripts organized around concepts such as market performance or civic solidarity – that suggest symbolic boundaries among social groups, mold our assessments about what is worthwhile, delineate positives and negatives, and help to articulate the collective good. For example, countries espouse diverse constructions of social goods and social evils (Alexander 2003, 6). The tool kit is heterogeneous and does not predict specific choices; yet it provides some continuity in style of action, even when goals of action change (Swidler 1986, 273–6).

Fiction writers act collectively as purveyors of the cultural touchstones; they inherit cultural tropes of their national literary traditions from the past and rework symbols and narratives to address current issues (Williams 1963; Guy 1996, 71). The national aggregation of symbols and narratives are passed down through generations, are used by cultural actors to depict social and political phenomena, and help citizens to interpret their world. We may observe not only the agency of individual writers, but also collective trends within the body of national literature, and even highly original writers draw upon the cultural touchstones of the past. As each generation redraws cultural touchstones, one finds continuity in tropes and the reiteration of master narratives over successive epochs.

The silence of the corpus is telling: What authors do not address with their works is as important as their intended ambitions for influence. Familiar touchstones inform the political unconscious, (or gap between authors' intended

goals and their subtext messages) that is unacknowledged by the text (Jameson 1981). For example, in *The Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys portrays the insane and incarcerated first wife in *Jane Eyre* from the vantage point of race and gender in Victorian England and highlights the gap existing between Bronte's intended goals and the sub-textual messages (Fessenbecker 2016). Kipling recognizes the political power of the national corpus when writing: "The magic of Literature lies in the words, and not in any man. Witness, a thousand excellent, strenuous words can leave us quite cold or put us to sleep, whereas a bare half-hundred words breathed upon by some man in his agony, or in his exaltation, or in his idleness, ten generations ago, can still lead whole nations into and out of captivity" (Kipling 1928, 6).

This view of culture as code suggests that each country has its own cultural DNA or a particular assortment of symbols and narratives in its cultural toolkit and that distinctive cultural profiles resonate with perceptions of policy problems and solutions. Cultural touchstones and repertoires of evaluation are unevenly distributed across nations, and some countries are more likely than others to access certain cultural tropes (Lamont and Thevenot 2000, 5–6). Nation-specific meanings – and some relative cohesion in the interpretation of core issues – provide the basis for collective political identities (Spillman and Faeges 2005, 424). We might further surmise that cross-national differences in these accumulations of cultural touchstones have deep, historical roots. Certainly, Danish author activists grounded their notions of Nordic collectivism in the Nordic myths and made claims that the Vikings had high levels of internal social solidarity, even while they engaged in predatory practices abroad (Grundtvig 1832; Oehlenschläger 1974/1830; Korsgaard 2019). British writers were more likely to draw inspiration from Greek and Roman mythology, and more Gothic, conflict-embracing versions of myths from the north (Gross 2008).

At least four cultural dimensions differentiate societies from one another and have bearing on political choices. Countries vary along an *individualistic-collectivist* fault line that matters to conceptions of society and collective social identities (Znaniecki 1952; Petersen et al. 2010; Korsgaard 2004; Stråth 2015; Oyserman et al. 2002). Countries diverge in their cultural conceptions of *class cleavages* (Crouch 1993; Lamont 2000; Martin et al. 2022). Symbols and narratives in novels may politicize or demobilize marginal groups; and stories of resistance become vital weapons in movement mobilization (Swidler 1986; Lamont and Thévenot 2000; Ewick and Silbey 2003). Countries vary in their notions of trust and *patterns of cooperation* (Rothstein 2005; Tabellini 2010; Putnam 1993; Alesina and Guiliano 2015, 914). Cultural attitudes also vary cross-nationally in attitudes toward *government* (Brubaker 1992; Alesina and Giuliano 915) and the relationship between states and markets (Fourcade 2011; Beckert and Bronk 2018; Griswold and Engelstad 2008).

Some caveats are in order. First, authors base their depictions of problems and solutions on other sources, besides symbols and narratives inherited from literary works. Authors certainly write about life as they know it and their

depictions may reflect shifting paradigms of political philosophy, changing hegemonic interests, patterns of class conflict, religious beliefs and shifting political institutions. Dickens' portraitures most certainly describe his childhood in the London slums. Moreover, authors' own creative renderings of reality may realign perceptions; in particular, great artists with unique voices may create new interpretations (Schwarz 1983). Cultural actors do not simply reflect national values and reproduce perfect images of life (Griswold 1987). Thus, Dickens chooses to emphasize certain themes, such as the mistreatment of children, in his depictions of Victorian poverty.

Second, individual authors vary and dissenting voices challenge the master narratives of their literary traditions (Gravil 2001, 1–3). Economic and social domains are built upon diverse logics; groups compete to assert their own logic in the formation of national identities; and canons of national literature and their cultural touchstones evolve over time (Poovey 1995, 15, 7). Writers construct stories that both resonate with and rework cultural tools when they write about new social problems (Poovey 1995; Guy 1996, 71). The dialectic between cultural persistence and change also reflects the mobility of people, ideas and political authorities across national boundaries (Greenblatt 2010, 2). The content of pulp fiction is driven by market-strategies (Corse 1995, 1279–81).

Third, national cultural models raise red flags. Older versions of cultural arguments relied on national values that were difficult to identify empirically, posited hazily understood causal processes, and resonated with imperialistic overtones about the superiority of American political institutions. Moreover, these theories were often tautological, giving political institutions as both cause and evidence of cross-national cultural divergence (Huntington 1996). Theorists often portrayed national cultural tropes as a coherent system rather than as objects of contestation and they focused in particular on the narratives of white men (Znaniecki 1952). Yet cultural invention was a subject of struggle among competing factions (Breuilly 1994; Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 15).

Fourth, it is doubtful that contemporary authors continue to play such a critical role in shaping contemporary public views, when so many other sources of information compete for our attention. Literature as a conduit of symbols and narratives was particularly influential before the twentieth century, after which technological innovations ushered in other types of intellectual exchange. Moreover, while literature provides a rich source of symbols and narratives, the cultural constraint also appears in other national collections of cultural products (see Halle 2014).

Fifth, it is important to stress that the structure of cultural artifacts does not have a *causal* impact on institutional development and change. As we saw in Chapter 1, many historically contingent factors contribute to policy outcomes and cultural influences interact with other political actors and structures. Quantitative evidence, however, makes it possible to verify cross-national

differences in cultural depictions of political problems and demonstrate their correspondence with cross-national variations in institutional solutions. Following Falleti and Lynch's (2009) model of context in causal processes, I suggest that the structure of cultural touchstones contributes to the context that mediates the mechanisms by which a cause has an effect. Context becomes particularly important under conditions of multicausality, context-conditionality, and endogeneity (Denk and Lehtinen 2014; Franzese 2009). This is similar to how public opinion structures the effect of political parties (Busemeyer et al. 2020). Thus, a factor may be relevant without being causal or fully accounting for the outcome (Mahoney and Goertz 2006; Martin and Chevalier 2022).

Yet, despite these caveats, the cultural constraint suggests some endurance of cultural touchstones through epochs, despite individual differences, global contagion, and temporal shifts. Certainly, there is also a reciprocal impact of power relations on cultural development, because dominant interests give preference to certain cultural voices. Yet one may see a continuity in characteristics of cleavage formation – the strength of antagonisms and distance between core and peripheral groups – across time, even as the outcomes of class conflicts vary. At the sweeping bird's eye view, the conflicting perspectives of individual writers fade away and one may observe enduring cross-national differences in the overarching structure of cultural ideas.

RESEARCHING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

I develop a method to investigate long-term, cross-national distinctions in cultural symbols and narratives by analyzing with quantitative methods large corpora of fictional works in Britain and Denmark. Computational linguistic and machine learning techniques (in Python) allow one to test observable differences in depictions of education appearing in corpora of British and Danish novels, poems and plays between 1700 and 1920 (after which copyright laws limit access). Full text files for the Danish corpus of 521 novels, poems and plays are obtained from the Archive of Danish Literature, and an online list of major Danish literature from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries supplements the works from the archive. The Danish corpus includes virtually all literary works available online. The corpus of 562 British works is constructed from multiple online lists of authors and fiction from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries; HathiTrust provides full-text files. Choices about what to include in the British corpus are settled by choosing from the online lists. I include all entries from the list of important works from 1700 to 1920 and select at least one novel, poem or play from each author on the online lists of authors from this period. Available full-text files are often not first editions; therefore, I alter manually the dates of works to reflect their initial publication. Timing of publication is critical for establishing the sequential relationship between cultural artifacts and reform moments. Bias certainly

exists in both in the initial publication of works (slanted toward upper-class male authors) and in online lists of important works, but I avoid additional bias by deferring to expert judgment about the collections. Both the quantitative and qualitative analyses include works such as Charles Kingsley's *Yeast* and William Morris' *News from Nowhere* that were widely read and highly influential in the nineteenth century but that are much less familiar today.

To evaluate word frequencies, I construct snippets of fifty-word texts around education words, stem the corpora and take out stop words. I then calculate within these snippets the frequencies of dictionary words (or bags of words) that pertain to a specific concept. Major concepts (e.g. government) are derived from theoretical discussion, but I must make choices about specific words included in each concept. I generate lists of words for each category by identifying the top 200 words in major novels using the HathiTrust word cloud software and coding these words into appropriate groups. These words provide the basis for my categories of society, state, class, skills, etc. I, then, add synonyms derived from online dictionary searches. I want to give both languages an opportunity to perform in each category; therefore, I study the actual performance of words within the corpora and choose words that are used during each era in order to get the most appropriate historical representation of a concept. I avoid words with multiple meanings such as "society," which in English refers to both upper-class high society (most prevalent usage), and the community of people living in a country with shared customs, laws etc. The term "social" is used instead. Political terminology for a concept often changes over time. I control for this problem by including relevant terms from all historical periods under investigation and by including varied spelling of words (e.g. Dannemark and Danmark). Reading fiction from this era also helps in choices of historically appropriate words.

The analysis relies on both a supervised learning technique (with the Python Natural Language Tool Kit code for calculating word frequencies) and an unsupervised topic modeling technique. A supervised learning model is appropriate because the categories are specified by theory: My object is not to assess how an individual document fits into a corpus, but to assess cross-national and temporal differences among works that are presorted by country, language and time (Hopkins and King 2010; Laver et al. 2003). Moreover, a supervised learning model is appropriate because I am analyzing literature rather than nonfictional essays to address a specific topic. Passages about education in fiction include many topics related to the plotline, character development, etc. that are largely extraneous to our concerns.

I supplement the supervised learning technique with unsupervised probabilistic topic modeling. Rather than beginning with keywords, this method asks the computer to identify the main topics in snippets of text surrounding a word. One specifies the number of topics in advance; the topic model algorithm allows one to infer the hidden topic structure and to compute the distribution of topics that best capture the collection of words in a document. This

provides a check on the word frequencies; while the results are probabilistic (and therefore changing with every iteration), they are consistent with what I find in the word frequencies.

I also use a clustering method to evaluate the distribution of views among authors in Britain and Denmark. I calculate the term frequency/inverse document frequency (tf-idf) scores for each author. Tf-idf calculates how important a word is to a document in a corpus. I then cluster the authors based on their scores on a given list of words and use a visualization technique, BDSCAN, to demonstrate the k number for the clusters. I calculate difference of proportions tests to evaluate significant differences between countries.

Linguistic structures of English and Danish could skew the results; for example, because "the" in Danish is a suffix ("mand" becomes "manden"), nouns could have higher word frequencies in Danish than in English. I address this by removing stop words (e.g. "the") and by observing that neither country has consistently elevated frequencies across categories. I also compare word frequencies of the British "give" and the Danish "giver" to ensure that these words track closely as expected.

It is now time to think about hypotheses to guide our study of cultural symbols and narratives. If cultural depictions set the context for both education system choices and processes of institutional change, then we should observe statistically significant cross-national differences and somewhat enduring within-country similarities in literary depictions. British and Danish authors should have diverse cultural depictions of the goals for the *public system* (which are also relevant to the ideas driving institutional change). They should portray class differently: This matters to the educational dimensions of *access*, *differentiation,* and *pedagogy* and is also relevant to the construction of interests. Authors in the two countries should offer varied depictions of *state* involvement and *administrative oversight* in education and these also inform the perceived legitimacy of rules guiding institutional change.

I do not make a causal argument, namely, that cultural values definitely cause specific choices of educational system dimensions. Rather I posit hypotheses about what one would expect to find in cultural scripts if these scripts are associated with cross-national distinctions in education system choices and with the ideas, interests, and institutional rules driving change processes in each country. An analysis of cross-national differences in cultural scripts about education allows us to rule out the null hypothesis that culture does not matter.

First, cultural symbols and narratives in literature may have bearing on the goals of the public education system and the ideas driving institutional change in education (Gonon and Deissinger 2021). If authors play a crucial role in putting education on the political agenda, authors' references to education words should increase in both Britain and Denmark in advance of major education reforms. If different ideas about the goals of education matter to education system development, we expect to find these differences in word frequencies in snippets of text about education. British authors should make more references to *individualism*

words than Danish authors. Danish authors should make more references to *society* words in depictions of education than British authors.

(H1) Denmark should have more early references to education than Britain and cultural depictions should predate major reform moments in both countries.

(H2) Frequencies of words associated with individuals should be higher in British snippets of text surrounding education words than in Danish snippets.

(H3) Frequencies of words associated with society should be higher in Danish snippets surrounding education words than in British snippets.

Unsupervised topic modeling should reinforce findings from the word frequency analyses: topics appearing in snippets of text surrounding "education," "instruction" and "school" should suggest that education is developed to benefit the individual in Britain but society in Denmark.

(H4) Using unsupervised topic modeling, topics associated with individual self-development should appear more in British snippets surrounding "education," "instruction" and "school" than in corresponding Danish snippets.

(H5) Using unsupervised topic modeling, topics associated with societal goals should appear more in Danish snippets surrounding "education," "instruction" and "school" than in corresponding British snippets.

Second, cultural scripts may inform choices about education for workers and for the construction of interests driving institutional change processes. If so, we should find different depictions of labor in discussions of education by British and Danish authors. As Denmark expanded access to workers earlier than Britain, we expect to find that Danish authors would more frequently mention *workers* (and farmers) in discussions of education. Because Denmark created more differentiated educational tracks and varied pedagogical approaches to provide worker skills, we expect that Danish authors would be more likely to view peasants and workers as making an economic contribution to society and would more frequently refer to *skills* than British authors. British authors may well worry about workers' poor living conditions but they should think less about workers' economic merits and the need for social investments in worker skills than their Danish counterparts.

(H6) Frequencies of words associated with labor should be higher in Danish snippets of text surrounding education words than in British snippets.

(H7) Frequencies of words associated with skills should be higher in Danish snippets of text surrounding education words than in British snippets.

Moreover, if cultural depictions accentuate or diminish the cleavages among social classes, we might also expect to find cross-national differences in the distribution of authors' views within each country. If authors contribute to the lower levels of class antagonisms in Denmark, we might expect that Danish authors hold to more uniform depictions of the working class than their British counterparts. Class conflict has historically been much more pronounced in Britain; therefore, we might expect British authors to have a more varied distribution in their perceptions of labor that reinforces the contesting views of labor expressed in political circles. Authors' divisive views of labor would thereby reinforce sharp class cleavages.

(H8) Cluster analysis should demonstrate that Danish authors converge more in their depictions of labor than British authors.

(H9) Cluster analysis should demonstrate that Britain has more nodal points in the distribution of authors' depictions of labor than Denmark.

Third, if cultural work provides context for choices about educational oversight and has bearing on institutional rules for negotiation, we expect to find different depictions of the state in discussions of education by British and Danish authors. As Denmark established a public system earlier than Britain and had less conflict over education system development, Danish authors should make more references to the *state* and *cooperation* in discussions of education than British authors. But because Denmark had stronger cultural norms about community control, Danish authors should make fewer references to *assessment* words than British authors.

(H10) Frequencies of words associated with the *state* should be higher in Danish snippets of text surrounding education words than in British snippets.

(H11) Frequencies of words associated with *cooperation* should be higher in Danish snippets of text surrounding education words than in British snippets.

(H12) Frequencies of words associated with *assessment* should be higher in British snippets of text surrounding education words than in British snippets.

FINDINGS

A cross-national quantitative analysis largely supports hypotheses that cultural tropes provide context for the ideas, interests, and norms driving institutional change in Britain and Denmark. First, cross-national comparisons support predicted differences in depictions of the goals of education, suggesting that authors' cultural frames may well contribute to the distinctive *ideas* driving institutional change in the two countries. Figure 2.1 confirms the predicted differences in the *timing* of references to education words. Denmark has significantly higher levels of references to education words than Britain in the years leading up to the 1814 creation of primary education. After passage of the act, Danish authors turned their attention to issues of constitutional reform and references to education declines over the nineteenth-century, a period when less governmental action was taken in education reform. In Britain, scant attention is paid to education in the early years; however, references to education words then climb steadily in Britain in advance of the 1870 act, during a period in which Victorian authors made access to and quality of schools a cause célèbre.

Figure 2.2 shows that the British corpus has much higher frequencies of individual words in snippets of text about education than the Danish corpus; and this supports our hypothesis that British cultural producers thought about education in terms of individual self-development. A close reading of texts shows

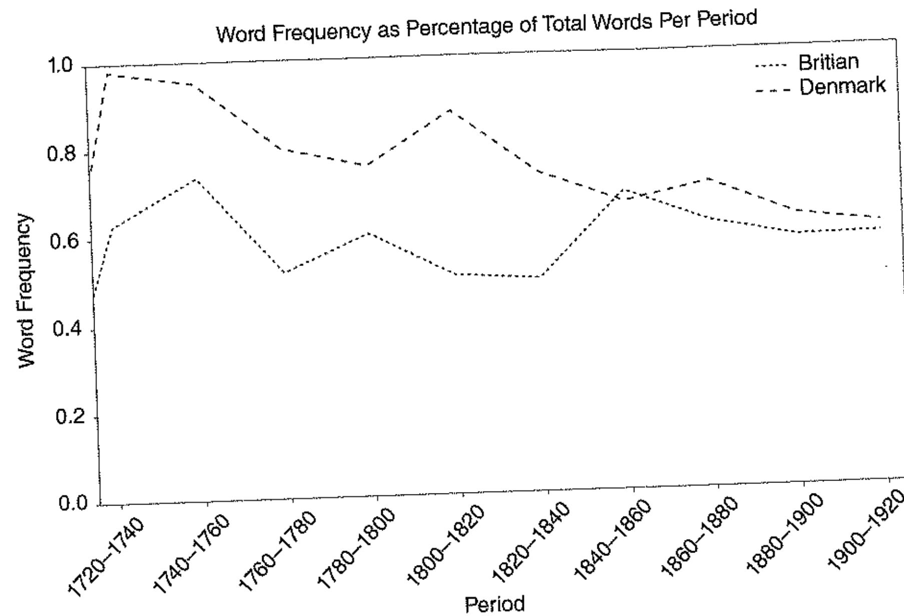

FIGURE 2.1. Timing of education words in entire British and Danish corpora

English education words include: "education, instruction, school, teach, learn, history, knowledge, read, student, write, count, arithmetic, mathematic, book, word"

Danish education words include: "uddannelse, undervisning/underviisning, skole, undervise/underviise, lære, historie, viden, læse, studerende, skrive, tælle, regn, matematik, bog, ord"

A similar figure appeared in Martin 2018.

that British authors repeatedly depict education as a vehicle for perfecting the individual, rather than as investment in society. Early eighteenth-century authors barely mention education, other than to make fun of the stereotypical bumbling tutor; thus, Daniel Defoe largely ignores education in both *Robinson Crusoe* and his journalism (Marshall 2007). Crusoe readily admits that formal schooling holds no allure; only on the desert island does he learn to create products (Defoe 2011/1719). Romantic writers around 1800 pay greater attention to education, frame learning as a path for individual self-discovery and provide poignant narratives that stir public interest in schools. Coleridge warns that "a man…unblest with a liberal education, should act without attention to the habits, and feelings, of his fellow citizens"; education would "stimulate the heart to love" (Coleridge 1796, #IV; Foakes 1989, 191). Matthew Arnold is perhaps the most ardent advocate of education for self-development. Thus, Arnold writes that the primary goal of education was not to make good citizens, but to create the best individual: "The best man is he who most tries to perfect himself" (Arnold 1867–8, 46).

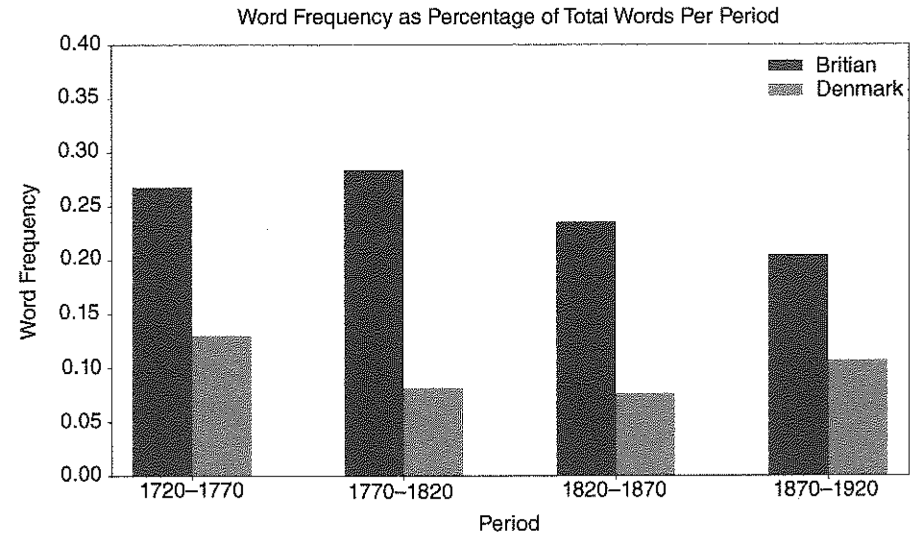

FIGURE 2.2. Frequency of individualism words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English individualism words include: "individual, independent, person, character, liberal, self"

Danish individualism words include: "individual, uafhængig, person, karak, liberal, selv"

A similar figure appeared in Martin 2018.

In Figure 2.3, Danish authors make many more references to society words than British authors, and this finding supports our hypothesis that cultural tropes link education to society, long before the development of a modern education system. Even in the mid eighteenth century, Ludvig Holberg views education and employment as important benefits to society as well as to the individual: "Merit ought to be rewarded, but the reward should be adapted to the object, that the State may not suffer" (Holberg 1845/1741, Loc. 807). Later the Romantic poets also frame the education of peasants as necessary to the general good and a strong society. Adam Oehlenschläger, who writes one of two Danish national anthems (entitled "It is a beautiful land"), links learning to the virtues of society. Denmark is strong as in the old Nordic myths; sciences and art are the hope of the future; and hearts beat for girl, country, and king. Still later, priest, poet, and philosopher N.F.S. Grundtvig believes that peasants and workers – the "workmen of the sun" – should be educated with Danish literature and history so that they may participate fully in society. For Grundtvig, this is a matter of national identity and essential to the collective folk (Grundtvig 2013/1838; Fain 1971, 78–82; Bjerg et al. 1995, 31–2). In *Only a Fiddler*, H.C. Andersen (1908/1837, 38) regrets that "there was no regulated school for poor children in the whole town."

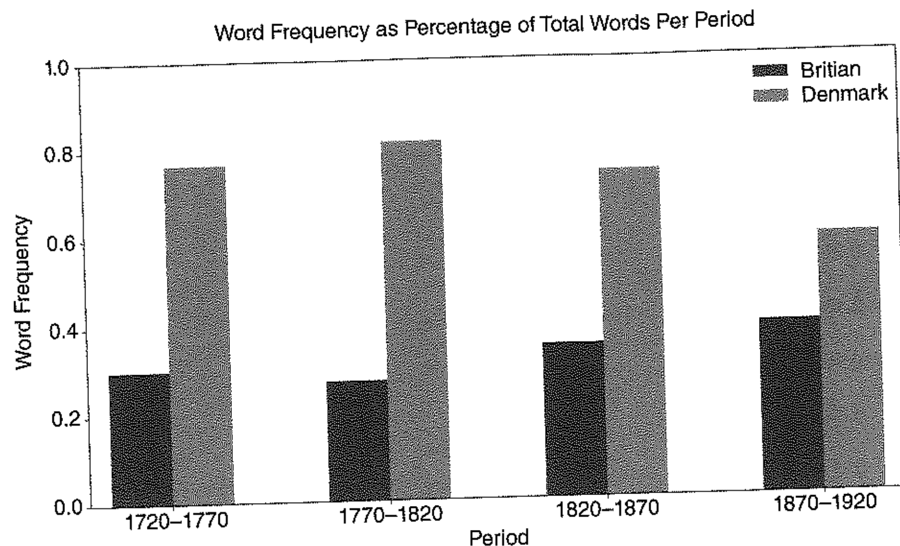

FIGURE 2.3. Frequency of society words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English society words include: "England, English, Britain, country, folk, people, collective, communal, mutual, custom, social"

Danish society words include: "Danmark/Dannemark, Dansk, land, folk, mennesker, kollektive, fælles, gensidig, skik, social"

A similar figure appeared in Martin 2018.

Unsupervised topic modeling confirms the findings of word frequencies about cross-national differences in the ideas surrounding the words "education," "instruction," and "school." While topics change slightly in each country over time, the cross-national differences in topics are stark. Topic modeling applied to the British education snippets produces topics about individual personality attributes (goodness, greatness, nature, honor, mind and sport) and upper-class terms (which are nonexistent in Danish findings). Danish topic modeling emphasizes nation-building (languages, history), society (spirit of the Danish people) religion, the state and skills.

Topics in the British school snippets are quite different from those in the Danish collection, and resonate with the British emphasis on schools as a vehicle for self-development, especially among the upper classes. The topic of goodness/greatness is by far the most important one in the British snippets throughout all periods, although this topic declines somewhat in the final period of 1870–1920. Thus, good/great appears in the British topic modeling output twenty-six times, compared to five times in the Danish output. Nature, honor, and the mind (all associated with individual self-development) are also important topics in the first two periods, and sport appears in the third period. Denmark does not mention any of these topics. Upper class terms constitute

another important topic, particularly in the first and last periods; thus, upper class terms appear as a topic eight times in the British snippets compared with zero times in the Danish ones. This count does not include the British term "master," which is a frequently found topic and can mean either a school teacher or an upper-class child, that is, "the young master." Government words (law, crown) appear only twice as topics in the British snippets, compared to five times in the Danish ones. Similarly, language words appear only twice in the British snippets, compared to seventeen times in the Danish ones. British topics do not include religion, equality or spirit; the topic of work appears once in the third period in Britain compared to four times in Denmark.

In contrast, the Danish corpus emphasizes nation-building, religion, society, and the state. During 1720–1770, languages emerge as the strongest topic, followed by religion, state, and work. These findings are consistent with authors' ardent campaign to teach in the Danish vernacular rather than in Latin or Greek, and to use schools for more practical purposes. Religion, nation-building (state, history), language, and spirit of the Danish people continue to be the dominant topics from 1770 to 1820. Languages, religion, society (the people, spirit, history), and the state are the most important topics from 1820 to 1870, a period in which the folk school movement developed in the countryside and national liberals worked with authors to build up Danish culture as tool in the battle over Slesvig-Holstein. The topics change somewhat during the fourth period of 1870–1920: language (but now modern foreign languages), the people, and equality are important topics, and religion disappears. These topics are consistent with the development of the 1903 secondary education act, in which modern foreign languages was created as a new track within gymnasium, reformers sought greater equality among primary schools, and religious influences were scaled back in education.

Second, the quantitative data also support the hypothesis that authors' depictions of class relations provide context for the construction of *interests* and social cleavages in the educational realm. Figure 2.4 shows that Danish authors have significantly more and earlier references to *workers* (and farmers) than British writers in education snippets, and this is consistent with the earlier extension of educational access to the working classes in Denmark than in Britain. This finding fits with the cultural story that Danish authors expect workers and peasants to strengthen economy and society. In *Niels Klim's Journey Underground* (*Niels Klims Underjordiske Reise*), Ludvig Holberg makes the case for some measure of equality in his utopian society of Pontu; individuals who are considered great are "noted for virtue and industry" (Holberg 1845/1741, Loc. 404). Laws favoring some classes are not "conducive to the general interest" (Loc. 446 to 457). With the end of serfdom, authors celebrate peasants as essential to nation-building. In his 1790 poetic play, *The Harvest Festival* (*Høst Gildet*), Thomas Thaarup describes a peasant boy's ardent desire to be educated so that he can defend Denmark (Thaarup 1822/1786). In Bernhard Severin Ingemann's heroic stories about the Danish middle ages, the people constitute the power in

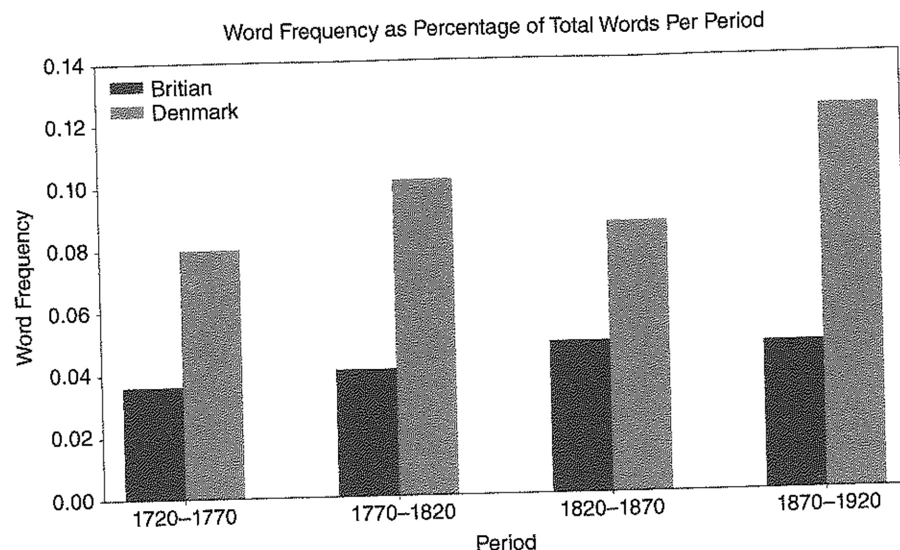

FIGURE 2.4. Frequency of labor words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English labor words include "worker, guild, craftsman, journeyman, apprentice, farmer, peasant, serf, mechanic, labour"

Danish labor words include "arbejder/arbeider, laug, håndværk, svend, Lærling, landmand, bond, liveg, mekanik, arbeidskraft/arbejdskraft"

those "days of departed glory…If it [the power] flashes not from many thousand eyes united, and pours not forth from every heart in Denmark, the greatest king in the universe cannot…restore to the people the lofty spirit of our ancestors" (Ingemann 1913/1828, loc 7602).

In sharp contrast, British writers scarcely comment on workers' contributions to society and many authors fear that excessive education will pose problems for social stability and create unrealistic expectations among the working class. Sara Trimmer's idea of schooling for the poor are Houses of Industry for the able-bodied poor and residential schools where five-year-old girls can learn spinning (Trimmer 1801, 69–70). In an undated letter, Wordsworth notes that "Mechanics' Institutes make discontented spirits and insubordinate and presumptuous workmen (Wordsworth/Knight 1907, 191).

Some progressive writers support education as a means of alleviating poverty; yet even they largely ignore the contribution of the working class to society. Coleridge writes that some schooling for the poor can limit alcoholism (Coleridge 1796). In Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (2015/1818), education transforms the monster, making even more poignant the novel's tragic ending. In *North and South*, Elizabeth Gaskell (2011/1854) suggests that educational opportunities and charitable interventions would allow the poor to

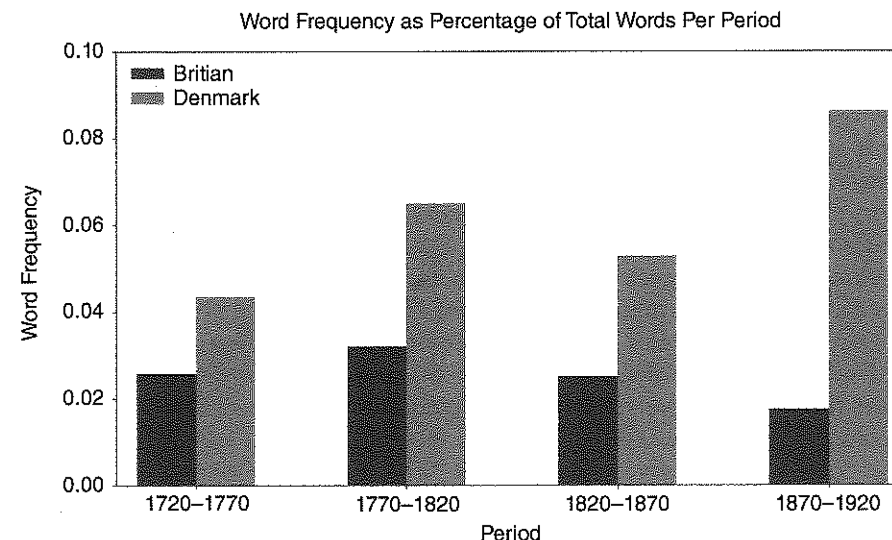

FIGURE 2.5. Frequency of skill words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English skill words include: "skill, ability, competency, proficiency, qualification"

Danish skill words include: "færdighed, evne, kompetence, dygtighed, kvalifikation"

improve their own position. Dickens and Gaskell are famously sympathetic to the tribulations of the working class, but they highlight the suffering of (especially) women and children (Poovey 1995, 57; Guy 1996; Steinlight 2018), rather than the loss to society from an ignorant working class. Indeed, even the most progressive social reform novelists share Malthusian views about the culture of poverty and overpopulation. In *Yeast* (Kingsley 1848, loc 2125), Charles Kingsley blames the social missteps of the working class on poverty: "Our daughters with base born babies have wandered away in their shame. If your misses had slept, Squire, where they did, your misses might do the same." George Gissing (2016/1889) stresses the cruelty of the urban poor in *The Netherworld*. Writers believe that the disorganization of the working class exacerbates afflictions of industrialization, a view also shared by liberal reformers such as James Kay-Shuttleworth (Armstrong 1986, 642–55).

Figure 2.5 demonstrates that Danish authors make greater reference to *skill* words in education snippets than British authors. Their fiction fits with the choice to have *differentiated* secondary educational tracks that satisfy the varied practical skills needed by society and that accommodate workers' diverse learning styles. A close reading of texts suggests that Danish authors consistently viewed workforce skills as strengthening economy and society. Nineteenth-century authors consider industrialization to be an important collective project and seek expanded mass education of workers to meet the

collective goals of building society, national strength and economic prosperity. They depict advances in agricultural and industrial productivity as a national project, and workers' skills become an issue of national security. In *Montanus the Younger*, Thomasine Gyllembourg connects social solidarity and investment in workers' skills to economic productivity and industrialization. Her forward-thinking protagonist suffers from arrogance and has to learn to conform to society, yet he has excellent ideas that will benefit the country. He writes a treatise on foreign technology, connects prosperity to the freedom of working men and argues for skills training to offset unemployment related to mechanization (Gyllembourg 2019/1837; Heitmann 2011, 11–19).

Danish authors stress the importance of practical skills and the problems with education that is disconnected from the real world. In Niels Klim, Holberg notes that "Intelligence resulting from methodical and practical study is preferable to the torpid insanity incident to much learning" (Holberg 1845/1741, Loc. 645–55). Similarly, in Ingemann's "Erik and the Outlaws," a character from the fourteenth century reflects on the uselessness of education dominated by classics and religious studies: "Our common-place scholars still chew the cud of mysticism, the useless learning of the schools, and the dry, worn-out Aristoteles" (Ingemann 1843/1833, loc 20435–9). Playwright Johan Ludvig Heiberg shares Ingemann's disregard for useless knowledge and enthusiasm for experiential learning in the concluding song of his vaudeville, *April Fools*. The setting is a small girls' school where the headmaster is a thief and students learn little from the schools' poor instructional method; for example, one student believes that Amsterdam is the capital of England. But students know much about life and the play ends with a song that celebrates experiential learning. Noting that "the promise of school falls short," the characters declare that "Life is short but art will last; Life itself is a school class" (Heiberg 2018/1828, 35, trans. CJ Martin).

In contrast, even when Victorian novelists are sympathetic to the tribulations of the working class and write achingly sad stories designed to pluck at our heartstrings, they are more inclined to support worker education as a mechanism for extending charity and reducing social instability rather than as a source of valuable skills (Poovey 1995, 57; Guy 1996; Childers 2001; Dzelzainis 2012). For Bronte, educating working-class youth in Jane Eyre is akin to imperialistic evangelicalism (Gargano 2008, 19). Many accepted that class injustices are a natural part of the capitalist order; even radical William Godwin writes about social class: "I believe that distinction is a good thing, and necessary to the peace of mankind. But, however necessary it may be, we must acknowledge that it puts some hardship upon the lower orders of society" (Godwin 2013/1794, 78).

Figures 2.6 and 2.7 present the results of our cluster analysis. Clustering and visualization analyses allow us to observe the distribution of depictions of labor within the British and Danish corpora. The data confirm that British authors have much more varied views of the working class than Danish authors. In the

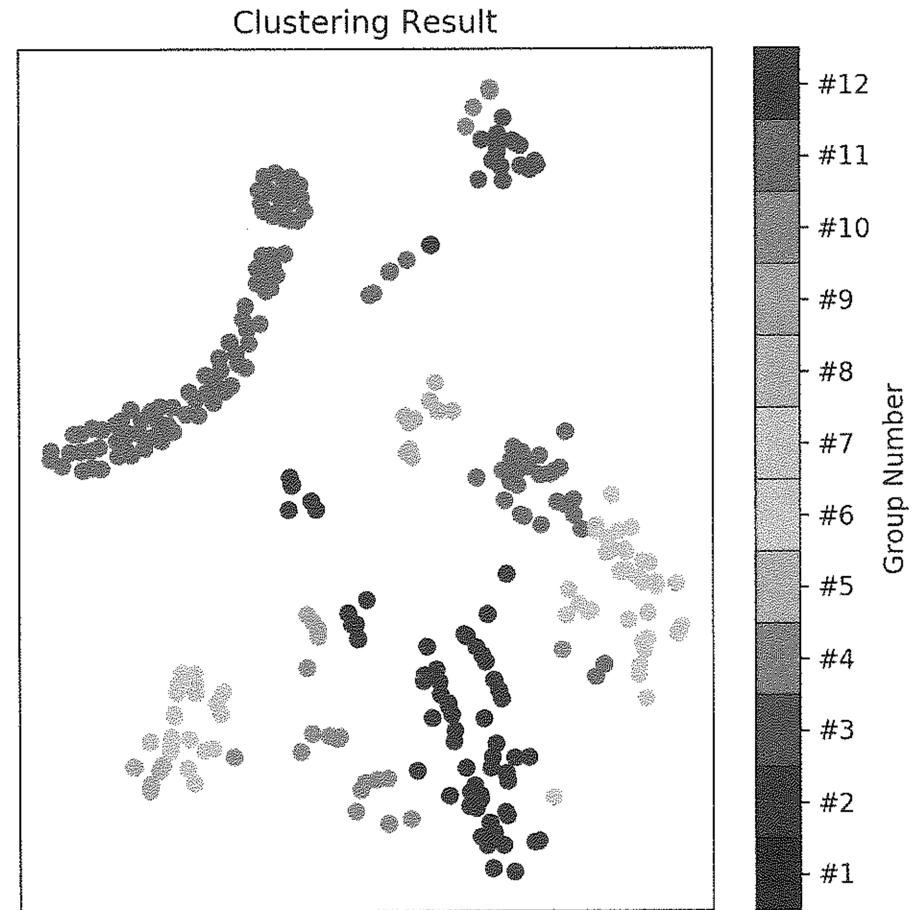

FIGURE 2.6. Clusters of writing about labor in Britain

cluster analyses, each color corresponds to a distinctive depiction of labor in fictional works within the corpora.

Figure 2.6 shows many distinctive depictions of labor (in color clusters) in British fictional works: one may easily see that British authors' depictions of labor are quite varied, with little consensus, and this picture of many competing views seems fitting in a country with high levels of class conflict. In sharp contrast, Figure 2.7, consists almost entirely of dots of a single shade; this demonstrates that Danish authors across the political spectrum essentially converge in their depictions of labor. This convergence in depictions of labor may well reinforce the more cooperative, consensual relations that exist between social classes in Denmark, and resonates with the weaker class cleavages in Denmark than in Britain.

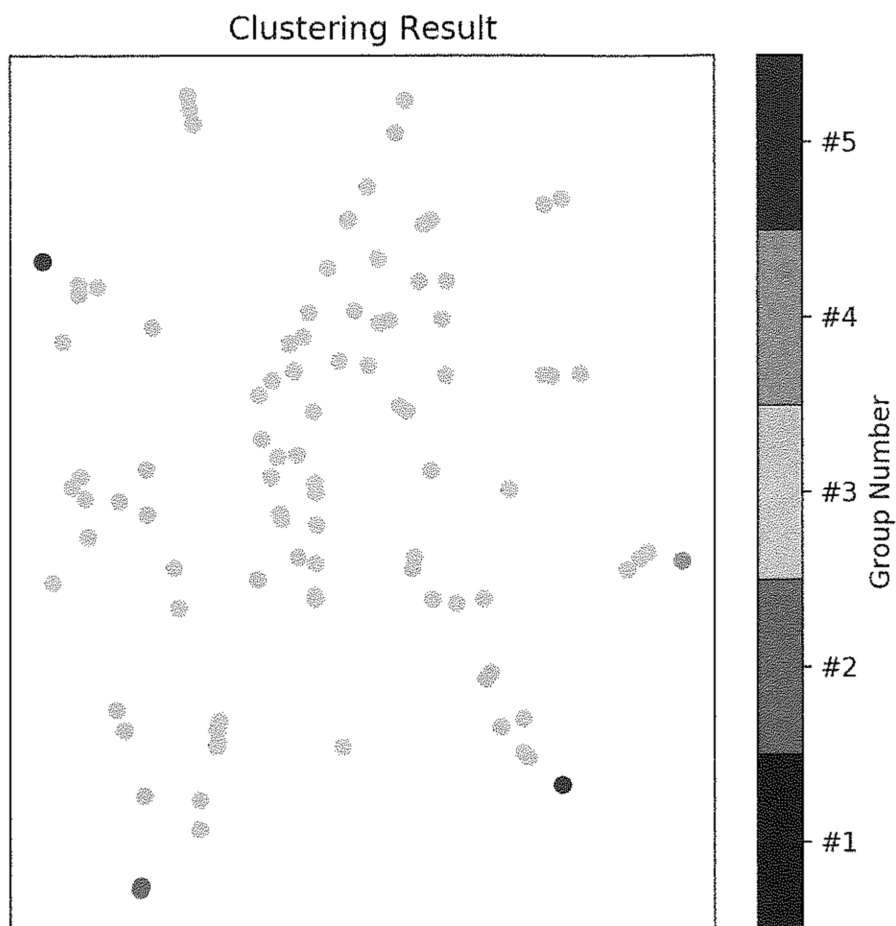

FIGURE 2.7. Clusters of writing about labor in Denmark

Third, the quantitative data also support the hypothesis that authors' depictions of institutions are consistent with the institutional rules driving education reform in Britain and Denmark. Figure 2.8 demonstrates that Danish authors make significantly more references to government in education snippets than British authors until the end of the nineteenth-century, when British reformers on the left struggle against the church to strengthen the public system. This is what we expect from a country (Denmark) where a public system is established quite early and the government (including at the local level) continues to play a major role. The importance of the state appears in Bernhard Severin Ingemann's view of the king as the guardian of the collective good who unites the people in harmony for the good of all: "If variance and discord are not soon to rend asunder all...we must necessarily be united...in lawful obedience to the majesty

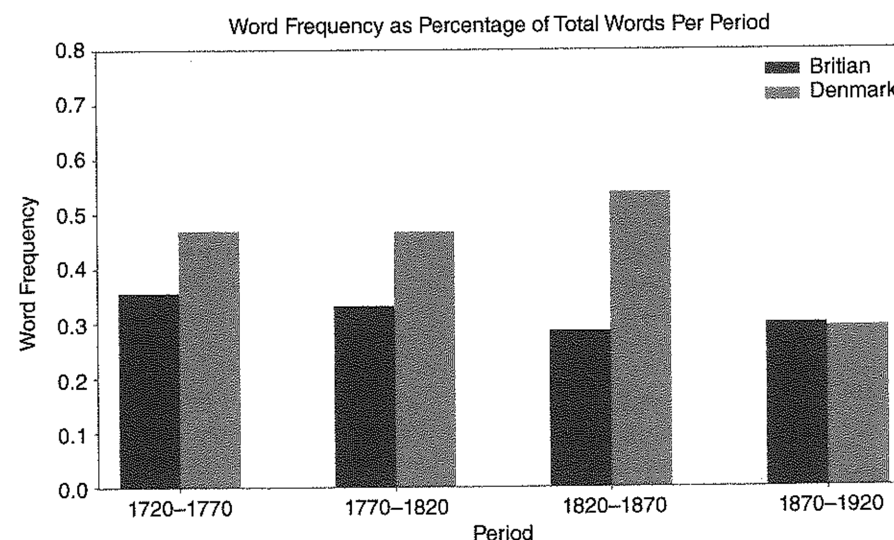

FIGURE 2.8. Frequency of state words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English state words include: "nation, government, ministry, authority, law, legal, illegal, judgment, judge, council, commission, committee, public, municipality, parish, king, kingdom, crown, throne"

Danish state words include: "stat, regering, ministerium, myndighed, lov, gyldige, ulovlig, vudering, dom, råd, commission, uvalg, offentlig, kommune, sogn, konge, rig, krone, trone"

A similar figure appeared in Martin 2018.

and divinity of the crown" (Ingemann 1913/1828, loc 5225–6). Writers recognize that government serves a positive role in promoting industrial projects, as when the protagonist in *Lucky Per* (*Lykke Per*) develops an ingenuous plan for a waterway to capture power from waves and wind that is greeted with great interest by local authorities and investors (Pontoppidan 2019/1898). Moreover, government interventions help to offset corruption. Jacob Knudsen in *The Old Priest* (*Den Gamle Præst*) describes the corruption of a private school-building project. The cabal leading the project is "almost unregulated, in any case erratic – also in a moral sense"; therefore, external regulation and oversight are necessary to stop private abuse of power (Knudsen 1901, 29).

How different is the view of government offered by British novelists, as even the most progressive writers continuously disparage government capacities to redress social ills. Dickens ridicules self-interest in the legal system, as when *David Copperfield's* Mr. Spenlow remarks, "the best sort of professional business...[was] a good case of a disputed will...[with] very pretty pickings" (Dickens 1850, 366). William Morris – a pillar of the Democratic Socialist

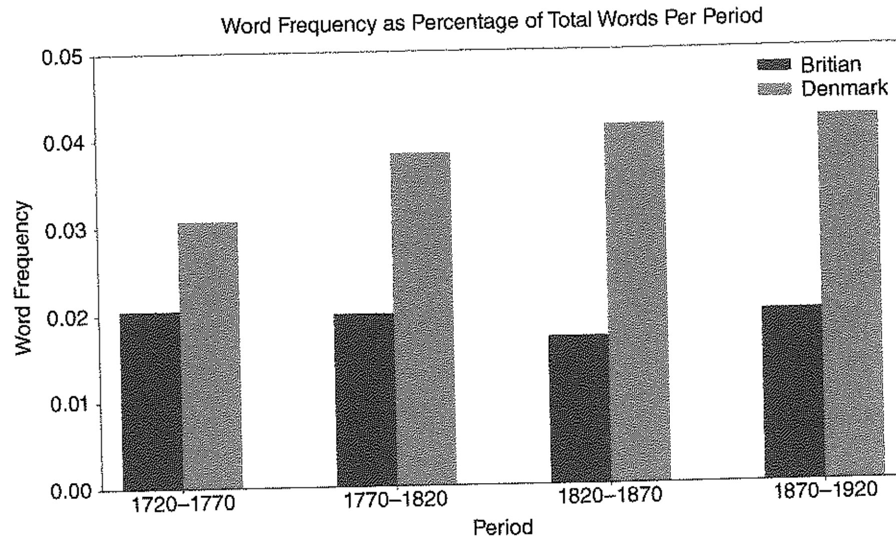

FIGURE 2.9. Frequency of cooperation words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English words include: "agreement, arbitration, bargaining coalition, collaboration, collective, compromise, cooperation, coordination, negotiation, pact, settlement, unanimous, unity, confederation, federation, union"

Danish words include: "aftale, voldgift, forhandling, coalition, samarbejde, fælle, krompromise, medvirkning, samordning, overenskomst, forlig, ordning, enstemmig, enhed, forbund, forening, fagforening"

Federation and later the Socialist League – is deeply sympathetic to workers, yet in his utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*, all institutions (states *and* markets) disappear. A guest from the past is told that the "whole people is our Parliament" (Morris 1890, 72).

Danish frequencies of government words in the education snippets decline in the late nineteenth-century. This reflects the modernist genre, in which authors are less normative and more experiential in their writing. Moreover, although education under the absolute monarchy is an elite project, schooling becomes more of a bottom-up process that is apparent, for example, in the folk high school movement inspired by NFS Grundtvig. The 1864 war strengthens the importance of civil society (Korsgaard 2004; Kaspersen 2020, 184) and the balance between state and society also shifted with the increasing importance of self-regulation by the social partners (Martin and Swank 2012).

Figure 2.9 shows that Denmark has significantly higher levels of cooperation words than Britain. This again shows some correspondence between cultural touchstones and the more consensual, cooperative politics of education reform in Denmark than in Britain, where extensive partisan and religious struggle contributes to a fractious politics.

Expectations of cooperation and peaceful negotiation are a constant drumroll in Danish literature. A favorable view toward industrial cooperation appears in Henrik Pontoppidan's Nobel-prize winning *Lucky Per* (Pontoppidan 2019, 480). In Johannes Ewald's (1889/1773, 30) wildly popular poetic play, *The Death of Balder* (*Balders Død*), heroine Nanna rails against useless conflict and male bellicosity. Balder loves Nanna; Nanna loves Hother; Hother wants to fight Balder for honor's sake; Nanna would only suffer from Hother's "heroic" death. This 250-year-old he said/she said debate gets at an essential truth about the cultural underpinnings of cooperation in Denmark – conflict is a waste of time.

Hother: The slave only feareth.	**Nanna:** The hero can fall!
Hother: Ah then his fame cheereth	His bride in her thrall.
Nanna: Ah then his bride weeps!	**Hother:** She's honour'd.
Nanna: She weepeth!	**Hother:** She's honour'd.
Nanna: And weepeth.	
Hother: Ah, then his fame cheereth	His bride in her thrall.
Both: Ah, then his fame cheereth	His bride in her thrall.
Nanna: Ah, if thou now fallest?	**Hother:** And if I now fall?
Nanna: Then I shall be wasted	By ne'er-ceasing smart.
Hother: But were my fame blasted	Then break would thy heart

In Britain, fighting the good fight is bred in the bone. Hughes celebrates the fighting spirit of the fictious Brown family in Tom Brown's Schooldays, who are the "chief cause of that [British] empire's stability" (Hughes 2012/1857, 2). "One may question their wisdom, or wit, or beauty, but about their fight there can be no question." The British nation should be "properly sensible of how much of its greatness it owes to the Browns...Whenever the fleets and armies of England have won renown, there stalwart sons of the Browns have done yeomen's work" (1). Charles Macay's famous poem, "No Enemies," finds fault with those who miss an opportunity for conflict: "You've never turned the wrong to right. You've been a coward in the fight" (www.poetrynook.com/poem/no-enemies).

Figure 2.10 demonstrates that, as expected, Britain authors make significantly more references to assessment words than did Danish authors. This fits with British expectations that government should engage in quality control, regulation, and assessment to assure that education meets the requirements to fully educate the individual. By the mid-nineteenth century, British writers increasingly lament the deplorable quality of schools and they come to support greater oversight by a centralized educational administration, a strong assessment regime and expanded regulation to improve quality. John Stuart Mill posits the need for government intervention: "The uncultivated cannot be competent judges of cultivation...Education, therefore, is one of those things...that a government should provide for the people" (Mill 1848, 947–8). Thackeray abhors

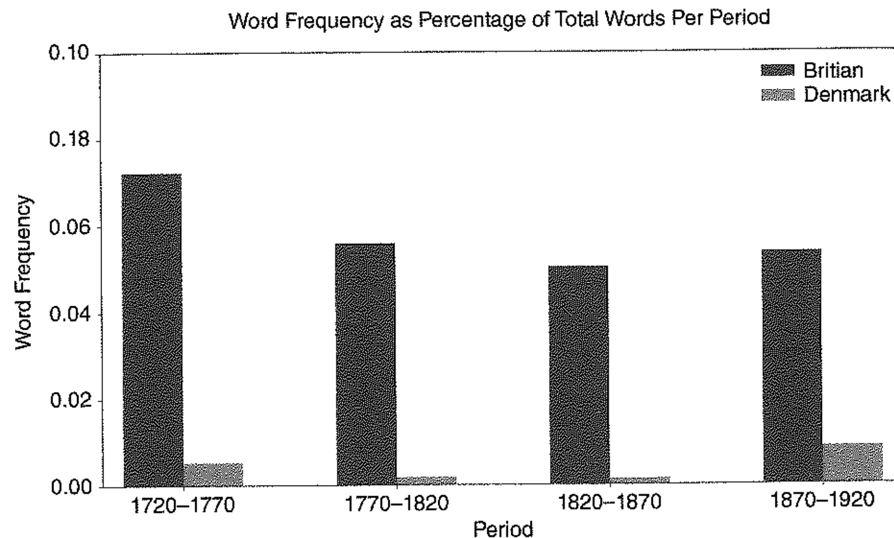

FIGURE 2.10. Frequency of assessment words in education snippets in Britain and Denmark

English words include: "quality, regulation, standards, assessment, evaluation, monitor, examination, inspect, inspection"

Danish words include: "kvalitet, regulering, standard, vudering, evaluering, overvåge, eksamen, inspicere, inspection"

the state of English education and his own school, Charterhouse, becomes "Slaughterhouse" in *Pendennis* (Gargano 2008, 44–55). Dickens sees merit in some schools: for example, in *David Copperfield*, Doctor Strong's school makes "an appeal, in everything, to the honour and good faith of the boys" (Dickens 1850, 225). Yet David suffers greatly at Mr. Creakle's Salem House where "Half the establishment was writhing and crying, before the day's work began" (88). David learns little, because the "boys were...too much troubled and knocked about to learn" (93). Dickens' *Nickolas Nickleby* (1839) depicts an abusive Yorkshire cheap school and the novel's immense success helps to close a huge number of the Yorkshire schools in the wake of its publication (Collins 1963, 104).

CONCLUSION

A cultural turn in political science is increasingly inspiring scholars to explore the dynamic relationship between cultural artifacts, cultural practices and political outcomes, and literature provides a promising avenue for exploration in this cultural turn. This chapter explores cultural work that transpires collectively at a structural level, or the level of the "cultural constraint." Generations

of fiction writers rework literary symbols and narratives inherited from past literary works to address the political challenges of their times. The transmission of national literary symbols and narratives passed down through the ages provide a subtext for the manner in which authors, policymakers and citizens interpret the world, construct preferences and engage in collective political struggle. Thus, one may observe empirically how literary corpora in Denmark and Britain differed enormously in representations of education, state, society and the working man over hundreds of years and how these recurring literary tropes set the context for choices about the dimensions of education systems.

An analysis of cultural touchstones in works of art constitutes an important source of cultural frames in institutional change processes, and provides an analytically distinct mechanism from path dependence for institutional continuity. Unlike policy legacies laid down at a specific moment of policy creation, cultural tropes are a recursive and repeating phenomenon. Even as they are subject to alteration over time, they sustain essential assumptions. Cultural work consequently sheds light on the moral economies underlying political economic systems such as diverse varieties of capitalism; for example, cultural touchstones anticipated the contemporary Nordic practices of consensual negotiation led by a strong state (Martin and Swank 2012). As early as the eighteenth century, Danish authors converged on a view of workers as central to the good of society; whereas, many British authors viewed workers with suspicion and feared the mob.

This work fills lacunae in the analysis of historical differences in institutional development across countries. Making cultural arguments about the distant past is more challenging than capturing cultural influences today, and an analysis of literary touchstones (and other cultural artifacts) provides a way to evaluate norms and values in the historical moment. Apart from process tracing with case studies, we have few tools for measuring historical cultural inputs and views, assessing empirically verifiable cross-national differences, evaluating how cultural symbols and practices transmit across generations, and exploring the interaction of cultural symbols with institutional change processes. We lack broad, cross-national data (e.g. from survey experiments and public opinion polls) to assess cultural distinctions and their associations with historical political developments. Social scientists risk making assumptions from the perspective of modern logics and this threatens to misrepresent historical dynamics, something that Ahmed (2010) refers to as reading history backwards. Studying fiction writers and their narratives, however, offers a tangible way to evaluate how culture matters to political outcomes. With computational linguistics and a close reading of texts, we may observe significant cross-national differences in historical literary images of education. Thus, the use of literature allows us to read history forward.