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# **UMI**

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PREVIEW

TEACHER EDUCATION FOR AMERICANIZING IMMIGRANTS  
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1871-1920:  
THE RHODE ISLAND NORMAL SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Len West, Ph.D.

The University of Connecticut, 1995

Today we are in a new era of immigration to the United States. Public school classrooms in southern New England and most other regions of the country, have newly arrived immigrant students. Some arrive as displaced persons and refugees. Others come to America in search of better opportunities. Now, there is renewed interest in education regarding the processes of enculturation by which newcomers to our country become United States citizens, and the methods of preparing school teachers to help socialize them into being "good" Americans.

The literature contains many previous studies of Americanization programs in the public schools, but lacks a scholarly examination of the normal school preparation that pre-service teachers received in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to provide these socialization experiences. This inquiry, therefore, is an historical documentary case study that focuses on one specific educational aspect of the programs at one publicly-supported state normal school during a period of heavily diverse immigration.

Len West, The University of Connecticut, 1995

It examines Americanization training at the Rhode Island Normal School (RINS) from its postbellum reopening in 1871 until its metamorphosis into the Rhode Island College of Education in 1920. The researcher believes that there are significant associations for contemporary teachers and planners of Americanization programs in the documented dynamics of this earlier teacher institution.

The study begins by introducing the research design, problem statement, research questions, and a review of related literature to help orient readers to the domain of Americanization education for immigrants and their children. Next, data are examined regarding then contemporary socio-cultural forces that would have impacted on the training of future Americanization agents at RINS. Data regarding the documented cultural diversity of RINS' own students and faculty during the period being studied are then examined. Lastly, the curriculum and instruction at RINS over the five-decade period are analyzed in order to demonstrate the relevant Americanization content. The study's findings regarding teacher preparation for Americanizing immigrant constituencies, beginning at the Rhode Island Normal School over a century ago, are interpreted in light of relevant philosophies and theories - then and now.

TEACHER EDUCATION FOR AMERICANIZING IMMIGRANTS

IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1871-1920:

THE RHODE ISLAND NORMAL SCHOOL PROGRAMS

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A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

The University of Connecticut

1995

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**PREVIEW**

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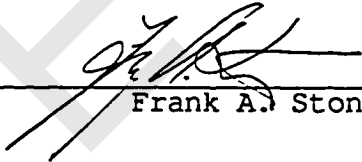
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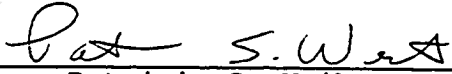
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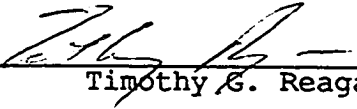
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To the best of my professors  
from July 7, 1981 to May 21, 1995;

I owe the successes to you,  
only the failures are mine alone

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The members of my advisory committee deserve recognition and thanks. Dr. Frank A. Stone, Professor Emeritus of International Education, has been one of my instructors since 1981 and my major advisor since 1989. Dr. Patricia S. Weibust, Associate Professor of Educational Anthropology, introduced me to the study of comparative education and the ethnography of schooling. Dr. Timothy G. Reagan, Associate Professor of Educational Studies, gave me counsel regarding educational historiography and school programs for Americanizing immigrants and their children. Other faculty who encouraged my studies were Dr. Farah Ibrahim, Dr. James O'Neil, and Dr. Glenn Atkyns. Ms. Judith DeLottie at The Homer Babbidge Library helped with all my research.

This study is based on documentation at The Rhode Island Historical Society Library, The Rhode Island State Library, and the James P. Adams Library of Rhode Island College. I especially wish to thank Ms. Marlene Lopes, who so conscientiously cares for the Rhode Island Normal School archives in Special Collections.

Several other persons in Rhode Island have shared with me their knowledge. Dr. James Davis taught me word

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My education students, past and present at Rhode Island College, The University of Connecticut, and The University of Wyoming have been my best reward as a teacher educator.

## FOREWORD

Today we are in a new era of immigration to the United States. Classrooms in southern New England, and most other regions of the country, have newly arrived immigrant students. Some arrive as displaced persons and refugees. Others come to America in search of better opportunities. Now, however, there is renewed interest in the processes of socialization by which newcomers to our country become American citizens, and the methods of preparing teachers to help them be good Americans.

There have been many previous studies of Americanization programs in the public schools, but nobody has examined the professional training that prospective educators received in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to provide these socialization experiences. This inquiry, therefore, takes an unusual direction. It is an historical case study of the preparation to be Americanization agents of the students attending the Rhode Island Normal School (RINS) over a fifty year period from 1871 to 1920. The researcher believes that there are significant associations for contemporary teachers and planners of Americanization programs in the documented dynamics of this earlier institution.

The present study has been organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the research design, problem statement, and research questions. There is also a "Review of Related Literature" intended to help orient readers to the domain of Americanization education for immigrants and their children. The case study of pre-service education at RINS begins in Chapter Two with an examination of the contemporary socio-cultural factors that must have impacted on training to be Americanization agents there. Chapter Three presents data regarding the cultural diversity at RINS during the period being studied. Chapter Four contains an analysis of the curriculum and instruction at RINS over the five decade period, in order to demonstrate the enculturalization methodologies that it contained.

The final chapter is a "Summary of Findings and Conclusions" in which the theoretical rationale of intercultural and citizenship education for immigrants is compared with the training given to RINS students between 1871 and 1920. Some recommendations for further research are also made here. Thus the implementations of teacher preparation to be agents of Americanization with immigrant constituencies, beginning at RINS over a century ago, are interpreted in light of relevant philosophies and theories - then and now.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

'Whatever you would have appear in the life of a nation, you must put into the schools,' is a Prussian maxim which led to the founding of German normal schools, in the eighteenth century. We may add another maxim equally true. Whatever you would put into the schools, you must first put into the teachers, through the agencies, which prepare them for their work.<sup>1</sup>

Donald Warren's 1991 Presidential Address to the History of Education Society featured a case study of Rhode Island's Dorr Rebellion, 1842, (the locals call it "The Dorr War") as a vehicle for better understanding educational history. Warren demonstrates that the Dorr episode is many sided. Examining it in a detailed case study provides insights into various aspects of the Rhode Islanders' perspectives and socio-political processes during that era.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, this case study of how prospective teachers at their Normal School, beginning some three decades after Dorr, were trained (explicitly or implicitly) to instruct immigrant students is a means of learning more about the procedures associated with Americanization and the public schools.

Americanization in the public schools has proceeded along two distinct lines: (1) adult education and (2) school programs for the children of immigrants. Fluency in English has always been considered essential for Americanization.

School programs have attempted to: (1) equip the children with functional specialities that would contribute to their usefulness and concomitant integration into American society aided by vocational guidance, industrial education, and domestic education; and (2) develop within the immigrant child a sense of identity with American ideals and standards of citizenship. These considerations have been addressed in the school's academic curriculum, extracurricular activities and other aspects of school life. In some communities schools established separate instruction in so-called "steamer classes" for non-English speaking immigrants; first, to teach them the English language and then to move them into the appropriate grade level of regular public school life as quickly as possible.<sup>3</sup>

There are several philosophical perspectives that have attempted to describe the relationship of immigrants to the pluralistic nature of the United States. Although differing over methodology, the various Americanization theories seek to produce an organized and harmonious social system with core values which can be shared by all Americans.<sup>4</sup> Whether the core values actually are shared is another matter. Philosophical perspectives and theories are examined in detail in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

The present study is set in the smallest state with the longest name, The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Its aim is to examine over a five decade period (1871-1920) the origins of some of the perplexities that

still persist regarding how teachers should educate newcomers to America.

Rhode Island, with its whirring mills and churning factories, located conveniently between Boston and New York City, the major points of entry into the United States from Europe for immigrants arriving by ship, attracted many of the new arrivals. Another factor directing immigrants there in the late nineteenth century was that when Boston and New York had admitted their monthly quotas, subsequent "steamers" could be diverted to the neighboring Port of Providence. That city, the hub of Providence County, and eventual capital was "...one of America's important cities in 1880. By 1925 it had been outstripped in size by many others, but it remained a relatively large urban center."<sup>5</sup> Approximately three quarters of the immigrants to the state settled in Providence County.

The state-supported "old" Normal School was originally opened in 1854, closed near the end of the American Civil War in 1865, and then reopened in 1871. This inquiry concerning one particular aspect of its program, therefore, begins with the postbellum permanent reopening of the "new" Normal School in 1871. The instructional processes and curriculum content with which its prospective public school (elementary) teachers were trained to enculturate immigrant children to the dominant ways of American thinking, speaking, and behaving are examined over a period of fifty years. The RINS was ultimately transformed into the four-year degree granting

Rhode Island College of Education by the state General Assembly in 1920, the terminal date for this study. Rhode Island College of Education, in turn, became today's Rhode Island College with the 1958 school year. Between 1871 and 1920, however, the Normal School prepared over seventy percent of Rhode Island's public school teachers. It became, "...the largest institute of its kind in New England."<sup>6</sup>

The span of years for the new permanent School fortuitously overlaps the era from 1880 to 1920 when the second great wave of immigration to the United States occurred. According to Edson during this period, "a close relationship was established between work and schooling that became permanently embedded in both the structure and ideology of American public schooling."<sup>7</sup>

The Task Force on New Immigrants and American Education, 1989, has characterized this time in American immigration, as "...the great period of immigration from 1880 to 1920," when the newcomers sought, "...to establish themselves by means of unskilled or semi-skilled labor."<sup>8</sup> It is pointed out that these means of entry into the American mainstream are largely non-existent today. So a major function for which most late nineteenth century immigrants were being prepared in the American public schools has been radically changed.

Originally, prospective teachers at the state's normal school would have been professionally prepared to enculturate children (native and immigrant), most of whose mother tongue

was already English. Even if they knew Gaelic, which many Irish immigrants did not, the Irish usually spoke English. The French Canadians, mostly from rural Quebec, were not necessarily fluent in English; but they, like most of the other newcomers to Rhode Island in the nineteenth century, had had at least some prior exposure to the language and experience with English common law and constitutional government. Most had been farmers, but they could adjust to becoming wage laborers in American factories.<sup>9</sup>

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, however, the immigrants' lands of origin were shifting to predominantly central, eastern, and southern Europe. This was the beginning of the great Italian migration to southern New England. At this time Greek refugees from the Ottoman Empire also began arriving. Others were Armenian, Romanian, Hungarian, Portuguese, Russian and Austrian. The RINS educators, therefore, now had to prepare "new" teachers for "new" enculturation tasks with "new" immigrant children in Rhode Island common schools.

The census figures for Rhode Island indicate that the heaviest immigration into the state in the last third of the nineteenth century was from Canada, England and Ireland. After the turn of the century these same three countries persisted at the top of the immigration figures. By 1910, however, the Italian population had increased so much that it ranked in the five digits. It is one of the top four countries of origin in Rhode Island.

The foreign-born totals published between 1871 and 1920 only range between 71,630 and 178,025, respectively.<sup>10</sup> However, for "Little Rhody" these figures represent one third of the state's total population for the same period: 217,353 to 542,610.<sup>11</sup> (Please see Table 1 on Page 151.)

#### Problem Statement

Although the history of immigration to the United States has been widely studied, and the Americanization of immigrant children in the public elementary schools has also been examined, a contingent issue has been neglected. In addition to teaching the "academic curriculum content," teachers have also been active participants in the enculturation of young people into American society. If that society and its government expected the children of immigrants to the United States (1871-1920), as well as the native-born, to be formally enculturated, through what is sometimes called "the hidden curriculum," then more scholarly case studies are needed regarding how prospective teachers attending the public and private normal schools of that era were being professionally prepared to become Americanization agents.

The problem for this historical case study involves examining the documented processes and contents by which pre-service educators were being prepared at Rhode Island's only normal school for participation in the public school process of Americanizing immigrant children from 1871 to 1920. The specifics of curriculum and instruction for Americanizing

elementary school-aged immigrant children that were developed, revised or utilized at RINS during these years are analyzed and interpreted. The study interprets how a public institution preparing teachers tried to fit them to meet the continuous flow of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States at that time.

Today, this issue is still of pressing importance to educators. For countless millions of the world's dissatisfied, disaffected, and disenfranchised, becoming "American" remains the dream. However, what has been done with the immigrants in order to enable them to pursue their dreams and enter into American society once they have arrived here? This dissertation will contribute to answering this question during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries at one specific institution.

#### Research Questions

1. What were the cultural forces (economic, legal, political and social) that may have affected the RINS programs of Americanization education training between 1871 and 1920?
2. What faculty and student cultural diversity (age, ethnicity, exceptionality, gender, race, religion) is evident from 1871 to 1920 at the Rhode Island Normal School?
3. What specific curriculum content and instructional processes were developed, revised or utilized between 1871 and 1920 at the Rhode Island Normal School and intended for

the teachers' application in the public elementary schools of Rhode Island to help Americanize immigrant children?

#### Methods and Procedures

According to Jacques Barzun and Henry E. Graff, "theoretically, everything we can think of has its history."<sup>12</sup> Written records are kept concerning nearly all institutions and organizations, not just to document their activities, but also as stores of experience. Three basic concepts that underlie historical research are causation, change, and continuity. By causation the historian means identifying the factors that contribute to observable outcomes. Therefore, an historical researcher in education must seek documentary evidence of what occurred while "explaining the political and social context in which the changes were made."<sup>13</sup> The change may be gradual or sudden, cumulative or radical. But one of the goals of historical research is tracing the process of change, as in the present study within Rhode Island's only public institution for teacher education from 1871 to 1920. The historical researcher must also ascertain those features of the institution's activities that persist over time. These form the basis for its structural and functional continuity, even while changes are occurring to alter it.<sup>14</sup> For example, a school can utilize a general "curriculum" while at the same time periodically revising the specific "content" of that curriculum.

The methodology for this case study is documentary historical inquiry. The point of entry for data collection involved determining the locations of extant relevant archival original and primary historical documentation of the state's normal school and the state's educational policy, 1871 to 1920. These materials are preserved in the Rhode Island Normal School Archives, Rhode Island State Library, and the Rhode Island Historical Society. The archival sources include handwritten documents, published materials, educational journals, and other periodicals of the period.

A narrative is then developed, as the study unfolds, concerning the research questions that presents germane data, in an interpretive framework reflecting relevant theories and perspectives of other scholars. Statistical and photographic evidence is employed, whenever available, in order to contribute to the explication. Contrasts and comparisons between the findings of the RINS case study and similar relevant research are then made. Conclusions are drawn as to whether "labels" from the various immigration philosophies of the period can be applied. Indications of the target groups of immigrant elementary school students having been in families that were "pushed" as emigrant refugees or "pulled" as upwardly mobil immigrants are considered. Current theory and practices are utilized in some cases, in order to identify educational precursors or trends. Educational practices have not always reflected the same perspectives.

Some ideas have been ahead of their time while others have suffered culture lag.

### Internal and External Validity

This study is delimited to coincide with the second large period of immigration to America by beginning with the postbellum reopening of the RINS in 1871 and concluding with its metamorphosis into the Rhode Island College of Education in 1920. Documents form the data sources, drawn from the period being investigated. Although a variety of perspectives is presented in the documentation, all the principal players in the Normal School's life are dead.

This is a case study of one educational aspect of the professional preparation of pre-service elementary school teachers at a specific state normal school. The findings cannot be generalized to other states until other similar case studies have been produced. It is not examining Americanization in the public schools but rather how prospective teachers were prepared to function as Americanization agents. How, or whether, they actually applied what they had been taught is the subject for a further study just as this dissertation is a further study suggested by Hector Richard Carbone's 1971 Ph.D. dissertation at The University of Connecticut concerning the RINS.

### A Review of Related Literature

When examining the Rhode Island dynamics of how prospective teachers were prepared to instruct immigrant