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## The Montessori Method in America: Montessori Schools in New York and Rhode Island From 1910-1940

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN AMERICA:  
MONTESSORI SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK  
AND RHODE ISLAND FROM 1910-1940

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

BY

KATARI I. COLEMAN

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2011

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For my parents, Thomas and Catherine Coleman and my cousin, Sandra Carey.

And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.

*Maria Montessori*

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## ABSTRACT

During the very early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. Maria Montessori produced a pedagogical approach that permitted the developmental delayed, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and the youngest of children to advance their cognition and adaptive skills to conventional standards. Her renowned “Montessori Method” was unleashed in 1906 in her home country of Italy and found its way to the shore of the United States soon after. This research will compare the implementation of the Montessori Method in two states, Rhode Island and New York. Both states invested time and money into the instructional ideals of Dr. Montessori in response to the advice of educators and, as is frequently overlooked in the scholarly literature, at the request of parents and community organizations. This study will focus on policy implementation: the how and who, and on the overall growth and decline of Montessori programs, concentrating on the role parents played.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The story of early childhood education in the United States is a story of international borrowing and adaptation. Europe seemed to provide constructs that caught on throughout the United States and surrounding territories. Early childhood education like other social constructs crossed the Atlantic by way of scholars, educators, philanthropists, media and religious entities. Since children began school around the age of 7 or 8, concern for the cognitive, social and adaptive capabilities of younger children led these entities and independent individuals to become activists on the part of certain programmatic approaches to the education and care of young children.

The United States originally via private organizations adopted ideas from European educators like Johann Pestalozzi, Robert Owens and others. The adoption started with Infant Schools during the early to mid nineteenth century, which was a safe outlet for mothers who worked to leave their young children. In the United States there were two types of Infant Schools; charity infant schools for poor children and private infant schools for the upper classes (Beatty, 2006). In 1830 the Women of the Infant School Society of Boston requested that infant schools be made public and available to all (Beatty, 2006). This request was denied due to monetary issues and was a short lived concept but provided the foundation for what was to come.

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was the adoption of the McMillian sisters' concept of the Nursery School which provided enrichment to young children, but turned out to benefit children of wealthy families in the United States.

Originally in England, Margaret and her sister, Rachel had a more altruistic concept as they provided their nursery school for poor children with an emphasis on health. The United States put a different spin on their concept through the creation of Parent Cooperative Nursery Schools in 1920, which today are normally administrated exclusively by parent/community boards (Taylor, 1954).

Almost simultaneous to the start of the nursery school progression across the nation there was the emergence of Froebel's Kindergarten straight out of Germany as an answer to America's educational needs for young children. The first kindergartens in the United States were private and taught by German immigrants in the middle 1800s. Kindergartens were promoted by American educators like Elizabeth Peabody and received foundational (financial) support from charity societies created by women like Pauline Agassiz Shaw (Beatty, 2006). Per the appeal of supporters kindergartens unlike infant schools were made public, therefore available to all children in 1888 – the first public kindergarten was in St Louis, Missouri (US Bureau of Education, 1889). Both the Nursery School and Kindergarten concepts stuck and are still very visible in the present landscape of American early childhood education today. These programs, specifically the Kindergarten were believed to have the ability to transform not only the child but the entire family therefore included components like home visiting and mother's groups that would actively work with the family in some capacity as part of the Americanization process.

Another method of instruction for young children that came across the Atlantic, specifically from Italy was the Montessori Method. Like the other instructional approaches awareness was brought to light due American visitation abroad and subsequent literature in the way of articles made available to the American public. This method became an international sensation attracting educators, politicians, philanthropists and the like and soon there was the need to train individuals that wished to replicate this method, like those mentioned above.

Dr. Maria Montessori the creator of the Montessori Method was a unique individual especially for her time. First, she was the first female physician in Italy and secondly, she was not afraid to follow her interest and desires. She was drawn to the welfare of children, at first the mentally-ill, then children from the slums of Rome and consequently, all children. Her methodology can be characterized by an emphasis on self-directed activity on the part of the child and clinical observation on the part of the teacher (directress) referred to as auto-education. She believed that the child's learning environment must be adapted to his or her developmental level, and that physical activity is essential in the child's absorption of abstract concepts and practical skills. This amongst a few other pedagogical approaches of her time initiated the concept of "child-centered" practices in education. She opened her first school "La Casa dei Bambini" in 1906 (Kramer, 1967). These children fared similarly or above the children of aristocrats educationally. Soon she received the opportunity to apply her instructional approach to normal children.

The Montessori Method was embraced by educators, politicians, inventors, child advocates and the like. A formal US introduction to Montessori and her method was

made in 1907, when she delivered several lectures in east coast cities, met with supporters, and visited schools utilizing her method. Her appeal seemed promising as Americans seemed to generate immense interest in her method (Kramer, 1967). But, soon after her last career-related visit her popularity and the popularity of her method diminished.

The advent of certain factors within the American education system during this time had an effect on the proliferation of Montessori's overall recognition throughout the United States. A major factor was the jargon expressed by prominent progressive educators like William Heard Kilpatrick, John Dewey and Elwood Patterson Cubberly also known as the pedagogical progressives. Their progressive ideas or better put opinions regarding pedagogy provided a blockade for the Montessori Method. Issues cited as inappropriate or reason not to support/administer were; the young age of children Montessori claimed could receive instruction, the lack of intentional socialization, the lack of activity of the teacher, focus on sensory training, the accusation that Montessori environments did not promote the child's use of his or her imagination, etc. In addition, Kilpatrick states in reference to Montessori's use of sensory training, which is the heart of her method, "For my part, to put these generally into any sort of kindergarten would be very undesirable" (Kindergarten Review, 1912, p. 268).

Administrative progressives focused on the efficiency of schools resulting in a centralized national school administration, a national student body curriculum, use of standardized tests for assessment, tracking and standardized teacher training. The use of standardized tests fashioned after Simon-Binet Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test help determine the future field of study of students, from the classes that were offered through

American schools. During this time in history there was a belief that IQ was fixed (Linden & Linden, 1968). But, there is claim that Montessori's methods could correct and/or raise IQ among special needs and disadvantaged children (Orem, 1968).

Out of her original American supporters there were the faithful few that held on to the belief that the Montessori Method had a purpose and place within the national education scene, if not as the major pedagogical approach but an option at the minimum.

Throughout the 1900s there was an estimate of thousands of schools using this method (Kramer, 1976). Due to implementation of her ideas into the minds of parents during her initial visits to the United States there was a slight spark that smoldered beneath the blustery weather of the American education system specifically with regards to the edification of young children. Around the late 1950s like a blaze the Montessori Method resurfaced as an alternative to the traditional authoritarian instructional approaches being fostered not only in early childhood but elementary and high school grades.

Montessori promoted a cooperative role between parents and teacher. Many believed that her work contributed to the founding of parent-teacher organizations (Morgan, 1999). Prior to official parent-teacher organizations parents were active throughout the formation of the American school system, but their roles have wavered back and forth from adversary to advocate depending on the issue at that very time. Montessori as well as other educators knew the profound effect that parents have on the cognitive development of their young children.

## Parent Involvement in United States

Parent involvement began in 1841 as the women of Kensington, Connecticut organized a Female Common School Association that met monthly to hear student recitations and do “good works” (Cutler, 1980, p. 15). In the late 1800s it was characterized by way of mother’s clubs which were extensions of American kindergartens. These clubs that serviced the lower socio-economic immigrant populations sought to provide instruction on motherhood and what it meant to be an American. In an effort to make sure the home is on the same page as the classroom the Public Education Association (PEA) sponsored lectures for mothers to address; pedagogy, curriculum, etc. (Cutler, 1980). Hiati (1994) reminds us that the National Congress of Mothers (NCM) began in 1897 which was comprised of middle and upper class mothers that met on Saturdays. The NCM materialized into what is known today as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), which like Mother’s Clubs helped to Americanize newcomers to the United States and worked to enlighten then middle with parenting education. The PTA is America’s first noted collaboration with school professionals and parents. Boston’s public schools seemed to be the catalyst with the first celebrated Home and School Association (previous name for PTA) in 1905 which multiplied into associations all over the United States (Cutler, 1980). By the 1940s PTA meetings were perceived as mandatory participation events (Hiati, 1994).

Dating back to 1898 there has been a push from the National PTA for children to attend school earlier (Cutler, 1980). This was probably due to the impression left by the nursery school movement in an effort to save the immigrant and the poor (normally they were one in the same). In addition, there was a plea from middle class parents that

opportunities for early education should be for all children. These parents diligently stayed abreast of the latest ideologies and methodologies in early childhood education.

In a Carnegie Hall lecture in New York City Montessori spoke directly to parents in the audience. She insisted on a role for parents identifying them as the child's first teacher (Morgan, 1998). Her ideas of parental responsibility as it connects to child development were not in sync with the public school system because the school was promoted as the ultimate and only place for bona fide learning.

Montessori's prevalence in the lives of parents can be confirmed by the need for media outlets to address parents openly. In the article "How to Teach Mothers the Montessori of Child Control" mothers were given directions as to how to get children to attend to activities (Margulies, 1912). In another 1913 article in the *New York Times* she censured parents for child restrictions but informed them of what they should allow children to accomplish. Parents were further influenced by Dorothy Canfield Fisher's 1912 publications of *A Montessori Mother* and *Montessori for Parents*. These were official American guides for interested mothers, which catalyzed a middle class following. There was a follow-up Canfield publication in 1914 geared towards parents, *The Montessori Manual* which further validated Montessori's popularity amongst parents.

Parental input into pedagogical techniques was not the norm at this time. The Montessori Method as well as other methods received its initial support by famed politicians, educators and philanthropists for that reason parental backing was a shift. Wills (1966) as well other historians alike resolve parents to have been the medium in which the Montessori Method is still alive.



Taking the stance that parental support may have been a factor of continuation for early childhood education programs and/or approaches like the Montessori Method, a look at state support and utility can be effective. The Montessori Method in the United States was first applied in the environs of New York City in Tarrytown, New York by private funding through the financial institution we know today as J.P. Morgan (Wikipedia, 2010). Private funding was the major means of financing for Montessori schools.

State supported Montessori schools and classrooms are nothing out of the ordinary today but historical exploration reveals minimum state support during the early 1900s. Two states did employ the method with use of state funds. Which to some extent leads to the first research question that guides this manuscript: to what extent did parental demand affect the spread and growth of the Montessori Method in two northeastern states, Rhode Island and New York in the period 1910-1940? Tarrytown, New York is the location of the first Montessori program in America, and Rhode Island was the only state to adopt the Montessori Method as the state curriculum which affected not only instruction to children but teacher training as well. Chapters 3 and 4 will reveal the level of devotion to the ideology and methodology of Montessori by what measures and whose means.

#### Movements across the United States

Prior to further examination of Maria Montessori's method in New York and Rhode Island, an exploration of simultaneous movements that may have affected this period in history pertaining to early childhood education and thusly the Montessori Method should be briefly investigated. Simultaneous and interrelated movements defined the first half

of the twentieth century in America. Some of these were; industrialization, immigration, black migration, progressive education, mental hygiene, and eugenics just to name a few. Others movements like women's suffrage and labor unions also helped shape the climate at that time.

Industrialization became part of the fabric of the United States during the nineteenth century, when business men like Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford, and John D. Rockefeller provided employment opportunities for thousands of men and women via production assembly lines, oil refineries, factories, and other vocation environments. Industrialization was supported by the growth in the populace across the nation due to immigration and migration.

Immigrants from mostly Europe and smaller quantities from China and South America were prevalent. Migrants were mostly characterized as black-Americans (descendents of African slaves) who relocated in northern municipalities from southern towns in an attempt to escape institutional racism and secure an improved way of life. Immigration and migration spawned dynamic growth in northern cities such as; New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and the like. New York's Ellis Island was the major entry point for most immigrants.

The political climate in the United States was dictated by the need to sustain a stable and competitive nation which can be seen in the focus of each president from Theodore Roosevelt (1909-13) to Franklin Roosevelt (1933-45). There was the addition of two states (New Mexico & Arizona) bringing the total to 48 states, and added territories (Adams & Brink, 1990). In addition, five amendments were passed and added to the constitution, two World Wars transpired, and the nation endured the Great

Depression. The circumstances of the United States at this time made it a breeding ground to cultivate movements that affected all aspects of life, especially education inclusive of early childhood education.

### Progressive Movement

During this time period American education was influenced by a wave of ideas meant to heighten the learning potential of students and the functioning of educational institutions, known as the Progressive Era and commonly referred to as the Progressive Movement. This time in history left a lasting impression on how education is viewed and conducted within the United States. There were two distinct breeds of progressives defined by historians that developed during the Progressive Era in American education, pedagogical progressives, who conjured the ideologies and methodologies of educational reform and administrative progressives, who were responsible for the organizational changes that the nation's educational system experienced during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and are still intact today (Tyack, 1995). Both groups, like Dr. Montessori were motivated by science and the belief that society could be improved by education.

In *The Transformation of the School* historian Lawrence Cremin (1961) provides loads of insight into what individuals were responsible for the early ideas that resulted in the instructional pedagogies and methods of this era. The efforts along of those involved were provoked by industrialization and its effects on the American society. School systems in industrial cities across America were not equipped to deal with the expanding population and lead to an intense movement to reform the schools. These individuals along with many other proponents of social change set the groundwork for the great John Dewey, known as the father of Progressive Education. He believed that the greater

emphasis of education should be placed on the broadening of intellect and development of problem solving and critical thinking skills, rather than simply on the memorization of lessons, which were rooted in the similar scientific understanding that his predecessors held along with the conviction that culture and vocation inherently must be together (Cremin, 1961).

The onset of compulsory schooling across the United States allowed the ideologies of progressivism to be demonstrated in experimental educational environments, some public and private. Historian Herbert Kliebard (1995) reports that the movement morphed into the formation of the Progressive Education Association (PEA) in 1919 that experienced immense membership growth by 1930. After 1932 the PEA no longer seemed to maintain domination and the movement was altered by social reconstruction and utopian radicalism encouraged by the administrative progressives (Kliebard, 1995). Tyack (1995) explains that similar to the efforts of the pedagogical progressives, the administrative progressives functioned within a socially respectable framework fueled by the ideals of Democracy. They believed that “progress was the rule of public education and schooling would guarantee a better society” (Tyack, 1995, p. 12).

The administrative progressives focus became school system management, which deviated from the progressive education movement’s original concern with pedagogy, curriculum and school environment. This time was marked with studies by administrative progressives that attempted to prescribe pedagogy through qualitative analysis that emphasized regimentation with the intent to isolate education from politics by putting it in the hands of the experts. They instigated this by making a recommendation to abolish school boards in order to streamline management therefore resulting in an enhancement

of bureaucratic control and expansion of the school system (Tyack, 1995). While the local school districts dissolved nationally, the United States Board of Education grew stronger harnessing more influence over states' decisions.

This loss of control by local school districts and even some states superseded decisions of utilization of the Montessori Method as a choice curriculum for students. States like New York and Rhode Island attempted to support the Montessori Method, but the nation-wide reorganization of compulsory schooling halted their endeavors. This national takeover would affect every aspect of education, like teacher training, learning environment, and the implementation of testing and cookie cutter curriculum.

While the accomplishments of the administrative progressives still reverberate within the American school system today, the pedagogical progressives were met with intense criticism from traditionalists. Critics harped on the lack of discipline and parental control and the relaxed classroom atmosphere endorsed by these progressives. The capitalistic bureaucracy insinuated that the ideas and practices of the pedagogical progressives may have faltered to communist influence. They felt that the progressive instructional approaches would insight anarchy amongst the children and subsequently insight anarchy amongst the world. Unfortunately, pedagogical progressive ideas that resulted in actual academic programs usually serviced affluent children. This was an about-face to Montessori's quest to educate the youngest children of the poor, and prior to the opening of the first Casa Dei Bambini her time was spent educating the forgotten children of society, the mentally-ill and/or developmentally delayed.

Montessori wished to fashion young peace loving individuals that could maintain the existence of an equalitarian society, stressing a child's concentrated attention

(Kirkpatrick, 2008). Since America at this time required an educational concept that addressed the reformation of the immigrant child and not his individuality, the progressives' ideas were quickly adapted. The Progressive Movement meant different things to different people, but above all it brought light to the challenge of a nation's ability to provide quality education to its young.

### Mental Hygiene Movement

Concurrent to the Progressive Education movement was the Mental Hygiene movement which dealt with psychiatry from the public health perspective became influential in 1910 (Beers, 1921). Instead of focusing on the treatment of mental illness, mental hygienists emphasized early intervention, prevention, and the promotion of mental health, because they were convinced that mental illnesses/ disorders were related to early childhood experiences. The National Committee for Mental Hygiene was founded in New York in 1909 and aimed to improve conditions in mental hospitals, stimulate research in psychiatry, improve the quality of psychiatric education, develop measures preventing mental illness, and popularize psychiatric and psychological perspectives (National Committee for Mental Hygiene, Inc., 1929). Mental hygienists became convinced that preventive intervention was best directed at growing children and those individuals who had the most extensive contact with them: parents and teachers.

Starting in the 1920s, mental hygienists promoted a therapeutic perspective toward the everyday problems of children. The National Committee was instrumental in the establishment of child guidance clinics (Richardson, 1989). Child guidance clinics increasingly treated parents and children who came for help on their own initiative. Also, academic research on children became increasingly respectable and well organized as a

consequence of the funding provided by the Rockefellers, who specifically supported research in child development at several academic institutions (Rapport, 1985).

A number of educational reformers became interested in mental hygiene to provide a rationale for educational reform by claiming that the curriculum needed to be organized in conformity with insights in child development. In addition, many Progressive educators viewed the school as the place where children were trained for adjustment; they viewed the school as the preparation for life. The progressives referred to the mental hygiene movement as the *life adjustment movement* in the later 1940s claimed that the school should train the whole child and not just his or her intellect (Kliebard, 2004).

#### Eugenics Movement

Another prevalent movement that may have shaped views in education was the Eugenics movement. The American Eugenics Society (AES) was founded in 1926 by Harry Crampton, Harry H. Laughlin, Madison Grant, and Henry Fairfield Osborn with the express purpose of spearheading the eugenical movement (Black, 2004). By 1930 the AES had worked at both the scientific and popular levels, becoming a highly effective organization at disseminating practical and scientific information on genetic health, drawing attention to eugenics, and promoting eugenical research. The term 'eugenics' was coined by Sir Francis Galton in 1883 to refer to those "good in stock, hereditarily endowed to them with noble quantities" (Tischler, 2001, p. 59). Otherwise stated by Charles Davenport, Galton's U.S. disciple, eugenics was the science of "the improvement of the human race by better breeding" (Engs, 2005, p xiii)."

Science was turned to solve the seemingly obdurate problems of violence among certain groups. The science of eugenics attempted to eliminate various forms of mental disease, including manic depression, schizophrenia, and feeble-mindedness (Larson, 2006). This led to close ties with the newly emerging profession of psychometrics, the psychological theory of mental measurement, which was eagerly being employed to develop standardized IQ tests. For their part, eugenicists welcomed the IQ test as an objective and quantitative tool for measuring innate mental ability (Ravitch, 2001).

Eugenics was first embraced politically as a scientific means of halting the rising stream of "defective" immigrants who came to the United States from 1880 to 1914 seeking relief from the economic problems besetting Europe (Belk & Borden, 2004). These new immigrants arrived principally from Eastern and Southern Europe, the Balkans, and Russia and many were Jewish. These groups were ethnically and culturally distinct from earlier waves of foreigners, such as those in the mid-nineteenth century who had migrated mostly from Anglo-Saxon countries of Western Europe such as Germany, England, Ireland, and Scotland. Too many Americans these new immigrants were considered "the dregs of humanity" and mentally deficient (as confirmed by tests such as those Goddard administered at Ellis Island), socially radical (many had been involved in trade-union activities in Europe), and willing to work for low wages, thus taking jobs away from hard-working Americans (Simon, 1985).

They called for rational planning and scientific management of every phase of society. Economically they substituted laissez-faire views for an emphasis on state intervention and promoted the use of trained experts in setting economic and social regulatory policies. The movement preached the doctrine of efficiency, which applied



cost-benefit analysis and emphasized solving problems at their root, rather than after a crisis has arisen, for example, as in preventive medicine.

The Eugenics movement quickly became standard education in high school Biology and College. By 1928, the American Genetics Association boasted that there were 376 college courses devoted exclusively to eugenics. High-school biology textbooks followed suit by the mid-1930s, with most containing material favorable to the idea of eugenical control of reproduction. It changed the structure of American thought on pregnancy and childbearing. It has established basic conventions for academic work on race and for observational research more generally. Eugenics has provided a very real and deep historical root for resistance to fertility control services (McWorther, 2009).

Eugenics was directly popularized by "progressivism" and its political incarnation, the Progressive Party, whose representative, Theodore Roosevelt, held the presidency from 1901 to 1909 (Ayers, Gould & Oshinsky, 2008). Progressive ideology was seen as the modern approach, and hence "progressive" by the standards of the day. In addition, it can be connected to the American Nativist Movement.

#### Nativist Movement

The Nativist Movement, known as Nativism is considered the fear and hatred of the foreign, specifically religious or ethnic minorities, as well as opposing political factions. Catholics were the first to experience the intolerance basically due to the religious ideals of the initial European settlers being Puritans, who were committed to creation of a church without Roman influence or corruption. Intolerant acts became more prevalent as the number of European Catholics immigrants increased throughout the 1800s.

The creation of secret societies such as the Know Nothing party gave rise to the nation's second largest political organization. After the Civil War there was a new crop of European immigrants including not only Catholics but Jews as well. The American Protective Association, one of the largest nativist organizations came about at this time and had an extremely large membership of 500,000 members (Higham, 2002). Nativism declined during the progressive era but it was revived by World War I. By the 1920s, a new organization the Klu Klux Klan had a membership of over 2.5 million members whose bound was based on anti-catholic, anti-Semitic, anti- foreign, and anti-black principles. In addition, the Immigration Act of 1924, restricting immigration and establishing national quotas specifically against southern and eastern Europe was the outcome of a campaign by the Immigration Restriction League (Bennett, 1995).

The Montessori Method was created by none other than a catholic, Italian woman and introduced to the United States with the face of Maria Montessori. The Nativist and Eugenics Movements may have presented as barriers to Montessori due to her ethnicity and religious affiliation. In addition, she was a woman during a time of great deliberation on the rights of women in the United States, which leads to the discussion of another movement in states at this time, the Women's Suffrage Movement.

#### Women's Suffrage Movement

Women's Suffrage must be mentioned as an outgrowth of the general women's rights movement that officially began with the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848. This sparked when several leading figures in the antislavery movement had begun to question the political and economic subjugation of women in a society that claimed to be a democracy, the most influential leaders being Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B.

Anthony. What started as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) became the National League of Women Voters in 1920 and then just the League of Women Voters (Cullen-DuPont, 2000).

The first fractional suffrage was achieved when several states allowed widows to vote in school board elections, which many people considered to be a reasonable extension of a woman's concern for issues having to do with home and family. The first extension of voting rights to women took place in 1869, in the Wyoming Territory, prior to this state's entrance into the union in 1890. One by one, states began to extend this right to their women with Wisconsin being the last at this time in 1919 (Baker, 2002). Active participation of women in the nation's war effort from 1917 to 1918 helped to support for a constitutional amendment enfranchising women. On January 10, 1918 the amendment passed the house and senate, and then once Tennessee ratified it in 1920, it officially became part of the U.S. Constitution on August 26, 1920, as the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution (Baker, 2002).

#### The National Labor Movement

The National Labor Movement during this time was fueled by the struggle between the industrial worker and his employer, big business, for that reason this movement can be said to be centered on the sociological concept of class. Labor disputes in the United States can be traced back to the days of slavery and the movement is documented to have begun as early as 1820. The first American organization for workers, the National Union was formed in New York City in 1864 (McNeil & Powderly, 1886.) In 1908 The federal Employers Liability Act was passed From 1910-

1940 there was a great deal of efforts to revolutionize worker conditions and compensation for industrial occupations (Foner, 1977).

Previously mentioned movements such as women's suffrage and nativism, as well as, phenomena as immigration and migration affected the labor movement. Immigration was a victim of this movement as workers urged the government to put a band on immigration, to preserve the available industrial jobs for American born citizens (Foner, 1977). Migration of blacks from the south to the north was also an issue when blacks began being hired for these positions. Despite the discrimination, women and blacks were part of the labor movement, with their own organizations.

Another issue that affected the labor movement was the high unemployment rate amongst the low socioeconomic population and minorities. This post World War I repercussion made the industrial worker an expendable commodity which allowed businesses to partake in the mistreatment of workers, with limited positions and low pay. This led to the formation of groups that became known to be modern day unions which provided funds to unemployed workers. This wretched state of society led these groups to march and protest, as well as strike. The hard work put forth by these groups led to the establishment of strong unions that would manage the rights and needs of workers across the country.

### Conclusion

The status of the United States at this time is best described as industrious in that the people of this country were working on numerous efforts to alter the status quo in an attempt to make life better for all. Immigration, industrialization and migration are the large sociological phenomena that shaped response from government, business, and

education systems. The few movements discussed were responses to the needs and wishes of the citizenry and those to become citizens. Not all of the movements were favorable for all in America, especially those that sought to discriminate against groups.

The movements discussed have the commonalities of affecting the education system at large and therefore affecting the plight of children. Children did not exist in a vacuum at this time in history therefore parents were part of the educational equation. What was needed to care for and educate young children? Young children whether immigrants, migrants or children of the upper class required care and education to some degree, and what was the best manner? Froebel's Kindergarten, Mc Millian sisters' nursery school, Laboratory nursery school or the Montessori Method? These movements provide insight into the nation's disposition and willingness to embrace educational ideologies such as the Montessori Method at this time.

Examination of all the factors that may have had an effect on the proliferation of the Montessori Method, with the fundamental question that explored the extent to which parental demand affected the spread and growth of the Montessori Method in two northeastern states, Rhode Island and New York in the period 1910-1940, led to further possible inquiries. These inquiries are; To what extent did media/news outlets/journals affect the promotion of the Montessori Method throughout the United States?, Did specific immigrant, cultural groups in the United States prefer the Montessori Method for their children?, To what extent did social service or philanthropic entities affect the growth and continued vitality of the Montessori Method in New York City?, and Did the Womens' Suffrage Movement have an effect on the growth and/or decline of the Montessori Method in the United States? Also, I would have focused on New York

City solely due to the availability rich historical documentation. The information from historical documents and other resources exposed these added research options.

However, employment of the original question resulted in exploration into the vitality of the Montessori Method, in the states of New York and Rhode Island from 1910-1940, that will further exhibit the nation's commitment to this methodology. Parental support of the method illustrates the affect people have on systems, and system support of the method demonstrates the affect systems have on people. Overall, it is this researcher's aspiration to reveal these connections as the foundations for the ultimate success of this method in America.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MONTESSORI ENCOUNTERS THE UNITED STATES

The Montessori Method revolution can be deeply credited to a generation of readers, as the circulation of different literary publications throughout Europe and in the United States covered the significance of this pedagogical innovation. The American press continuously broadcasted the continued success of these schools and the teacher education courses offered in Rome. Inquiries, both written and by telegraph into Montessori's method and well as the woman necessitated a visit to the United States. This chapter will explore her influence on America before, during and subsequent to her initial visit to the states, which is of great value to the questions and hypothesis proposed by this researcher.

#### American Exposure and Enthusiasm

The most significant publication that covered the Montessori Method in America was not just one article but a series of articles written by Josephine Tozier appeared in 1911 in McClure's magazine (Standing, 1957). It was extremely significant because it brought the method to the minds of the American public whereas before only individuals in the field of education had knowledge of it via educational journals and word of mouth. This publication brought a description of the school and method with many photographs. This series of articles were responded to with hundreds of letters applauding Montessori, requesting a chance meeting with her and/or a chance to attend a training course, and

insisting that Montessori visit the United States (Kramer, 1976). There were criticisms of the method and its inventor, by educators, and other influential people, but in review of numerous articles that arrived on the American scene in news outlets like McClure's and the New York Times there was a flow of positive feedback.

Anne George, the first Montessori-trained American teacher opened the first American version of the "La Casa Dei Bambini" in the fall of 1911 in Tarrytown, New York, with funds from the City Bank of New York. This school which catered to children of wealthy families shared the same success Montessori experienced with the children from the slums of Rome. Historians, Gutek and Kramer both contend that George was faced with the challenge of taking over-stimulated children (due to their parents overindulgence), and facilitating their attention to the simplicity of the Montessori Method, which she prevailed. This excellent experimentation in the transplanted of a foreign pedagogy made it newsworthy resulting in the article entitled "The First Montessori School in America" in 1912 published by the Frederick Stokes Company which was part of the Harvard School of Education in Massachusetts. Other publications followed that spawned interest from prominent Americans (Kramer, 1976).

Among the initial American Montessori enthusiasts were prominent individuals such as; Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone, and his wife Mabel, Ms. Helen Keller, renowned deaf activist, Philander P. Claxton, the American Commissioner of Education and Margaret Woodrow Wilson, daughter of the president of the United States (Kramer, 1976). Their fascination with and faith in the Montessori Method sparked a revolution within the United States partly due to the influence by these enthusiasts. They would be tremendous forces in the start of schools, the creation of the American



Montessori Committee in 1912, and overall publicity of the method throughout America and the world generating international acclaim (McClure's Magazine, 1912).

Interest in the Montessori Method compounded quickly throughout the United States. It was the method now known to provide young children, despite their socio-economic background and/or disability an opportunity to have the freedom to learn. The experiment in the slums of Rome and the success with the defective children was seen as wondrous, which American supporters came to believe could help present-day immigrants, and other lower socioeconomic populations, both part of America's future become productive, responsible and harmonious citizens.

American educational, foundational and other civic organizations became enamored with the potential learning outcomes for young children in the states. Resources developed by and for Women's Clubs across the country, like the *Practical programs for women's clubs* by A.H. Cass (1915) suggested the Montessori Method as a topic for clubs that have been organized for an extensive amount of time to pursue and promote. And, most of the individuals in the field of education were influenced by the inclusion of information on the method in just about every American education journal. Both, educators and philanthropists endured the long trip across the Atlantic to personally view this remarkable approach that turned wild children from the slums of Rome into well-mannered, productive little citizens. The overall focal point seemed to be Montessori's newly found method that focused on "self discipline and self mastery"(American Education Review, 1912, p. 591).

Also, as previously discussed the national phenomenon of immigration affected many aspects of society in the states at this time. The influx of immigrants, especially

Europeans soared during the early 1900s, which impressed the need for an overhaul of the education system and produced attention to early education, to instill some order in lives of these children and their families. The young immigrant could benefit from an educational curriculum that focused on hygiene, basic daily living activities as well as basic academic skills, which the Montessori Method offered.

During this time, two of the method's original American supporters, Alexander and Mabel Bell began a Montessori class for their grandchildren in the spring of 1912 (Kramer, 1976). Their grandchildren along with other children from the community received this worldwide publicized educational training in the comforts of their home and summer home in Canada, which they affectionately called the 'Children's Laboratory'. By the fall of the year the Bells convinced their grandchildren's teachers, Ms. Roberta Fletcher and Ms. Anne George that there must be an official school started in their Washington D.C. home.

#### Montessori's Initial Voyage to the United States

The success of the method spread quickly throughout the states resulting in over one hundred schools based on Montessori's philosophy and methodology. Major supporters such as Ms. Adelia McAlpin Pyle, a family member of the Rockefellers, Helen Parkhurst, an American educator who developed the Dalton Plan, and Margaret Woodrow Wilson, President Woodrow Wilson's daughter elevated the status of Montessori and her method, which led to interest in her by individuals in the business world. McClure who was a journalist and the owner and editor of the McClure magazine became a major supporter and sponsor of Montessori. His interest was not solely based on the method but his need to pull himself out of the depths of debt so he fiercely pursued

her. He conjured up the idea of Montessori traveling to the states and undertaking a lecture tour to formally introduce her method to the American society (Kramer, 1976).

After viewing some of the motion picture films made of Montessori he went to Rome to convince her to make a voyage over the Atlantic. After listening to his promises; the formation of more Montessori schools, a teacher-training institute, didactic material production and distribution, and the institution of the method in American public schools she agreed to come. Ironically, when her fellow supporters had previously requested her presence in the states Montessori flatly turned them down. It is rather strange how she not only trusted McClure but allowed him specific benefits, for example, he secured the sole rights to films that would result from her North American lecture tour (some of these films were maintained by McClure and used by him for lectures after her American visitation).

Prior to his interest in bringing Montessori to the states he had began promoting her and her method in his magazine. As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter the first article that introduced the Montessori Method to American society written by Josephine Tozier appeared in McClure magazine in May of 1911 (Kramer, 1976). There were numerous responses that readers sent into the magazine that undoubtedly revealed the money McClure could make if he invested heavily in Montessori.

Readers of McClure magazine directed questions such as; how and where they could become trained on the method, where they could observe children trained by the method, how one could become an apprentice of Dr. Montessori, etc. Many simply expressed their excitement and plans to utilize the approach with their classroom or own children in their home. One could say that Ms. Tozier had a tremendous impact on those

who expressed interest in the method since she answered these questions, therefore having a tremendous impact on the growth and sustainability of the Montessori Method.

These responses not only were a spring board for McClure's diligent effort to entice her to the states, but simultaneously revealed the earnest interest Americans had in the method based on hearsay and a magazine article. The creation and maintenance an entire department at *McClure* magazine which focused on the dissemination of information pertaining to the Montessori Method brew from the demand to hear more about this miraculous instructional approach (Kramer, 1976). The knowledge of the possible arrival of Madame Montessori elevated general interest into an overwhelming desire to lay eyes upon her.

Right away different news mediums of the time, like *The New York Times* (1912), broadcasted Montessori's plans to come to the United States with extreme enthusiasm. The stage was set for her to be treated like a dignitary upon her arrival by not only McClure's entourage but diligent followers who were members of the American Montessori Educational Association. Prior to arriving in the states her reputation preceded her as numerous voyagers sought to converse with her about her work. This transpired because she had already achieved international acclaim specifically of the European nature. People knew her work and highly regarded her as an educational expert already. She traveled 13 days with McClure from the city of Naples, Italy to South Brooklyn, New York where they arrived December 3, 1913 (some historical documents cite December 4, 1913). She was greeted by devoted followers who were women who had taken her course in Rome and scores of media representatives. She continued to be courted by the media even in her hotel room later that day and took numerous pictures for

both the media and fan. Throughout the entire visitation, she answered countless questions via her translator Anne George, with a “serene smile” and when encountered by her former pupils gave a “continental kiss upon the cheek” (The New York Times, 1913).

During this media montage Montessori talked at length about her methodology, curricular equipment and materials, the original Casa dei Bambini and the other schools, and the future of her method in the United States. In addition, she was inundated with questions regarding her philosophy of child development and life as a whole. There was reference to her as a suffragist, to which she with great pride and poise acknowledged her conscientious advocacy for women’s and children’s rights around the world. Her political and social ideology may have been a possible hindrance to the acceptance of her method at this time for some and fuel for others.

The day after her arrival and her world wide press conference Montessori found herself in Washington D.C. with McClure (Kramer, 1976). In the country’s capital is where she was able to visit the Montessori school set up by the Bells, which as discussed earlier was originally opened for the Bells’ grandchildren but was extended to children in the community and then other children who did not fit the elite socioeconomic bracket of the Bells. It seems to be the consensus of historians such as Kramer, Standing, Gutek, and the writer of the December 11, 1913 *New York Times* article that she was pleased with the conditions of the schools started in the states. This must have been inspiring, for her work had been validated far across the Atlantic. She observed that her method could work with children not only in European countries but in the celebrated United States, and even more importantly with any children despite status or condition.

Her day continued with a tour of Washington D.C. by the daughter of President Wilson, Margaret who replaced her father due to illness. She met with political dignitaries such as the American Commissioner of Education, Philander P. Claxton, where there were discussions of the American school system with the notion that her method could be integrated to address the educational needs of America. This is backed by the commissioner noting that he personally recommended the Montessori Method to be introduced in the public school system (Standing, 1957).

Three days after her arrival Montessori gave her first US lecture in Washington D. C. that was well attended by four hundred people. This event though attended by political and social notables, held no flame to the crowd she addressed in New York City two days later. This was one of the largest audiences in Carnegie Hall's history, as it is documented that groves of people from established educators, administrators, reformers, students, etc. poured in to hear the great female Italian doctor who had revolutionized education. It is estimated that over a thousand people were turned away. There was a sincere attempt to make her feel welcomed, as both the flags of both her country and America draped the stage. She was accompanied by greatness at the platform by persons such as John Dewey, renowned philosopher and father of progressive education, and William Heard Kilpatrick, the dean of American educators at Columbia University and the president of the American Kindergarten Association who presided. These individuals who so graciously held discussions with her and praised her would later become some of her harshest critics (Kramer, 1976).

After an introduction from McClure she went right into her lecture. She delivered her two hour colloquy completely in Italian as Anne George once again translated for the

attendees. She focused on the scientific nature of her method based on her study of normally developing children which sparked from the findings on children with abnormal development. Montessori was adamant about the clinical process of observation as a critical piece to give ways to experimental strategies. She claimed that via observation she unearthed “an independent intellectual and spiritual life unconnected with any of the efforts of their teachers, a growth from within” (Kramer, 1976, p. 195). An alignment of her scientific findings with her spiritual and religious ideals was evident throughout her lecture.

After this tremendously successful oration in New York City she was off to Philadelphia where she again captivated the crowd. Her success allowed for McClure and his partner to schedule another lecture in New York for the following week. The outcome was far beyond McClure’s expectations, and as any clever businessman would do, he found a way to get more juice out of the lemon.

Though Montessori seemed to be indulged in her work, which included not only the research and development of her early childhood curriculum but work with many educational and social entities in Europe, she had idols in which she wished to meet. While in Philadelphia she got the chance to sit down and converse with Ms. Helen Keller. Ms. Keller who was a staunch supporter and in her own words “a product of the Montessori Method” was world-renown due to her highly functional nature despite her inability to speak or see (Kramer, 1976). She was proof of what Montessori had read in the writings of Seguin. “Helen Keller is a marvelous example of the phenomenon common to all human beings: the possibility of the liberation of the imprisoned spirit of man by education of the senses”, was Montessori’s own word in the preface of her

handbook (Montessori, 1914). Ms. Keller had come to experience the Montessori Method through her relations with Alexander Graham Bell and his promotion of the method (Pollard, 1931). Their entire conversation underwent double translation from Italian to English and then from English to sign language or vice versa. Their conversation reverberated issues of the state of parents, communities and its hindrance to national Montessori education implementation.

Helen Keller's success lends opportunity to discuss the use of the Montessori Method with the individuals with sensory-based disabilities across the United States, specifically the deaf. The American Asylum for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, Convention of American Instructors of the Deaf, Conference of Superintendents and Principals of American and Schools for the Deaf conferred about the Montessori Method throughout their *American Annals of the Deaf* in the early to mid-nineteen tens. A specific article, "*Priority in the use of the Montessori Method*" asserts that the method is useful for this population and expounds on Sequin's method (*American Annals of the Deaf*, 1913). Rhode Island is first noted for using the method with the deaf in 1913 and from there its use spread throughout the country.

Returning to New York Montessori allowed visitation in her hotel to allow individuals the opportunity to ask her questions, similar to the press conference she endured immediately after her arrival. She appeared at the Brooklyn Academy and was then swept off to Boston where she executed two lectures. Then she made a visit to Providence, Rhode Island where her system had already been adopted by the state board of education. Afterwards, there was the visit to New Jersey where she met Thomas



Edison and received a tour of his laboratories (Kramer, 1976). She never seemed to get a moment of unscheduled time to do tourist type activities.

Once back in New York at the end two weeks, she returned to Carnegie Hall and repeated her performance which was to be her last lecture in this city. There was overwhelming attendance again but Montessori seemed to alter some of her focus to confront notions from the world of psychology that children between the ages of 3 and 5 should not be formally educated due to their poor attention span. She aggressively denounced this opinion, and laid claim through examples (backed with film) that when children ages, three to five are provided with appropriate activities and materials they will attend and learn. She stated, “Surely this shows with what intensity a child rivets its attention on something in which it is interested in.” (New York Times, 1913, p.73). Her attention to sensory perception was also highlighted in this lecture with regards to the natural inclination for young children to touch objects when she states, “It is not naughtiness but his way of learning; the child at this age learns through his sense perceptions by touching things, whereas adults have outgrown this stage of development” (New York Tribune, 1913). The lecture concluded with the firm view seemingly directed to parents that if children are given freedom to develop their minds then their innate righteousness will burst through, spawning the formation of the first-rate, well-behaved child. Her choice to focus her lecture directly to parents would be substantiated by the re-ignition of her method in the states after 1950, as well as its utility from 1910-1940 though minimal, mostly by American parents concerned about the academic readiness of their young children (Kramer, 1976).

Montessori proceeded to Pittsburgh and then Chicago. In Chicago she presented two lectures at the Illinois theatre and was given introduction by great women. First by Ella Flagg Young, who became the superintendent of the Chicago Public schools (an awesome accomplishment for a woman during these times) and Jane Addams, the founder of the famed Hull House. After these lectures she took a well deserved break and enjoyed a secluded weekend in Battle Creek, Michigan at the home of breakfast-cereal millionaire, J.H. Kellogg. Returning to New York to make way to set sail back to Italy, Montessori shared a bit of time with members of the Women's Cosmopolitan Club. Now some 20 days after her arrival on December 24 she found her way to the ship similar to that of her walk from the ship weeks ago as fans, followers, supporters and of course reporters were present to be part of or document her farewell partying (Kramer, 1976).

#### Analysis of Montessori's Visit to the United States

Much of the information provided about her initial visit to the United States informs of her satisfaction with the visit, process and the country as a whole. She did not receive the same compliment by all media factions which may have played into the later disinterest in her methods. Some distortions of her verbiage and flat out misquotes made Montessori seemed too radical for some of the American public. For example, an American reporter from the New York Herald claimed she spoke of "the need to rip babies away from their mothers as soon as possible, and that her training course superseded the need of a colligate education" (Kramer, 1976, p.191). But that very next year in the London Times, a Washington D.C. correspondent wrote:

There are abundant signs that the United States will be the first country to try to experimentalize with the Montessori system on a large scale. It is clear that she has compelled the interested attention of specialists the country over. Already there are over sixty Montessori teachers at work in private schools, and with special classes ... Los Angeles, Boston and New York have experimental schools in full swing. ... A National Montessori

The reporter went on to reveal the American framework that would allow for the implementation of the Montessori Method.

Association has been established in Washington with powerful backing; and it is significant that since Mme. Montessori's visit the education boards of practically all the States have applied for the information. Various universities have taken the system up in an experimental way. At the University of Chicago, a young Hindoo student who has been trained by Mme. Montessori and who hopes to eventually introduce the system to India, is holding two classes, one of the deficient, the other of normal children... It is hoped that eventually a [teacher-training] school will be established here.

Social struggles are then thrashed out by the reporter to give readers an idea of the state of US at this time and how Montessori could have a positive effect.

It may easily be imagined how an idea of that kind appeals to a people who are feverishly, though often subconsciously, trying to reconcile with the individualistic traditions of the "free-born" citizen the paternalism implied by statutory eugenics, sex hygiene, and all the stock-in-trade of the modern Radical who would reform society. One sees that in the way the Press treats Mme. Montessori ....

And if the teachings of Mme. Montessori are in sympathy with the spirit of the times, they are also consonant with some of the favourite conceptions of American education.... The general tendency of American schools for young children is towards freedom and liberty...

But enough has been said to show that it is safe to prophesy that the Italian example is bound to find many followers here.

(The Times (London), 1914, p.28)

Despite this article's appearance in a British newspaper rather than an American media source, it provides insight into the American disposition for Montessori as an educational system to assist in the defense of the American ideals, freedom and liberty. Her initial visit sparked great interest; probably the greatest interest there would ever be within the United States.

There were countless articles in newspapers across the country and internationally. Media outlets like the New York Times seemed to track her moves from Washington D.C. reporting on the reception on her behalf by the Bells, her lectures, private meeting, as well as provide commentary after her visit. The 1914 article entitled “*What America thinks of the Montessori’s educational crusade*” is a comprehensive and impartial examination of America’s opinion of her method subsequent to her visit was documented. There was the depiction of her admirers who placed her above Froebel and Pestalozzi, and the reference of articles in which critics questioned Montessori’s ability as an educator (Current Opinion, 1914). The author made it clear that America was intrigued by the method, especially women (teachers and mothers) but there was no firm indication of what the future may hold for Montessori and the United States.

After Montessori’s return to Rome and her work she would conduct another (second) international training course with an enrollment that included 45 American students. She was urged to return to the states by supporters and friends and soon her American business broker, McClure. Since her return to Rome he had been profiting off her films, by conducting lecture presentations in many American cities. Soon he was after Montessori again with ideas of establishing a research center in New York, but she declined the offer. It is believed that she may have not have returned to be in contact with her son, but she claimed she preferred to be engulfed in the needs of her students in Rome. McClure was so persistent that he sent his brother to Rome to persuade Montessori to change her mind. This was to no avail because she reiterated her original response with complaints about not receiving her share of the profits from the original lecture tour nor McClure and his business partners living up to their promises. In time,

according to historians such as Kramer and Standing, McClure completely dropped out of the picture. There was no further contact between him and Montessori. He later returned to her all the film and other promotional materials from her lectures, which connoted the termination of their covenant (Standing, 1957).

Montessori moved on with her career goals publishing a handbook detailing her method in English in. This publication paid close attention to the techniques that support the methodology claiming that technique is inseparable from method (Kramer, 1976). Additionally, she focused on a thorough explanation of the material education of the senses. She had always been unwavering with the way the method was executed, demanding that teachers of the method be trained explicitly by her. This handbook was possibly her attempt to regulate American Montessori classrooms and their directresses.

At this point it is important to note that Montessori had fundamentally accomplished her goals in relation to her pedagogy and the education of both deficient and young, normal children. The children's natural attention to and for learning was due to her construction of a carefully prepared environment (Cohen, 1968). Montessori's visit to the states worked to connect the method to a character but even her strong American supporters may not have viewed her visit as meaningful, due to her busy schedule that kept her from socializing and sharing with them.

#### The Montessori Education Association

Prior to Montessori's first visit to the states was even conceived by the business savvy, McClure there was a union created amongst disciples of the method and Montessori's philosophical beliefs. Individuals of the upper echelon both socially and politically found Montessori and her instructional approach worthy of praise and

commitment. They came together and formed the Montessori American Committee between March and April of 1912 (University of Notre Dame, 1970). The initial membership began with 18 significant figures in education, philanthropy, and print publishing which included; Anne George (translator of her writings), S. S. McClure, William Morrow and Edith Sharon to name a few (McClure Magazine, 1912).

The Montessori American Committee set out to promote the method through the incorporation of training programs to create a pool of teachers to run Montessori educational institutions throughout the United States. Though these efforts exhibited the highest degree of respect, Montessori's attitude was pessimistic from the beginning. Historians, Kramer and Standing both made extraordinary attempts at documenting her character and personality. They revealed an egotistical side that feared loss of control of her research findings and theoretical concepts. This would be a constant theme through the existence of this committee.

After banter between the doctor and the group's spokesman (McClure) the efforts to start a training class resulted into an international training class that took place in Rome in the mid January of 1913, which included 67 Americans (Kramer, 1976). It is important to note that 22 more Americans took her course, representing a twenty-three percent increase in prepared American Montessori teachers, in part due to monetary assistance from the Bells (Zell, 1997). Additional members responsible for the class formation were Alexander and Mabel Bell, Professor Holmes and Ellen Stevens. This course was an international success with students from all over the world.

The Montessori American Committee gave birth to the Montessori Educational Association in Washington D.C. in May of 1913 by the Bells, other influential

supporters, and some local parents who believed in the Montessori mission (The Teacher's Journal, 1915). The initial board of trustees included the Bells, Dorothy Canfield Fisher (author), McClure, Philander P. Claxton (American Commissioner of Education), Margaret Wilson (President's daughter), and notable educators, bankers, attorneys, etc., with Mrs. Bell was elected the first president (Kramer, 1976). There were big strides made by this faction as they secured a building to open a larger Montessori educational facility, gave presentations at parent groups and the creation of an association bulletin to keep both members and other interested parties informed. They were exceptionally diligent in their efforts to promote the Montessori Method across the States and despite the past they were given the official approval for their vision and labor by Montessori (Standing, 1957).

The Washington crew's efforts sparked interest throughout the nation. During the same year by that spring there was a New England Montessori Association founded in the spring of 1913 and a lecture for teachers was given by Myron Scudder of the Scudder School for Girls in New York (Kramer, 1976). The result was that one of the teachers returned to Maine to direct a Montessori institution. The method was now discussed in high places, such as the Teachers' College of Columbia University, the New York University and even within many state boards of education across the New England states.

Kramer (1976) documents phenomenal growth in that there were over 100 Montessori schools and numerous societies across the United States within the same year of the establishment of the Washington faction. Other sources such as; education journals, governmental proceeding and reports are equally vague in their approximation

of the number of schools in the states at this time. Despite the ultimate example of flattery being imitation Montessori was worried about misinformation or misuse of her method and didactic materials getting to the public at large.

Montessori attempted to notify the American public of the serious nature of the utilization of her method by including a conclusion in the English translation of her book that indicated that without her direct supervision training was not to occur and was duly not sanctioned by her. This point of view would linger in the mind of Montessori and develop into a serious mistrust of the American associations.

Her communication with the associations, specifically the Washington D.C. faction had been written, telegraphic or by word of mouth passed from an individual that had the opportunity to visit Rome, until she visited the states again in 1913 (Gutek, 2004). This visit gave her an opportunity to commune with these American disciples of her method. Most of their meetings were brief or intertwined with tours of schools or other places of interest she visited. Other organizations seemed to bid for her time, keeping her from formally discussing issues of concern with the association members. McClure may have been the catalyst of the lack of contact between her and the individuals that comprised these groups since he was heavily involved in her lecture and publicity schedule during her initial visit.

Both Kramer and Standing discuss the failed relationship between Montessori and her party of American disciples who were instrumental in the initial promotion of the Montessori Method. The Washington D.C. group which included the Bells and other political and social sovereigns are said to have been disheartened and disillusioned by the treatment they received from her, and her undying objective to keep them from instituting



any training programs or establishments in preparation of American teachers. In a letter to the editor of the New York Times she states “it would be premature to establish training schools which were not under my direct supervision, so that for the present no training courses for the preparation of teachers except those held here in Rome, will be authorized by me” (New York Times, 1913, p. 10). She even went as far as to draw up a memorandum that claimed that the only teachers that were authorized to call themselves Montessori directresses were those who took her training course after the date chosen by Montessori. This excluded one of her most celebrated disciples, Anne George who had trained under Montessori and worked diligently at her side as her interpreter and English translator of her first book. Lashing out possibly due to feelings of exploitation, Montessori denounced the use of her name in conjunction with any American ideas she saw as propaganda.

Possibly due to the issues mention in the above paragraph the Montessori Promotion Fund was authorized in 1915 by Montessori in an effort to re-affirm her autonomy in relation to her methods and ideas in the states, with herself as president and Helen Parkhurst as its chief operating officer in the states (Gutek, 2004). This organization existed in addition to the American Montessori Committee with selected membership but was the official voice of the Montessori Method, with connections to the American companies that constructed and sold Montessori materials, specifically the didactic apparatus. In addition, the Montessori Promotion Fund published a teacher’s bulletin, and articles like, “Education in the relation to the imagination of the little child”, which sought to respond to the accusations from progressives that the Montessori Method did not address the young child’s imagination.

There was a quest by the Bells to maintain a relationship with her despite the frustration they endured due to her unapproachable attitude. This was possibly due to the time and energy they had invested with the promotion of the method, as well as, their whole-hearted belief in the method and what it could do for the United States. It was essential for the MEA and her to have a working relationship, therefore despite the assignment of Helen Parkhurst as the president of the National Montessori Fund (who was to work with US factions), failed communication called for the MEA to send Anne George abroad to discuss some of the associations' issues. Though Ms. George's visit went well the continued miscommunication caused the MEA to dissolve around 1916. Mabel Bell conceded and became a member of the National Montessori Fund within the same year.

In 1917 Montessori's beloved *Margarita*, Parkhurst severed her connection with the organization in an effort to unreservedly pursue her own educational dreams which resulted in the curricular creation of the Dalton Plan (Kramer, 1976). Given all the efforts Parkhurst was involved with on behalf of the Montessori Method, this loss was tragic. Montessori's American ties seemed to unravel due to legitimate concerns related to the integrity of her method, the over zealotry of some American supporters and the desire for independence of others.

Montessori's method's popularity seemed to flourish across the States in the face of the problematic issues mentioned in this chapter at least until the mid 1920's. Gutek (2004) reports that in 1925 there were one thousand Montessori schools in the United States, but soon after there was a tremendous decline. Though this was a great increase from the one hundred schools and/classes reported in the States around the time of her

second visitation, this researcher did not find another primary source to substantiate this growth.

### The San Francisco Exposition

Montessori made history with her initial voyage to America. She brought her method to the forefront of the country's educational system and with the use of visual aids (film) she was able to back up her educational claims. She gave herself wholeheartedly when lecturing to standing room only audiences, conversing with individuals privately, exchanging ideas with social and political dignitaries, educators, etc. and explaining her ideology to representatives of the media. Despite her popularity she would not return to the states with the same sponsorship, neither through a business venture nor with any connection to her organized followers of the Montessori Education Association founded in 1914, but unexpectedly another national association.

Montessori had been attending to her normal day to day agenda teaching international training courses and visiting Casa dei Bambinis throughout Rome and surrounding Italian provinces with the continued purpose to collect data to enhance her method. There had been a lull in the contact between her and any of her American followers, such as those of the Montessori Education Association, which led one to believe that she would not be visiting the states any time soon (Kramer, 1976). But, in the fall of 1914 the California Outlook asserted, "Maria Montessori, the world's greatest living figure in the field of child education, personally will supervise the work of the model Montessori school to be conducted as a part of the educational demonstration work, at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, in 1915"(Wallace, 1914, p. 19). This identical statement was inserted in the Pacific medical journal exhibited the outreach and excitement for her

participation in this American event. The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was an event devised to celebrate the construction of the Panama Canal. She received this invitation from the National Education Association (NEA) that was having their 53<sup>rd</sup> annual convention in Oakland, California simultaneously (Kramer, 1976).

The charge for Montessori became to address both the NEA and the International Kindergarten Union and to create a model Montessori classroom for educators of all levels, but especially teachers to both hear and see the method. The model classroom was without a doubt the most attended attraction at the Palace of Education on the exposition grounds. Her training courses in which she provided several lectures weekly were well-attended. Her stardom in the United States was upheld.

The model classroom seemed to have poised the most pressure on the capabilities of Montessori. The initial arrangements were handled by state-side followers; Katherine Moore and Mr. and Mrs. Townsend. Her concern was to find someone with a great understanding of her method to direct the demonstration class. She chose Helen Parkhurst, who at the time resided in Wisconsin where she worked within a Montessori environment. Montessori willingly offered to accommodate Parkhurst by any means because she would not run her school without her (Standing, 1957).

Issues such as money plagued the initial creation of this classroom, which historians like Packard in 1972 to more recent individuals during the new millennium seem to uphold as a living work of art. The original thought was to construct a separate building but this was just not possible. Much deliberation over how the classroom would be designed was mulled over daily until Montessori made due with what she had available to her. Not only was she an intelligent instructor of children, educational

philosopher, and lecturer, she was ingenious as she utilized all resources available to her to make her ideas and dreams come alive.

After referencing many descriptions of this classroom, this researcher can duly report that the classroom can be described as a glass educational laboratory, where onlookers sat in tiers of chairs affixed around the classroom glass walls. The classroom itself was on a platform in a corner of the Palace of Education. It functioned from nine in the morning to noon, with an initial count of twenty-one young students, three to five years of age from different socio- economic backgrounds that were chosen from over two thousand applications (Kramer, 1976). Interesting, the children spoke different languages, but without coercion adapted sign language as their method of communication.

Once the classroom was up and running with *Margarita* (term of endearment for Helen Parkhurst) in total charge, she was able to focus on her lectures. Despite a few issues, such as a day when during a visit the great Montessori displayed her frustrations of a child's seemingly stunted cognition, and knocked down his materials, all seemed well. This incident of course found its way to the gossip mills and some news outlets per Kramer, but overall her work in California at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition was valuable in regards to positive promotion of what her method could accomplish.

There was an official entry into three governmental reports about the Montessori demonstration classroom (the report of the commissioner of education made to the secretary of the interior for the year of 1915, the report of the federal security agency and the annual report of the office of education-all for the US office of education in 1915). It notes the importance of this opportunity for tangible practice instead of only printed accounts which was the only option for most interested Americans at this time. The

historian Will Carson Ryan (1916) who focused completely on the education exhibits at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition references the environment to be too artificial to ascertain true value of Montessori's work but affirms the aesthetics were very impressive.

Furthermore, both educators and the general public observed in awe, as these children became engulfed in the classroom activities, mostly working alone reflecting Montessori's ideals of free will and focused attention. The attention generated was shown as American news outlets referred to the spectators as tourists and the classroom exhibit as an aquarium (Sobe, 2004). Her method had turned undisciplined, unskilled children into regimented, skilled learners, by a simple challenge to choose their own activities and allowance to gain necessary proficiency and understanding at their own pace. Individuals like Ellen Yale Stevens and Clara Craig (1913) investigated the dispositions of the children in this Montessori classroom and others in Europe and the United States seem to promote the consensus that the children were gratified by the opportunity and possessed an eagerness to demonstrate their new talents as well as, assist others (children) with acquisition.

The success of the simple glass walled structure on a raised level brought Montessori several invitations to remain in the states to run schools and conduct training courses. Montessori declined all offers to and returned to Rome. Much is speculated as to why she did not take any of the offers and pursue a career in the states. An interesting note is that for the first time in her travels, she was accompanied by her son, Mario. This could speak to her need to return home and she was actually in the foundational stages of cultivating a relationship with her child. Also, it is believed that she left unconcerned

about her method's promotion and preservation because she placed it solely in the hands of Helen Parkhurst, whom she trusted wholeheartedly. As previously stated, Parkhurst would briefly become the American voice of the Montessori Movement in an effort to carry on the promotion of the method with Montessori's blessing (Kramer, 1976).

### Conclusion

The popularity of the Montessori Method was immeasurable prior to her arrival in the states in December of 1913 as intrigued Americans desperately digested literature on the method and those with means traveled to Rome to observe this amazing educational development. Subsequent to the creation of the first official Montessori School in Tarrytown, N.Y., McClure magazine, a dedicated media source began to allow Americans to increase their knowledge and understanding of the method, as well as, receive responses to their inquiries with a department exclusively devoted to Montessori.

Her initial and second visit provided the American public to actually lay their eyes upon the remarkable woman described previously only in printed text, as well as hear her deliberate on her ideas and methods. There may have been lost information due to her Italian being translated into English, which may explain some of the misquotations and misinterpretations of her words. Interestingly, her visitation led to a whirl wind of media reports, more attempts at use of her methods, and an implausible focus on the opinions of her critics.

The New York Times and McClure magazine seemed to provide favorable depictions of Montessori while in the states and overall, whereas the New York Herald seemed to lend its canvas to negative sensationalism by reporting that Montessori states children should be ripped from the parents at birth. While other sources like the Current

Opinion, Journal of Education, and the Kindergarten Primary magazine provided their readers with documentation of her visit with minimal judgment, and without positive or negative sensationalism.

Montessori's visitations to the states gave crux to the national buzz and validated her passion for education of young children. Would the Montessori Method have maintained prominence without her visit stateside? Resoundingly no, and specifically though there is a tremendous amount of literary accounts dedicated to the initial visit and less to the second in this researcher's analysis the first visit was a presentation of the intellect behind the idea, and the second was more substantial in that the demonstration school provided an opportunity for people to see her own interpretation of the method. In addition, the second visit included a training course for teachers and other interested parties from Montessori herself.

What is unhesitatingly demonstrated is that once Montessori made her way to the states American supporters, who had dedicated their time and efforts to Montessori and her method selflessly were refuted by Montessori herself. The innocent effort of the original group that made up the American Montessori Committee and then became the Montessori Educational Association (MEA), to share her method with the world was not acceptable to its creator. She seemed to have limited faith in their abilities to defend the integrity of the method which led to a split between her and these sincere followers. The MEA would continue their campaign for the use of the Montessori Method, but the Montessori Promotion Fund would become the only American entity backed by Montessori directly.



What is important to retain is that Montessori's influence was international, but the youthful United States was critical soil in which ideas and concepts; educationally, economically, and philosophically could be planted. Her visits, efforts of her American supporters and the exposure by American media outlets made the Montessori Method a focus of attention for educators, activists, as well as parents across the world.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN NEW YORK, 1910-1940

Without a doubt the state of New York has one of the richest histories pertaining to the systematic development of an educational structure to support the edifying needs of its citizens. This is in part due to the city of New York's Ellis Island, which was an entry point for almost all the fourteen million immigrants that came to the United States during this time as well as a center of cultural, philosophical and political ingenuity. New York was home to leading educational institutions like the Teacher's College (Columbia University) as well as educational leaders such as Kilpatrick who launched and maintained their grandeur in the state of New York.

After the attainment of a complete free school system in 1867, major New York state cities such as; Albany, Rochester and New York City experienced tremendous programmatic growth during the late nineteenth century and even more during the early twentieth. Specialty schools for older children and adult learners, truant children, as well as, kindergarten programs were a major development throughout the entire country which was well exhibited in these cities as an interest point of the progressive education movement. Out of all the cities throughout the state, New York City had the largest population, therefore it had a dire need for unique programs to equip children with the academic and social skills required to be well-adapted citizens. For that reason, in support of this research New York City will be the major focus for the state of New York.

This researcher will introduce parent specific groups, charitable organizations and domestic legislation as motivation for the use of the Montessori Method in the state of New York from 1910-1940. In contrast, stateside provisions for the method proved to be weak, without appropriate budgeting or follow up on experimental classrooms. The state of New York gave Dr. Montessori's concept of auto-education a once over and passed it on. It would be parents and entities that supported education needs of the young children to preserve this method's utility in the state of New York.

#### New York's Early Childhood Programs and Teacher Training

New York City's education system's greatest concern during this time was wrapped up in the implicit needs of immigrants. Reformers believed that immigrants required assistance in everything from hygiene to housekeeping, therefore the public school became a place to receive vaccinations, hygienic instructions and English language lessons. One of the important aims of the New York City schools was to transform a "land of strangers", into a land of orderly and educated Americans (Avena, 2010).

New York City, as well as other American cities, was undergoing a process of centralization in within their education system which was controlled by the influential, better known as businessmen. There was not a distinction between public and private funds in usage for public education programs in the business men's mission to create an unwavering, conventional, coherent establishment to support their social capital needs (Tyack, 1974). Men like John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie who managed most of the nation's wealth would demonstrate interest in the educational plight of America, both becoming benefactors of educational projects along with other businessmen of their

caliber. The Montessori Method would be one of the many projects, which was supported by philanthropic businessmen.

Organizations like the New York Public School Society and The Free School Society of New York would promote programs within the existing system that complimented the quests of big business (Tyack, 1974). New York and Rhode Island would attempt alignment with the needs of industry and urbanization espousing new models of education. Kindergartens would become one of the countless social capital tools utilized throughout the United States, especially in New York City.

Though the first private kindergarten surfaced in the United States in Indiana and the first public one was in St. Louis, Missouri it is important to remember that New York City had the most kindergarten programs across the country at this time due to its sizable population. The state of New York seized the kindergarten concept as an acculturation apparatus for all young New Yorkers. The New York Society for Ethical Culture founded one of the first kindergartens in New York City for the children of working families in 1880. Soon after, many other private (church based, non-for-profit, etc.) and then public kindergarten programs became permanent conventions in the city and throughout the state.

The New York City Board of Education officially instituted publicly sponsored kindergartens in 1910. The number of kindergartens all over the city swelled tremendously from the late 1880s to the early 1900s. By year end of 1910 there were 27, 233 children registered in kindergartens across the city (NYC Bd. of Ed., 1919).

At the same time as New York City's accelerated kindergarten growth we know that the first school dedicated to the Montessori Method commenced in Tarrytown, NY in the fall of 1911. The small municipality of Tarrytown located off the east bank of the Hudson River in Westchester County just north of New York City's midtown Manhattan is where the United States first met Dr. Montessori officially. This school privately sponsored by the president of the country's leading bank, National Bank of New York (known today as Citicorp) served children of the financial and business elite per the request of parents (George, 1911). Most importantly, it gave way to numerous schools throughout the United States in an attempt to educate young children in a more effective manner. Due to the Tarrytown replication of her Casa dei Bambini many publications and media endorsements publicized the method and inspired Montessori's visit to the states. For example, 1912 New York Time articles like "A Montessori School", and "Great Interest in Montessori Method" as well as the previously discussed McClure Magazine Montessori series gave way to heighten interest.

Behold at the time of this heighten interest and by end of the 1912 school year the New York City School system had an estimated need of 1, 116 more kindergartens due to the city's unstoppable growth spurt (NYC Bd. of Ed., 1914). The kindergarten became the primary mode of instruction for children under age 6 and soon blossomed into different types. New York City's Board of Education archives reveal that there were kindergartens for normal children as well as for children with health difficulties and those considered defective (NYC Bd. of Ed., 1911). The needs of the kindergarten programs such as kindergarteners (instructors), space and supplies increased annually.

In a clear effort to devise a solution of the early education need of thousands of young children who in the words of Henry W. Holmes (1912) live in “hateful cliff dwellings of our modern city” the Kindergarten House Experiment was established in 1912. The Kindergarten Experiment was an effort by the Board of Education to utilize the Montessori Method to create a model kindergarten. This experiment took place in the Maxwell House which was annexed to a public school in the heart of the Italian District in Brooklyn. Funding for this experiment was provided by the Junior League of Brooklyn, the kindergarten mothers and a few interested individuals from the community (NYC Bd. of Ed., 1914).

This experimentation in the methodology of “Countess Montessori” failed to be a conversation of historians at this time, in fact the two sources of information pertaining to the use of the Montessori Method were the departmental notes of *the Teacher’s College Record* and the 14<sup>th</sup> *Annual Report of the City Superintendent of Schools of the department of Education of the City of New York*. The only other brief mention of public school support in relation to New York was in the College News and Department Notes section of the Teachers College Record, which acknowledged that Miss Harriett O’Shea has secured the cooperation of several schools in an experimental study of the Montessori Method (Teacher’s College Record, 1919). The primary sources didn’t give this researcher a sort of prevailing opinion of the masses in regards to public support of Montessori.

There were of course many private Montessori programs throughout the state, for example the Brooklyn Heights Seminary utilized Montessori instruction from elementary

through high school. Out of 130 pupils some received regular instruction and the others received Montessori instruction. This program was run by the well known Montessori supporter, Ellen Y. Stevens. Miss Gale Scudder ran a Montessori demonstration class and the Lenox School incorporated the method into an elementary school classroom (University of Virginia, 1912). Helen Parkhurst supervised the establishment of Montessori classes in the lower east side of New York in 1916 for underprivileged children while she ran refresher courses for teachers who had trained with Montessori (she was the only authorized trainer in the states). These teachers volunteered their services to the project. Knowing that there were many Montessori programs functioning from 1910 to 1917 in the state of New York all of them except the city's Kindergarten Experiment are assumed to have been privately funded, charitably or for-profit. However, it is not clear if any of these classes were truly supported by any public funds because entities like the Junior League were instrumental in the subsidization of the undertaking of operating these classes.

Research did not reveal an expansion of the use of Dr. Montessori's method in more public kindergarten settings, but by 1917 the number of kindergartens throughout the city grew to meet population demands and adapted to meet the needs of the younger deaf, blind and otherwise handicapped children. In addition, the Mother's Club which was a staple of the kindergarten process now had many purposes such as English language instruction for non-English speaking mothers. This same year a reorganization of the kindergartens occurred, which resulted in a deduction of the amount of children

that could be enrolled per kindergartener. These changes were instituted to capture better scientific inferences and ultimately to obtain improved educational results.

One dynamic that was reflected in further New York City board of education documentation was the cost factor. In the Annual Reports of the Superintendent's of Schools of 1918-1920 there are details related to the financial situation of the New York City kindergartens at that time. The board recommended several cuts affecting the space, structure and budget of the city's kindergarten programs in order to maintain some semblance of the plan that had been in effect since 1910. With this information it is possible that finances may have been the instigating factor that led to no further investigation into the Montessori Method made by New York City before after the Maxwell House experiment up until 1920.

Interestingly, the state of New York had the most Montessori schools out of all 22 states during the school year 1916-17 resulting in 29 schools out of the 104 across the US (National Montessori Promotion Fund, 1917). This alone is intriguing since this researcher did not find any documentation verifying a public supported Montessori program across the entire state of New York during this exact time (1916-1917), which means that all 29 had to be privately funded.



MONTESSORI SCHOOLS IN AMERICA  
FOR SCHOOL YEAR 1916-1917

States	Number of Schools
Arkansas.....	1
California .....	23
Connecticut.....	2
Illinois .....	9
Indiana.....	1
Kansas.....	1
Maryland.....	1
Massachusetts.....	6
Mississippi.....	2
New Hampshire.....	1
New Jersey.....	3
New York .....	29
Ohio.....	3
Oregon.....	3
Pennsylvania.....	5
Rhode Island .....	3
South Carolina.....	1
Texas.....	1
Virginia.....	1
Washington.....	2
<u>Wisconsin.....</u>	<u>2</u>
Total Number of Schools.....	104

Table 1 (National Montessori Promotion Fund, 1917)

The issues that plagued the New York City kindergarten between 1912 and 1920 were not linked necessarily to instructional approach but systematic issues of teacher training, finances, and meeting the demands of individual communities especially with regards to language. Teacher training for all grades and programs underwent transformation throughout the entire country during this time. Teacher training institutions better known as “Normal Schools” had been in existence since 1839 (Massachusetts), but the specific needs for instruction of younger children led to specific licensure for kindergarteners through New York training programs. Even more specifically, proper comprehension of the Montessori Method was customarily obtained by means of American Certificate Montessori courses, some even referred to as Montessori Normal Schools. Helen Parkhurst supervised plans for a Montessori Normal College offering a two (2) year degree subsidized by the Montessori Promotion Fund and approved by Dr. Montessori in the winter of 1916. In this same year there were 200 American graduates with Montessori certificates (Wills, 1966).

It is important to distinguish training on the method by Dr. Montessori herself (would have taken place in Rome) or Helen Parkhurst, the only person she personally approved during this time period, and so-called training on the method by opportunists. The education annuals published between 1910 and 1916 are filled with countless advertisements for training on the Montessori Method especially in New York City. Historical records due show that Ms. Parkhurst was the head of teacher department the Montessori Training College in New York between 1917-18, therefore this gave opportunities for legitimate training to be obtained in the state (Columbia University,

1916). And, since the ultimate way to acquire Montessori Method training was from the Dr. Montessori herself, Rockefeller is on record for providing financial support for New York teachers to attend official training in Rome (Tozier, 1913).

The instructional approach specific to the utilization of Montessori certificate courses may have been controlled by outside forces. Kilpatrick and crew were supporters of the original Froebelian method. As discussed in chapter two (2) of this manuscript it is made evident that Kilpatrick had an unenthusiastic attitude when it came to Montessori, which he backs in the *Montessori System Examined*.

Another specific issue that may have affected continued utilization of her method was the Montessorian notion that children under the age of six could learn how to read. In an Annual Report to the New York City Superintendents of Schools (1914) Miss Fanniebelle Curtis took a stand against teaching reading to children under six (6). This stance was in line with distinguished progressives such as Dewey and Kilpatrick. Dewey was adamantly opposed to reading instruction of young children. He felt it pushes the child out of sequence developmentally resulting in the loss of crucial phases of cognitive development like the use of imagination.

The state of New York made contributions which lead to the continued existence of the Montessori Method throughout the United States between the years of 1911-1920. Public funding for the method was found to be limited to only a few occasions. Though there is no follow-up found in any of the city or state historical documentation, nor any other documents, supplementary information from historical city documentation and other means show that the outlook during this time in the state of New York public

support from the existing educational system was not propitious for the Montessori Method.

#### State/Parent Climate

Compulsory attendance laws would create the need for truancy departments all over the nation, and New York would react with the creation of truancy schools throughout the municipal districts. These schools would take custody of the child, who would then reside on the school premises. This did not fortify the relationship between parents and the school system, but laid down provisions to support the mandatory federal law.

Prior to this local law, laws were very vague and parents resisted. Though parents had become more and more vocal over the last century parents were by no means a passive group when it came to the happenings of their children. Parents wanted children to meet the needs of the family unit as opposed to the state's condition.

New York's compulsory attendance law went into effect in 1874, nine (9) years earlier than Rhode Island. Though six (6) other states had adopted the same type of legislation prior, New York had an extremely large and diverse population to consider as the state made provisions to educate their residents. Parents and parent groups may have aided in the construction of these provisions by making their requests known.

Parents' associations in the New York City public school system had reached over 200 by 1913 (New York City Board of Education, 1913). These associations met regularly to discuss issues and innovations related to the education of their children. Weeks (1914) provides the premise for the Montessori Method's popularity in American

homes and promotion by these associations. The premise would be the English translation of Dr. Montessori's book and the organization of an American corporation in New York known as the House of Childhood, which manufactures the didactic apparatus. Parents could read it for themselves and purchase materials to use with their children.

These parent associations were being further influenced by literature like WA McKeever's (1915) *Outlines of child study: a text book for parent-teacher associations, mother's clubs and kindred organizations*, which recommended the use of the Montessori Method especially in regard to discipline. E. Hershey Sneath's (1912) *Moral training in school and home: a manual for teachers and parents* cites the ideas and methods of Dr. Montessori as useful in training the young child, with focus on adaptive skills which leads to better disciplined children. Another publication was *Religious training in the school and home – a manual for teachers and parents* which promoted the method as a great complement to religious training (Tweety, Hallam, & Smeath, 1917). It seems that parents were still considered a vehicle for promotion and utility even in 1925 at a time when interest seemed to have calmed down across the nation the journal, *School and Society* discussed the need for Montessori classes to be run by parents.

During this time in history the New York Times, New York Tribune, Globe, and many other literary outlets had not only articles but advertisements of upcoming classes on the Montessori Method. In the *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* Bertha Johnson and E. Lyell Earle (1915) encouraged mothers to utilize the Montessori Method, referring to the use of "exercises of life" essential for the proper development of the young child (p.144). The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) magazine often consisted of ideas and materials

for parents on child development from the mid 1910s to the mid 1920s. Both of these publications also advertised Montessori classes in New York City for parents and teachers.

The role of the parent had become highly regarded by the mid 1920s. No longer seen as adversarial but now as advocate, parental concerns, recommendations, and overall input began to assist in the shaping of the education system in New York. Strong associations such as the PTA, Women's Clubs, Child Development Foundation, and even religious/ethnic specific affiliations like the National Council of Jewish Women endorsed the Montessori Method visibly seen in annual reports to the department of labor from 1913-1915.

Even more marketing to parents is seen by the books by Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Carolyn Sherwin Bailey catered specifically to mothers through the provision of "how-to" explanations of the Montessori Method with renditions of activities that could be replicated in the home. In the Montessori Manual Canfield's (1913) forward acknowledges that the majority of letters inquiring about the method came from mothers. Canfield was an American mother that had embraced the method and wished to share her enthusiasm with the world and encourage the use of Montessori Method across the state and nation at large.

Further evidence is witnessed in 1927 when the state of New York addressed early childhood through the creation of the New York State Bureau of Child Development and Parent Education. This was in part due to a grant from the Spelman Fund awarded to the New York State Education Department through Cornell University

and the City College, as well as two school districts; Albany and Rochester. The Bureau which persisted for a total of 10 years focused on study, service, and research in child development and parent education. The Bureau was extremely parent friendly that when members of local school PTAs had to attend meetings in Albany they would spend their time with staff of the Bureau. The result was the creation of 60 parent groups and over 150 teacher guide publications on early childhood education instruction, which incorporated Montessori Method techniques (New York State Board of Education, 1938). The instructional techniques were suggested and/or approved by the parent groups.

#### Domestic Legislation - Mother's Pension

Prior to War World I there was a push to provide governmental support for children and mothers without the contribution of an adult male's income. Mothers across the nation were not able to financially provide for their children, due to the loss of income when fathers died or were removed. The mother's pension was the first explicit welfare benefit established outside of poor relief in the United States. It was can be best described as "paltry long term cash provisions for children without employable fathers, contingent upon their mothers acceptance of middle class behavioral norms"(Leff, 1973, p. 397).

New York was one of the first states to enact legislation for the provision and research of mothers' pensions for eligible caregivers, specifically one out of twenty states, between 1911-1913. It was first discussed during the proceedings of the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the New York conference of charities and corrections in 1911 and then a commission on relief for widow mothers was developed in 1913 (Lathrop, 1914). A

favorable report in support of its continuance was submitted to state officials from this commission the very next year.

This responsibility on the state allowed mothers/caregivers to take the initiative to care for and educate their young children in the home. At the same time, social reformers pushed the belief that home care was better than institutional care. Mothers regardless of socio-economic status became the focus of social service and church based organizations that promoted Montessori.

As mentioned above media vehicles such as newspapers, journals and certain books seemed to focus their attention towards mothers. Words from progressive activists like Rodman who told the New York Times that men were probably not “naturally fit” for infant care, and that “Mothercraft” would remain largely the work of women, set the precedence for an outright promotion of skills that mothers must be equipped with, as well as, methods to use to care and educate their children (Ladd-Taylor, 1970).

In addition, organizations in favor of mothers’ pension promoted the use of the Montessori Method at some point from 1910-1920. The National Congress of Mothers whom endorsed mothers’ pension in 1911, soon after took part in proceedings with many organizations including the Montessori Congress at the National Education Association meeting in 1915. The proceedings of this meeting had 16 entries in relation to the Montessori Method and its utility for young children. There were 5 or more entries which were provided directly by Montessori herself, to explain her ideas and methods. Though commentary from these proceedings seemed to possess a neutral tone to deflate the escalated attention to the Montessori Method, promotion was evident in the



information provided. Focus of the Montessori presentations were on the intellect of the child and the mother – child relationship.

New York City would experience the development of entities like the Child Development Foundation in 1915 which promoted the theory and practice of the Montessori Method because of the increased amount of mothers/caregivers reception of pension funds in the name of care and education for their child(ren). The Montessori Method seemed to become the chosen instructional approach for young children at home and in permissible structured environments per these social entities. Most importantly, the mother's pension provided additional support for the use of the Montessori Method through the push for mothers/caregivers to utilize with their children in the home.

#### Conclusion

Throughout the time period in question (1910-1940) the one constant in the state of New York after the initial implementation of the Montessori Method, were parents. It is important to remember that the original motivation for the first few Montessori schools from Tarry Town, NY to the Bell's home in Washington, DC, was due to the request of parents. The state's support of the method can be best described as minimal and experimental while parental regard and use seemed be great and unremitting.

Several city civic organizations played an intense role in the perpetuation and promotion of the Montessori Method through the parent. State aid to mothers, also known as mothers' pensions along with all the other social and political matters of this time period was the basis for several organizations and individual activists to speak on behalf of mothers/caregivers. Parents seem to be a major thread within the adaptation of

the method throughout New York which kept the method alive when it was no longer of interest to the public sector.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MONTESSORI METHOD IN RHODE ISLAND, 1910-1940

The state of Rhode Island has a unique history with regards to education. Carroll (1918) refers to the period from 1893 – 1918 regarding the Rhode Island education system as a time of expansion and improvement. Rhode Island would be the last of all the New England states to make public provisions for education, but would become the first in many educational endeavors. Rhode Island along with Connecticut received direction from prominent educator, Henry Bernard who served as commissioner during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He argued for many initiatives such as the reduction of lay control of the public schools as early as 1837.

Given the precedent set by Henry Bernard Rhode Island would make decisions and promote initiatives in education ahead of the rest of the country in a sincere effort to provide optimal educational experiences for the state's children becoming a leader in education innovation. It was the first state to enact policy towards compulsory schooling in 1840, with later legislation passed in 1883. Further example of this effort would be Rhode Island's commitment to provide education to all children by being the first state in the union to provide special education classes for school –age children with developmental needs in 1895. Prior to that Rhode Island philanthropically embraced the

concept of educating early by investing and implementing the kindergarten concept in 1882 which led to total state support in 1895.

Why did Rhode Island become a leader in education innovation? Rhode Island though a small land-sized state, was the leader in industrialization, urbanization, and cultural pluralism in the United States between 1910 and 1940, which began as early as the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. In response to the needs of industry education became a critical instrument in preparation of the worker. According to an article in the Journal of Education in 1914 Rhode Island was “by no means small or weak in its energy, activity or mental alertness. For instance, the body politic of the schoolmaster corps of Providence may well challenge comparison with any city for its initiative and for its intelligent conduct of schools”(W.P.A., 1914). The author (unknown) also claims that the education officials in the state had proven their loyalty to the high ideals of education. The education of young children especially immigrant children which were primarily a mixture of French-Canadians, Italians, Germans and Jews from several countries became part of the Rhode Island landscape. There was the language barrier and the cultural barrier that the young immigrant had to overcome. They were stuck in the middle with two different sets of values and expectations, trapped in the middle of staying true to their roots and the cost of Americanization. Rhode Island would be thoughtful regarding the needs of these children and their parents.

Rhode Island would invariably endorse and indoctrinate the entire state in the use of the Montessori Method to educate children and instruct future teachers for the fore-

mentioned reason. Parental support for the Montessori Method would occur through organized factions and cultural predilection.

#### Rhode Island Early Childhood Programs & Teacher Training

In 1905 Dr. Walter Ranger, an outsider to the state of Rhode Island became the superintendent of schools and by 1906 began on a quest to revolutionize the policies that govern education at large in Rhode Island. The compulsory attendance law took years starting back in 1895 and Dr. Ranger finally addressed the issue wholeheartedly including kindergarten in the language and as an educational option for citizens under the age of six. The public kindergarten, a modification of the Froebel school adapted to American need has come to be an adjunct of some city school systems, the Board of Education in 1895 said the required cost was prohibited. But after his validation of the kindergarten funds were made available for instruction and enrollment grew accordingly.

Additional issues addressed and put in policy by Dr. Ranger were teacher training requirements and options, rate of pay standards for teachers, and policy around taxes that would be used to support public education, etc. He seemed to embody progressivism, by fulfilling the needs of his state. Though he had a straightforward approach it was favored by legislators, teachers and parents alike. These policies would lay the groundwork for acceptance and experimentation of new ideas.

Rhode Island had always exhibited the concerns of special populations as early as the late 1800s. For example, in 1892 Providence, RI formed a special class in the public school for defective children (Goodard, 1914). This attention to special needs was further witnessed with the use of the Montessori Method as an interest for young children in

Rhode Island's Mary C. Wheeler Town and Country School, which was actually the first American school to use the principles comparable to the Montessori Method in its Kindergarten instruction in 1889, 12 years prior to the method's arrival in the shores of America in Tarrytown, NY. Miss Mary Jackson Kennedy implemented this unofficial curriculum that was comprised of a mixture of Montessori and Froebel methods as well as Deweyian ideas (Smith, 1912). More officially, the Rhode Island School of the Deaf began to utilize the Montessori Method in a fresh air playroom by Mrs. Edwin Hurd (Volta Review, 1913). Mrs. Hurd is recorded as the second person to actually use the method with the deaf in 1913, but she was originally thought to be the first. The first is now credited Mrs. J. Anderson of Philadelphia (United States, 1914). Mrs. Hurd's continued dedication to the use of the method for Rhode Island's deaf is documented well into the mid nineteen- forties.

Most notably, Rhode Island took interest in the Montessori Method and performed an experiment within the Rhode Island Normal School by conducting a Montessori infant school. This was headed by Miss Clara Craig who was the supervisor of the training department of the Normal School, who traveled to Italy and studied under Dr. Montessori for an entire year. Four years after this implementation Rhode Island had three (3) schools exclusively dedicated to the Montessori Method ((National Montessori Promotion Fund, 1917).

In 1913 a report entitled *The Montessori System of Child Culture* was submitted to the Rhode Island Board of Education, this report's forward was written by none other than Dr. Walter Ranger, who was the secretary of the Board of Education at this time.

This report detailed the training Craig received in Italy and described every aspect of the method in relation to the practical lessons by date. The recommendation from this report was “that the pedagogical worth of the Montessori method be tested in the Rhode Island Normal School” (Craig, 1913, p.16). This was a grandiose recommendation but amazingly it was followed through by the Board.

Along with the overall recommendation of Rhode Island taking on the Montessori Method unreservedly, special attention was made to the instruction of reading and writing to young children. “Doctor Montessori has proven emphatically that reading and writing may be taught with more economy, with less nervous strain, and to very young children who are in the stage of development most permeable to the incentives of spoken and written language” (Craig, 1913, p. 16). This exhibits support of early reading instruction to young children throughout the state as well as use of Montessorian methods to teach all ages reading and writing skills.

JF O’Neil (1937) exposed minor resistance to this statewide endeavor in an article that discussed the outcomes of the adaptation of the Montessori Method in the Rhode Island School System. The resistance seemed to be fixed around Catholic concerns related to the children being allowed to function independently in the classroom. The Montessori Method was opposed on the belief that children needed direct and continuous instruction (O’Neil, 1937). The discipline needs of children to gain literacy skills in order to read the bible and other religious texts warrant a structured, teacher led environment to assure achievement of these proficiencies. Interestingly, in time the Catholic Church and other organizations would become devout supporters of the method

in other states. Other concerns were related to the overriding of the basic Frobelian methodology such as pretend play, and other contemporary education ideas that were being applied at this time.

In Craig's (1919) *The beginnings of reading and writing in the Rhode Island normal schools* published by the state normal school provides the state's logic for implementation of the Montessori Method. It was a top priority of the state to Americanize its inhabitants, literacy was the key and the Montessori Method had shown great promise in the acquisition of reading and writing skills. This push to address literacy could also be fueled by a staggering 1883 report that seemed to suggest Rhode Island had the largest population of illiterates out of New England states; 11.9% of inhabitants over 10 could not read and only ¼ of all foreign born inhabitants could sign their name (Carroll, C. 1918). Therefore, despite the critics' view of children requiring traditional instruction to learn to read and write Rhode Island felt it could be the answer to the construction of literate citizens.

In the annual report of the state board of education together with the annual report of the Commissioner of Public Schools of Rhode Island in 1919 Miss Clara Craig and Miss Lillian Fields reported on the progress of the Normal Schools and the continued utility of the Montessori Method. Further exploration of the state board of education documents reveals that a manual with rules and orders for the use of the General Assembly of the state of Rhode Island included policies on the use of the Montessori Method in 1917. After 1921 the state board of education records did not reference the Montessori Method. In the same report in 1922 there was a brief status provided on



kindergartens throughout the state but no mention of the method. It is this researcher's belief that remnants of the method may have continued through the Henry Barnard School, which had experimental classrooms for student teachers with the purpose of Montessori Method implementation from 1914-1919 since these laboratory classrooms remained part of the framework of the Rhode Island Normal school. The method's employment in the Henry Bernard School is documented to have continued until 1937 (World Book Co., 1937).

It is fair to mention that other groups like the Rhode Island Kindergarten League embraced Dr. Montessori's ideas (American Childhood, 1917). The Association of Women Teachers in Rhode Island was also committed to these ideals. The support provided by these educational organizations was most likely due to the interconnectedness of the educational associations with the administrators of the Rhode Island Board of education. Clara Craig's presidency of the Association of Women Teachers in 1917 is a great example (Patterson, 1917).

#### School Systems- State/Parent Climate

Simultaneously and earlier states dealt with a national crisis, child labor. Rhode Island addressed child labor as early as 1855 but the federal child labor law of 1917 required re-visitation of state policy. This would make for a strained relationship amid parents, teachers, and school administrators, which the literature reveals was normal for many states during this time. Some parents were not fond of the state taking away their able-bodied child who could be making a contribution to the household financially by working. In Rhode Island enforced compulsory education specifically meant children

ages seven to sixteen must attend day school therefore parents had to make sure children that didn't fit the permissible exclusion categories attended or be in compliance with federal and state law.

Add compulsory school attendance with the onset call for industrial vocational education and it is obvious that Rhode Island public school system had a mammoth task on their hands. This was validated by the state's appointment of an assistant commissioner of the public school to aid in the investigation of the state's educational needs. By 1913 policy was in place to appropriate state aid to towns to establish courses in manual training, household arts and vocational industrial education (Carroll, C. 1918). Parents, largely immigrants had to make a decision to embrace the state's policies in support of the educational needs of their children.

English language literacy would additionally become a focus of the entire state in the nineteen twenties possibly as an outcry in relation to World War I which resulted in an English-language only law directed at French-Canadian parochial schools in 1922, but resulted in all institutions of learning required to only use English (Keller, M.1994). This opened the state's eyes to immigration patterns and immigrant educational necessities. Despite the publicity of the English-language only law it seems that Rhode Island presented as culturally tolerant as the concept of cultural pluralism is applied by historians. For example, historian Charles Carroll brings attention to Rhode Island's assessment of the literacy needs of French and Irish Canadian immigrants. Discovering that the children of these immigrant groups were the most likely to be working in mills and not attending school, was used to restructure the state's truancy laws (Carroll, 1918).

There was continued *mêlée* due to some parents that wanted their children to receive instruction in their native language, so to maintain the peace some private schools were allowed to instruct in the immigrant group's native language. This supported the suggestion that Rhode Island was the leader in cultural pluralism during the time in question.

It is important to mention that Charles Carroll and Homer Patterson seem to be the primary historians to report on Rhode Island's public school system from 1910-1940. Patterson provides qualitative and quantitative information of the school system specifically focused on the 1910s, while Carroll presents more qualitative (narrative) information on the focus of the system at large. From these historians it is made clear that Rhode Island was proactive in addressing the educational needs of its populace, and heralded attention to school policy being driven by the needs of an ever-growing ethnically diverse and industrialized society.

Based on the literature and historical records parents did not seem to be an active part of the original educational framework at large prior to the twentieth century and the early twentieth century but in sizeable American municipalities their presence was becoming known. The voices of parents seem to be completely dependent on the issue(s) and characters and/or organizations involved. National school systems would ultimately embrace parents as they realized parents played a crucial role in shaping the minds of their children as well as making decisions that affect the state provisions for educational needs such money for teachers and administrators, as tax payers.

Many organizations comprised of women were visible during this time in history coinciding with the Women's Suffrage movement and education concerns throughout the country. Rhode Island organized their chapter of the Federation of Womens' clubs in 1895 a year after New York. There are both implicit and explicit connections to the Montessori Method are found in the analysis of this organization. Many of the women involved in this organization were philanthropists that were determined to promote best practice in early childhood educational environments as well as address other social ills. The need for all children to attend kindergarten was high on the list of must-dos, and the Montessori Method became another crusade for some of these women. They did not publicly support the mother's pension movement unlike chapters from other states like New York. They rallied with other associations on choice issues, but most importantly they were mothers, aunts and grandmothers that wanted the best for all children.

Mary Wood Allen, a member of the Women's Club of Rhode Island was an advocate for the Montessori Method. She is cited in William Forbush's (1914) *Manual of Play* promoting the sensory activities of Dr. Montessori. Mrs. Sarah Doyle, a prominent member of the Women's Club of Rhode Island is documented as a committee official of the department of education which was in full agreement with the experimentation of the Montessori Method in the Normal School (*Journal of Education*, 1913). Another member of the Women's Club, Mrs. Charles Remington who is on record as a member of 10 organizations was also a member of the state's Parent-Teacher Association, who supported use of the method as well (*National Congress of Parents and Teachers*, 1919). These organizations; including the National Education Association, the

American Normal School Association, National Association of School Superintendents, National Teacher Association, Central College Association and other organizations came together annually to discuss educational needs of their states, municipalities and special populations. This combined effort had to hold major influence on the professional community of educators nationally as well as parents.

On a cultural note, Smith (2004) explains that education was an important part of a young Jew's life in that it was to be an impetus for positive change in their community. Adults formed self-education clubs to learn American values and derive a better understanding of the English language. As a rule the Jewish male regardless of which part of Europe he immigrated, was employed in commerce, therefore American specific communication skills were a must. Therefore, parental choice to some extent can be viewed through a cultural lens as records reveal groups like the Council of Jewish Women and the Workmen's Circle in Rhode Island became involved in the national discussion of early childhood education, specifically the application of kindergarten amongst young Jewish children (Woolons, 2000). The Council of Jewish Women paid equal attention to the deaf population, through fundraising, attendance at conferences, and promotion of the Montessori Method.

Beyond the correlation of organized supporters there is the fact that some Jewish children that emigrated from European municipalities taken over by the Nazi attended Montessori schools prior to their journey to the United States. These schools were prohibited by the Nazi regime during the nineteen thirties, and thusly children attended state required schools for Jewish children. This is characterized in the famous memoirs,

the Diary of Anne Frank in which Anne Frank depicts her days under the tyranny of the Nazi regime during the Holocaust. As for more profundity in Spotts' (1967) Montessori School for Jewish Children infers that American Jewish immigrants throughout the east coast sought out or created Montessori type environments for their children, to include Rhode Island but most prevalent in the state of New York.

### Conclusion

Parents in Rhode Island during this time in history provided minimal advocacy for the Montessori Method perhaps due in part to the state board of education's divine commitment at the moment of their initial knowledge of the method. Wagner and Craig pushed forward an agenda of full inclusion of the method for teacher instruction in the state's normal school and in cooperation with the early childhood environments, like kindergartens. This was all in an effort to boost literacy skills to meet the needs that industrialization, urbanization and immigration had supplanted. This valiant action on behalf of Rhode Island's future, the children, makes its educational decisions unique from all other states in the union at this time.

Rhode Island's affair with the Montessori Method does not exhibit any direct connections to parent specific groups, charitable societies, or domestic legislation like New York. In contrast, the Montessori Method received strong support from the state in an effort to meet the state's desires to become the leader in industrialization, and urbanization in the nation. By 1937 there failed to be any dialogue in historical documents about the state's backing of the method. A postulation would be the circumstances of the nation economically as cited as a restraint in continued employment

of the method in New York. The onset, duration and outcome of the Great Depression in addition to two World Wars affected government provisions for everything, especially special interest projects.

Rhode Island executed and achieved a feat that had not been attempted by any other state when the Montessori Method was adopted systematically based on research that was significant for that time period. Further proof of utility was documented and used to fulfill the educational needs of the state. In closing, Rhode Island must be commended for its initiative to positively affect the lives of young children, and subsequently all of her citizens.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Montessori's sincere effort to change the world through education is revealed in her method which transformed how the young child is perceived. Though Froebel and others had enlightened the public about the need for the young child to be socialized, in Montessori's perception the young child could take part in the process of skill building via auto-education and benefit from early instruction in reading and writing. These unprecedented ideas were either met with skepticism or embraced wholeheartedly.

Dr. F. H. Swift (1912) writes "Most of the accounts of the Montessori Method school have been written by enthusiasts and not by educational experts and have thus formed the opinion of the public. Much has been said in the favor of the method of the wonderful Montessori school in Rome." Many articles and advertisements gave preferentiality to Dr. Montessori and her method. Overall, the United States seemed to have mixed emotions about the Montessori Method. It found favor in mostly private venues and a small number of public institutions, as experimental programs from its initial entry to the states in 1911. Some of these experimental programs became permanent and others were temporary attempts to revolutionize the educational offerings for young children. Over a 30 year period from 1910-1940 the method experienced



reputation was noble enough to keep the name relevant and recognized across the country.

Montessori herself came to the states during controversial times when major movements like immigration and industrialization affected the design of business therefore affecting the nation's economy, political and educational systems. Education became a mode of intellectual transformation and/or Americanization for young children during this revolutionary era. The Montessori Method was one of several methods imported and incorporated by private schools, institutions for the deaf and the mentally ill, as well as by public school programs for "normally" developing children.

Dr. Montessori's creation that sprung from her work with society's less fortunate and less likely entered the United States as an educational option for children of the affluent, which continued to be a theme throughout the 30 years in question. As time went on use of the method was adopted by philanthropic organizations to educate poor children and as minimal means of experimentation for public education institutions. Then parental application of the method was simultaneous with the endorsement of government benefits known as the mother's pension or widow's pension. The Montessori Method's route of employment seemed to trickle down from those who were well off enough to make choices, to those disadvantaged enough to be driven by need. The latter especially seen in the state of New York.

The state of New York's history reveals it to be a breeding ground and spring board for novel educational ideas during the time in question. New York City's Ellis Island, the major entry point into the states for immigrants from abroad. The Montessori

Method would travel over the Atlantic Ocean from Italy by news outlets and word of mouth, by Americans who had encountered the method while in Italy. Tarry Town, New York would be the lucky recipient of the first recorded, full-fledged school in which Montessori methods and values were incorporated. New York would then develop a total of 29 Montessori programs by 1916. Many New York organizations such as the Child Development Fund and other state chapters of Mothers' Clubs, Parent Teacher Associations, etc. would continue work to support the Montessori Method throughout the 1920s. This leads to future research as to what extent did social service or philanthropic entities affect the growth and continued vitality of the Montessori Method in New York City?

In addition, New York though only having one documented Montessori program within the state public school system would be the primary place for Montessori teacher training. Helen Parkhurst who spent several years in New York City working on many Montessori endeavors provided trainings on the method, and worked within the framework of the progressives to legitimize the method. She was the solitary individual Dr. Montessori trusted to promote her method along with the membership of the Montessori Promotion Fund. This would further bolster New York's Montessori Method status.

Despite being the smallest state in the union Rhode Island, was a leader in industrialization, urbanization, and cultural pluralism during the time period this researcher has examined. Rhode Island took a unique approach to address the educational needs of its young citizenry and adopted the Montessori Method

unreservedly. The state chose to make it a focus of its normal school's instruction and early childhood education programs. This was a colossal incorporation, on the other hand New York City's school system gave minimal attention to the method by allowing an experimental, kindergarten classroom that was sponsored by philanthropic sources. This utilization of the Montessori Method as an act of the state is documented to have lasted until the early 1920s.

In both states, the phenomena of industrialization, immigration and urbanization drove the education systems to meet the requirements for fruition. Early childhood education was a phenomenon of its own that seemed to make an attempt to address the desires of these states (as well as others), and its municipalities to Americanize immigrants to build a fitting workforce. Movements such as: progressivism, mental hygiene, eugenics, nativist and women's suffrage intensified the development of these phenomena. This leads to another one of this researcher's further research considerations. Did the Womens' Suffrage Movement have an effect on the growth and/or decline of the Montessori Method in the United States? Due to her proclamation of being a suffragist during her visit stateside, as well as the apparent lull in suffrage activity once women receive the right to vote in 1920. It is possible that the overall popularity and utility of the Montessori Method in the United States was potentially affected by each movement, along with the major occurring phenomena.

The Montessori Method's effectiveness and endurance in the United States can be tied to successful legislation that was quickly adopted by each state. Legislation known as the "mother's pension" began as financial assistance to families who had lost the

primary breadwinner of their household. This government support program for single women and children, encouraging mothers to stay home with their young children, was backed by factions such as, the National Congress of Mothers, the Council of Jewish Women and other philanthropic foundations. These factions, as well as prominent authors promoted the Montessori Method as the instructional approach mothers should embrace to develop their children in intellect and morality.

Discipline was a focus due to missing paternal figures in homes (that received the mother's pension) and charitable organizations that used the method in their early childhood programs. The quiet, orderly disposition of the Montessori classroom and the concentration on adaptive skills made it attractive to mothers and teachers of the disadvantaged alike. The discipline child was an "American" child therefore charitable organizations that worked with immigrant children favored the method as well.

Specifically in New York parents can be considered a reason for the sustained existence of the Montessori Method from 1910-1940. But, since parental use and interest was driven by the fore mentioned entities, parents should not be considered a direct cause. The promotion of the method to parents was fostered by the media and other literary options, such as books written specifically for parents by Dorothy Canfield Fisher. Another future research consideration that is apparent here is to what extent did media/news outlets/journals affect the promotion of the Montessori Method throughout the United States? There were innumerable newspaper articles, journal entries, and books that spoke directly to parents.

As mentioned before, parental application of the method was accompanied with application on larger levels. Non-for-profit institutions such as the Free School Society utilized the method (modified) in free kindergarten programs for the poor throughout New York City. It was not until the state requested the input of parents in 1927 to determine what curriculum to incorporate, that parents had a direct affect on the state's incorporation of the Montessori Method.

Some families in Rhode Island's Jewish immigrant communities, like New York and other states came with previous experience with the Montessori Method and expressed in organized assemblages their concerns related to the education of their children. This group favored the Montessori Method. Interestingly, despite Dr. Maria Montessori's heritage, research did not connect Immigrant Italian Americans to the support of her method. Her followers were educators, activists, and parents of prominent, seemingly pre-immigration ethnic groups, better described as the upper-class. This drives a future research venture of the notion if specific immigrant/cultural groups in the United States preferred the Montessori Method for their children at this time in history?

According to Gutek (2004) there were one thousand Montessori schools in the United States in 1925 but, soon afterwards there was a sharp decline in number. Unfortunately, Montessori schools and other private educational institutions that were established after World War I closed by the 1930s partly due to the Great Depression (Spodek & Saracho, 2005). Funding for charitable Montessori schools and programs were not readily available because of the need for these same organizations to provide basic necessities to the increasingly growing impoverished population at this time.

It did not stunt the growth of early childhood education programs because the nursery school and the kindergarten movement experienced cut backs but prospered, and took over the early childhood scene with federal support during these harsh times in America. Sadly, an unpublished dissertation notes that by 1940 there was only one Montessori school (found in New York City) (Notre Dame Journal of Education, 1970). This was possibly the only organized program at this time.

Amazingly, the results of this researcher's examination of the Montessori Method between 1910 -1940, in the states of Rhode Island and New York, appeared into the purported revitalization of the method by Nancy Rambusch in 1958. She was the founder of the Whitby school in Greenwich, Connecticut and her efforts resulted in the creation of the American Montessori Society(AMS) in 1960 (Altenbaugh, 1999). According to Spodek and Saracho (2005) the Montessori Method was not firmly established in America until Rambusch resurrected and reintroduced the method to answer the concerns of parents for an environment that employed the Montessori Method.

Well-educated parents were in search of more academically orientated early childhood programs to better prepare their young children for the school system. The American school system, public and private alike had embraced ideals of the administrative progressives that called for the adoption of testing that caused parents to be more concerned with the early childhood experiences their children received. Parents would be a major persuasive factor in the start of Montessori schools across the states.

Rambusch attended a Montessori training class in London in 1953 and after her first child was born she started a little play group incorporating the Montessori principles (Anbar, 1999). Her discussions with other parents led her to believe that her updated version of the Montessori Method must be made available to larger groups of children, resulted in the successful Whitby school. She met with Mario Montessori, the head of the Association Montessori International for the purpose of receiving approval to hold Montessori teacher training courses in the states. Despite specific requests to stay true to the original method Nancy started training teachers with her Americanize version. Though not in line with Mario's request it is reported that there were 600 legitimate AMI recognized Montessori school across the country, 13 training programs, public school implementation, and once again Montessori hardware was being manufactured in the states by 1970 (Ahlfeld, 1970).

Fascinatingly, one of Rambusch's (1992) many publications, *Montessori's Flawed Diffusion Model: An American Montessori Diffusion Philosophy* discusses her theory, and as to why the Montessori Method was headed for extinction before her noble rescue. She claimed "Montessori's proprietary lock on her ideas and their expressions caused consternation and puzzlement to Americans interested in her work" (Rambusch, 1992, pg. 3). Montessori's break from people like the Bells didn't place her in a good position amongst well-known activists, philanthropists and others. This is possibly the main factor to which the Montessori Method experienced a drop in popularity after her American visit in 1913. Her strong hold on her method and materials rejected the American concept of capitalistic enterprise. Her dedication to quality was so sound she

did not buy into the push to replicate Montessori-like environments and mass produce directresses across the US. Though Kramer and Standing portray Dr. Montessori as a compulsive tyrant when it came to the application of her method, the advertisements found in the education journals starting around 1911 suggests numerous individuals and businesses used the term Montessori loosely.

In conclusion, parents played a larger role in the Montessori Method's survival in the state of New York than Rhode Island. Rhode Island's adoption of the method statewide left an indelible mark on the state's educational system, affecting the instructional approach for young children. New York's implementation (among other states) of the method relied on the demand of activists, philanthropists, business men and most effectively, parents. It seems that though children received the product, parents were the consumers who desired this methodology to be utilized with their children, for previously mentioned reasons like discipline and academic skills. Therefore, the Montessori Method survived and eventually triumphed in the United States due to one consistent variable, parents. Parents, regardless of socio-economic status, with or without direct knowledge perpetuated the utilization of the method in their effort to fashion the ideal American child.



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## VITA

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