



3-2022

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Charles Tocci

Loyola University Chicago, ctocci@luc.edu

Ann Marie Ryan

University of Texas at San Antonio

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Recommended Citation

Tocci, Charles and Ryan, Ann Marie. Conserving the American Man: Gender, Eugenics and Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps. *History of Education*, 51, 2: 224-243, 2022. Retrieved from Loyola eCommons, Education: School of Education Faculty Publications and Other Works, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0046760X.2021.1947395>

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**Conserving the American Man: Gender, Eugenics, and Education in the Civilian
Conservation Corps**

Charles Tocci, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Education
Loyola University Chicago
Phone: (312) 915-6865
Email: ctocci@luc.edu
Corresponding Author

Ann Marie Ryan, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching
College of Education and Human Development
University of Texas at San Antonio

Charles Tocci is an assistant professor of education and program coordinator for the secondary social studies education program at Loyola University Chicago.

Ann Marie Ryan is professor of education and chair of the Department of Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

Conserving the American Man: Gender, Eugenics, and Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps

The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a novel United States federal education program that enrolled nearly three million men during the 1930s and early-1940s. This public work relief program provides a case study of the ways that masculine, eugenicists ideas about public education evolved from the Progressive Era through the Great Depression. This educational philosophy was espoused by a small group of men—some educators, some not—who sought to remedy what they saw as the failures of public schooling, namely its overly feminine nature. Through an analysis of their public writings and the images that were used to advertise the CCC, we examine the program's vision of education for white working-class men intended to help rebuild the United States following the Great Depression. Our exploration of these ideas provides an important bridge between the educational theories of the Progressive and the Post-World War II Eras.

Introduction

The significant economic hardships placed on schools during the Great Depression of the 1930s challenged the foundations of public schooling in the United States and raised questions about its purpose. This brought to light significant tensions about what and how men and women should be taught in terms of academic and vocational content. However, the most pressing issue facing schools during the 1930s centered around funding, though financial hardships are provided little treatment in the literature.¹ Given the fact that most large public school systems were relatively young and new at managing compulsory enrollments during this time, it is notable that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration did not specifically support

¹ Paula Fass, 'Without Design: Education Policy in the New Deal', *American Journal of Education*, 91 (1982): 36-64; E. Thomas Ewing and David Hicks, eds. *Education and the Great Depression: Lessons From a Global History* (New York: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2006); Harvey Kantor and David B. Tyack, eds. *Work, Youth, and Schooling: Historical Perspectives on Vocationalism in American Education* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982); Jeffrey Mirel and David Angus, 'Youth, Work, and Schooling in the Great Depression', *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 5 (1985): 489-504; Ann Marie Ryan, 'Keeping "Every Catholic Child in Catholic School" During the Great Depression, 1933-1939', *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice*, 11(2007): 157-75; Gilbert E. Smith, *The limits of reform: Politics and Federal Aid to Education, 1937-1950* (New York: Garland, 1982); Tracy.L. Steffes, *School, State, and Society: A New Education to Govern Modern America, 1890 - 1940* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012); David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elizabeth Hansot, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Pres, 1984).

schools with the New Deal. Rather, several New Deal programs, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), attempted to side-step public school systems to provide additional educational programming.² With these programs, the federal government opened a new space for various factions within and connected to the federal government to attempt to implement their distinctive visions for public education.³ The CCC started in 1933 and largely consisted of residential camps for men to conduct environmental conservation work jointly sponsored by the Department of War, Department Labor, Department of Agriculture, and the Department of the Interior.

This article examines key publications produced for enrollees in and instructors of the educational programs of the CCC. We analyze two core texts: *Once in a Lifetime: A Guide to the CCC Camp* by Ned H. Dearborn⁴ and *The School in the Camps: The Educational Program of the Civilian Conservation Corps* by Frank E. Hill.⁵ Each of these volumes was published in the years after the CCC was established and just prior to the ‘Civilian Conservation Corps Act of 1937’, which required that the CCC provide ‘at least ten hours each week [that] may be devoted to general education and vocational training’.⁶ Dearborn and Hill’s books were key texts in shaping the CCC’s education programs, which reached over 2,500,000 young men by 1942.

In articulating a vision for education in the CCC, Dearborn and Hill used Progressive Era notions of eugenics, conservation, and progressive education to develop a critique of contemporary public schooling as well as outline an educational solution for redeeming young,

² Fass, ‘Without Design’, 36-64; R. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992).

³ Fass, ‘Without Design’, 36-64.

⁴ Ned H. Dearborn, *Once in a Lifetime: A Guide to the CCC Camp* (New York: Merrill Company, 1936).

⁵ Frank H. Hill, *The School in the Camps: The Educational Program of the Civilian Conservation Corps* (New York: Merrill Company, 1935).

⁶ Civilian Conservation Corps Act, Pub. L. 163-383, 50 Stat. 319, codified as amended at 16 U.S.C. §§ 584.

white, working class men. Hill and Dearborn argued that these young men, harmed by an overly feminine public school system, could be rehabilitated into productive workers by laboring in nature and pursuing their personal educational interests. Hill and Dearborn's efforts found a unique home within the New Deal, an unprecedented creation of welfare programs enacted during the mid-1930s that created numerous opportunities to develop and promote idiosyncratic ideas about education. In this way, ideas promoted by Hill and Dearborn serve as key bridges for historians seeking connections between the educational philosophies of the Progressive and post-WWII eras where intersecting eugenicist, conservationist, and misogynist ideas persisted and evolved. These ideas are related to the life adjustment movement that emerged as a forceful trend in American education post-WWII, which reshaped the secondary education curriculum with its emphasis on vocational skills and instilling student dispositions amenable to a working class station in society.⁷

The CCC, working parallel to schools, was controversial in its time in part because it developed new curricula and practices targeted at young men who often had little or limited formal schooling.⁸ The educational philosophy behind this large scale experiment was expressed at length in Dearborn's *Once in a Lifetime*.⁹ Dearborn, the Dean of the Division of General Education of New York University during this period framed the CCC's curriculum programs as intentionally different from that of 'The Old Schools'¹⁰. This 'new deal in learning' was

⁷ Steven J. Gross, 'Civic Hands Upon the Land: Diverse Patterns of Social Education in the Civilian Conservation Corps and its Analogues, 1933-1942' in *Social Education in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Christine Woysner, Joseph Watras and Margaret Smith Crocco (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 42-57.; Diane Ravitch, *Left Back: A Century of Battles over School Reform* (Simon & Schuster, 2001), 322-365.

⁸ Calvin W. Gower, 'The Civilian Conservation Corps and American education: A threat to local control?', *History of Education Quarterly*, 7(1967): 58-70; Hill, *The School in the Camps*; John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942: A New Deal case study*.(Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1967).

⁹ Dearborn, *Once in a Lifetime*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 16. With oft repeated phrase 'old schools,' Dearborn appears to be playing on a few different distinctions. From one perspective, he is distinguishing the kind of education recruits would receive in the CCC with what they

designed to be thoroughly student-centered, providing enrollees offerings in ‘arts and crafts, vocational training, or recreational activities’.¹¹ Dearborn contrasted this with a public school system he described as dominated by women and overly focused on academic content to the detriment of vocational skills.¹²

To realise this new form of education, CCC camps sought out teachers, practices, and structures that were different from public schools at the time.¹³ Hill clearly articulated his disdain for the public schools, their methods, and instructors, and he hoped the CCC would offer men of the 1930s a radically different and much improved educational experience. Hill proposed for the CCC a practical curriculum and all male instructors, both of which he argued was not provided by the public schools.¹⁴ Despite the rhetoric of the CCC’s educational program founders, who aspired to offer an educational alternative to the public schools, the actual educational programming in the camps was widely diverse and variable in quality, method, and purpose, perhaps fitting for a widely distributed system with little centralized control.¹⁵

In drawing distinctions between the CCC education programs and schools, Dearborn, Hill, and other architects of the CCC issued rebukes to the schooling of their era and articulated

experienced in public schooling, despite the fact that many of the CCC pedagogical practices Dearborn described evolved across the same period—the early-twentieth century—and in tandem with contemporary public school practices. But Dearborn expects the average CCC recruit would not have this historical background, though Dearborn himself should. Moreover, Dearborn is implicitly contrasting the newer field of adult education, in which he was a prominent figure of the time, with the longer established education system for children. For further on this, see Harold W. Stubblefield, *Towards a History of Adult Education in America: The Search for a Unifying Principle* (New York: Routledge, 2018).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17

¹² *Ibid.*, 16

¹³ Robert Fechner, ‘The Educational Contribution of the Civilian Conservation Corps’, *Phi Delta Kappan* (1937): 305-7; Hill, *The School in the Camps*.

¹⁴ Hill, *The School in the Camps*. Hill was reacting to the increasing number of female teachers in secondary schools during the early twentieth century. By the end of the 1930s some 58% of secondary public school teachers were women. Emery M. Foster, *Statistical Summary of 1939-40, Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1938-1940, Vol. II Chapter I* (Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Education, 1943), 35.

¹⁵ Harry Zeitlin, ‘Federal Relations in American Education, 1933-43: A Study of New Deal Efforts and Innovations’ (Ph.D. dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1958); Fass, ‘Without Design’ 36-64.

an alternative framework that sought to rehabilitate young, white men. Their vision of public education sought to emphasize the masculine over the feminine, the informal over the formal, choice over prescription, and the practical over the academic. In doing so through a nature conservation program, they drew an implicit equivalence between engineering the landscape and engineering society. Through a close reading of *Once in a Lifetime* and *The School in the Camps* as historical and cultural texts¹⁶, we critique the ways Dearborn and Hill drew on eugenicist, misogynist, and conservationist concepts dating back to the early-twentieth century thereby perpetuating ideas that would find reconfigured expression a decade later in the life adjustment movement¹⁷.

The Civilian Conservation Corps

The CCC was established by the U.S. Congress within the first months of the Roosevelt administration. The ‘Civilian Conservation Corps Reforestation Relief Act’¹⁸ was proposed on March 21, 1933 and passed ten days later. While governor of New York, Roosevelt had introduced the same basic concept of hiring and training unemployed young men to perform conservation.¹⁹ Though the program had been established at the state level for only a year prior to his inauguration, Roosevelt moved quickly to realize his campaign promise of replicating it at the national level. After the law passed, Roosevelt took only six days to issue an executive order initiating the program. He appointed Robert Fechner, vice president of the International Association of Machinists, as its director.

¹⁶ Úna Ní Bhroiméil, ‘“A Tinge of Effeminacy”: Masculinity and National Manhood in the Mosely Report, 1904’, *Paedagogica Historica* 51, no.3 (2015): 338.

¹⁷ Gross, ‘Civic Hands across the Land’, 42-57.; Diane Ravitch, *Left Back*, 322-365.

¹⁸ Civilian Conservation Corps Act.

¹⁹ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

Fechner's role as a labor union leader was a strategic consideration by Roosevelt.²⁰ During the campaign and legislative negotiations, labor leaders worried that the creation of large-scale employment programs like the CCC would undermine labor markets and the role of unions within those markets. To ameliorate these concerns, several key program design decisions were made: enrollment was limited to men ages 18-25 who could not find work, except in the case of veterans and a small program dedicated to Native Americans; enlistment was for a six-month term, which enrollees could renew up to three times; and salary was set at \$30 per month for general enrollees, with \$25 of that designated for family members of the enrollees. Once the bill was passed, the appointment of Fechner and of James McEntee as executive assistant director signaled to labor unions that their worries would be considered.²¹ McEntee was a former member of the International Association of Machinists who was appointed by Woodrow Wilson to the New York Arbitration Board, where he mediated labor disputes brought by merchant marines and shipyard workers.

By July 1, 1933 there were roughly 250,000 men enrolled in "Emergency Conservation Work" in over 1,400 residential camps across the country.²² This was a collaborative undertaking by four cabinet-level departments: the Department of War, which oversaw the camps; the Department of Labor, which recruited men; and the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, which supervised the projects undertaken by the camps. The central role played by the Department of War brought a martial nature to the program, one where men followed several military routines as part of camp life. Men were grouped into regiments, wore army-style

²⁰ Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007); Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

²¹ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*; Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

²² Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

uniforms, and were supervised by Army officers and World War I veterans. Later, at the outbreak of World War II, veterans of the CCC were enrolled into the Army with varying advanced ranks based on their length and kind of service in the corps.

At first, the CCC was not intended to have a formal educational function but serve solely as an employment program providing valuable public works. This was in part, again, due to lobbying from labor unions who feared that the federal government would supplant the role of unions in the vocational education of workers.²³ However, as the first waves of young men entered the camps, their supervisors were troubled by the perceived poor level of education among enrollees and, in many but not all camps, began to offer a variety of academic and vocational classes²⁴.

Figure I presents a snapshot of the level of education that enrollees had upon entering the CCC. Of the 282,079 that came to the CCC in 1936-1937, 59.1% had less than a high school education. This was in line with the national median years of school completion by age 25, which stood at 8.4 in 1930.²⁵ Moreover, this average level of education also comported with H.M. Bell's 1936-1937 survey of workers, which found that relief workers had completed 8.1 years of schooling compared to 7.5 years for unskilled laborers, 9.2 years for domestic-personal workers, 9.8 years for semi-skilled workers, and 10.2 years for skilled workers.²⁶ In sum, the young men who enrolled in the CCC generally reflected the overall national educational attainment despite the consternation of CCC administrators about their poor academic background.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert Fechner, 'The Educational Contribution', 305.

²⁵ Thomas D. Snyder 'Education Characteristics of the Population', in *120 Years of American Education: A Statistical Portrait*, ed. Thomas D. Snyder (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1993), 21.

²⁶ Howard M. Bell, *Youth Tell Their Stories* (Washington, D.C.: ACE, 1938), 94.

Insert Figure 1 about here

As soon as the camps were up and running, Fechner began visiting and, self-reportedly, asking intently about the educational needs and interests of enrollees. He reports that ‘(d)uring the first summer the Corps was in operation...I found company commanders, project superintendents, and foremen were teaching as many as ten and twelve courses. Most of the subjects taught were in the elementary and high-school levels. Education that first summer, however, was largely of catch-as-catch-can nature’.²⁷ The solution was to recruit the Office of Education to manage the educational work in CCC camps. Since, at this point in U.S. history, the Office of Education was already part of the Department of the Interior, the inclusion of the Office required no new statutory authority. But the Office, since its inception in 1872, had been prevented by law from direct educational work or otherwise involving itself in the schooling of youth; its primary function was to collect and disseminate research about the state of education across the nation. So once recruited into extraordinary duty for this New Deal program, a thin, makeshift bureaucracy was rapidly created to install educational programs in CCC camps on a national scale.²⁸

In late 1933, Fechner appointed Clarence Marsh, the Dean of the Evening School at the University of Buffalo, as the Education Director of the CCC to develop and implement an educational program in the camps. Marsh considered the CCC’s educational work to be a kind of rehabilitation for young men who had been poorly served by their schools and by the broader economy. He wrote, ‘[T]hat effective rehabilitation of these young men demanded not only that they be fed and clothed and given honest work to do, but that in their spare time they be given

²⁷ Fechner, ‘The Educational Contribution’, 305.

²⁸ Fass, ‘Without Design’, 36-64.

the utmost opportunity to learn about the world in which they live, and their relation to it.’²⁹ Characterized in this way, Marsh sidestepped difficult and potentially intractable conflicts over the role of the federal government in K-12 public education.³⁰ It also meant that new capacity had to be quickly built within the Office of Education.

To fill this gap, Marsh connected with the adult education field as a source of expertise about how to educate the young men enrolling in the CCC. Marsh formed an advisory board, which developed a basic plan for immediate implementation: each camp would have a dedicated education space, preferably a building, an education advisor, and a small library.³¹ As soon as this basic outline was adopted, Marsh engaged the American Association of Adult Education to study these educational efforts and make recommendations for improvement. In turn, the Association tapped Frank Hill³² to supervise and publish the study *The School in the Camps*.³³ At the same time, Marsh asked Ned Dearborn to produce a monograph intended for the public. Dearborn’s volume, *Once in a lifetime*, was addressed to young men considering enrolling in the camp, and includes a long, detailed presentation of CCC educational practices, philosophies, and ideals.³⁴

When the CCC was reauthorized in 1937, education became a specific charge for the program, with each enrollee receiving at least ten hours of instruction per week. Zeitlin estimated that during 1938-1939 over 90 percent of enrollees were actively participating in educational

²⁹ Clarence S. Marsh, ‘The Educational Program of the Civilian Conservation Corps’, *Bulletin of the Department of Secondary School Principals of the National Education Association*, 50 (1934): 221.

³⁰ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Guide to the Frank Hill Collection, 1905-1969, The Board of Trustees of Stanford University, (1999), <http://pdf.oac.cdlib.org/pdf/stanford/mss/m0212.pdf>. Hill was a Stanford-educated poet and radio enthusiast who was hired as one of the initial district supervisors for camp educational advisors. Though he has no obvious connection to the CCC or formal education systems, Hill was son of the noted nature photographer and early-20th century conservationist Andrew Putnam Hill.

³³ Hill, *The School in the Camps*.

³⁴ Dearborn, *Once in a Lifetime*.

programs for an average of four hours per week, and that two-thirds of this 90 percent were involved in strictly academic classes.³⁵ These academic classes could range from basic literacy and numeracy to specialized courses in Latin, history, and mathematics.³⁶ Camps serving Black enrollees also offered over 900 ‘Negro history’ courses.³⁷ The quality of the CCC courses was respected enough that by 1941, four states and the District of Columbia offered school credit to young men who could demonstrate completion of classes in CCC camps.

Dearborn and Hill’s Educational Vision

Dearborn and Hill were opportunists who designed the CCC’s educational program to complement the corps members’ physical labor in ways that addressed certain concerns about formal schooling found in the rhetoric of the day. Hill and Dearborn invoked the discourse of fear around the feminization of the teaching profession and the poor fit that co-educational schools had become for American young men. They promised ‘the sort of school you can like’ to draw in both disgruntled dropouts and male teachers fed up with the ‘over feminized’

³⁵ Zeitlin, ‘Federal Relations in American Education’, 92.

³⁶ Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*.

³⁷ Edgar Brown, ‘What the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) is doing for Colored Youth’. (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Offices, 1941). Brown was an Illinois-born Black WWI veteran who earned a business degree from Northwestern University, was a four-time American Tennis Association singles champion, became an editor for the *Standard News* in St. Louis, Missouri, and served as an advertising manager for Madame C.J. Walker Company. With the onset of the Great Depression, Brown transitioned into federal service in the CCC as an advisor on the segregated Black camps; he came to this job by way of his brother-in-law, Irvin H. McDuffie—President Roosevelt’s personal valet—who lobbied the President on behalf of Brown. In this role, Brown was a vocal advocate for Black enrollees, which drew the Fechner’s ire. The CCC director wrote to the President that Brown ‘seems to be obsessed with the feeling that he should constitute himself the personal representative of every Negro in our C.C.C. organization.’ Yet, as the American economy began to improve in 1939 and 1940, the number of new enrollees began to drop and Fechner turned to Brown to help increase Black enlistment to keep CCC numbers up. This was the genesis of this 1941 advertisement, which publicly touted the value of the CCC for Black men in a way unimaginable just a few years earlier given the program’s de facto segregation. For more discussion of the Black experience in the CCC, see: Calvin W. Gower, ‘The Struggle of Blacks for Leadership Positions in the Civilian Conservation Corps: 1933-1942.’, *Journal of Negro History*, 61, no. 2 (1976): 123-135. Brown also served as president of the United Government Employees union from 1934-1943, where he was instrumental in elimination of the personal photograph requirement for all civil service job applications as well as the inclusion of a provision in the 1940 civil service reform law that expressly prohibited racial discrimination. For more on Brown, see his biographical note: Andrew Salinas, ‘Brown, Edgar G. (1889-1954)’, Amistad Research Center, <http://amistadresearchcenter.tulane.edu/archon/?p=creators/creator&id=443>

circumstances in their schools. They realized this vision by appealing to the conservation movement and its ties to restoring men's masculinity through work and economic activity. Their educational plans focused on preparing young men for their place in the American economy, but not for moving up the social strata.

Dearborn cultivated the sense of the ignored or neglected male as he wrote for potential and new enrollees:

School Wasn't Always So Bad. There may have been some studies you liked. There were school parties, clubs, and basketball games. You probably remember one or two teachers who were friendly and human. They were interested in you as a boy—ahead of their interest in literature, history, Latin, or science. But these were exceptions. The old school room even smelled like a school room: blackboards, desks, pencils, erasers, rulers—pretty messy and boring! So you said, “Schools? Education? Nerts! I’ve had enough! Teachers and professors? Take ‘em away!” Too bad, but the story is too true. Well here at the camps you have a new deal.³⁸

In Dearborn's *Once in a Lifetime: A Guide to the CCC Camp*, he framed the curriculum in CCC programs as intentionally different from ‘The Old Schools’, offering that ‘no one will require you to study or to join a class. No one will outline a program of courses’ and hand it down to you. No one will even ask you to learn anything in the usual school way’.³⁹ Dearborn exhorted, ‘**The Old School.** Remember the school that tried to make you study things and do things you didn’t like? You had to go, whether you wanted to or not. There was a compulsory school-attendance law. You had to take certain subjects, whether you liked them or not’.⁴⁰ This ‘new deal in learning’ was designed to be thoroughly student-centered, providing enrollees

³⁸ Dearborn, *Once in a Lifetime*, 17. Here, Dearborn wrote in the second person and adopted an exaggerated, humorous tone in an effort to grab the attention of young men who might be unsure about the CCC and, simultaneously, to perform a winking version of young men for other readers. In either case, Dearborn drew strict lines between what was good (parties, clubs, and basketball) and what was bad (academics, the sensory experience of classrooms, and most teachers). But the camps were offered as a physical and social escape for all the worst parts of school.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

offerings in ‘arts and crafts, vocational training, or recreational activities’.⁴¹

If none of these were of interest, men could ‘sit around and twiddle your thumbs, sulk, or otherwise waste your time’.⁴² As Dearborn relayed, ‘[the CCC] is a school in which you can get the real dope on other men and on the importance of nature to our everyday life.’⁴³ In drawing a number of pointed distinctions between the CCC education programs and schools, Dearborn and other architects of the CCC issued rebukes to the curricula of their era. This vision of public education sought to emphasize the masculine over the feminine, the informal over the formal, choice over prescription, and the practical over the academic.

As the architects sought to distinguish the CCC from traditional schools of the time, they spearheaded a massive attempt to use the federal government to fund alternative public education. Hill stated that ‘As for the C.C.C....it might become a method for training young men dissatisfied with the public schools, who could combine work experience and study in the process of carrying out useful public works projects’.⁴⁴ Hill also emphasized the uniqueness of the teachers employed by the CCC:

The teachers in the C.C.C. are as interesting as the method. The maleness of the C.C.C. faculty is one unusual characteristic. Furthermore, many of these men, some in administrative work and not actually teaching, are bookish and inexperienced in nonscholastic [sic] life. The women are for the most part unmarried; many have grown tired and nervous from years of difficult work...For boys from twelve to seventeen years of age the ministrations of nervous, unmarried are often instinctively repugnant. A student must after all find his instructor a person he respects, admires, and can work with. The adolescent boy, physically bigger than his woman preceptor, instinctively realistic, and vaguely impatient of attitudes he may find uncongenial and irritating, frequently goes “sour” on school because of the person form in which he encounters it. In the C.C.C., he meets a man, often physically as well as mentally his superior, and one with whom a social relationship can be simple and natural. Consciously or unconsciously, he finds the personal

⁴¹ Ibid., 14.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 83.

symbol of education acceptable.⁴⁵

Dearborn supported Hill's view that the methods of education employed by the CCC were superior to those used in traditional public schools, stating that 'the simple life as a highly praiseworthy objective has great and sufficient rewards for most of us. It is proposed as a thought worth serious consideration'.⁴⁶ Both Dearborn and Hill emphasized masculinity and nature in their discourse as they wrote to CCC 'enrollees'. They focused on promoting the interests of enrollees as long as those interests focused on practical aims or the "simple life". They were cultivating 'natural', 'simple', and masculine as mutually reinforcing concepts of appropriate education for a large segment of young white men.

Feminization Fears and Eugenicist Responses

Hill and Dearborn, the architects of the education program of the CCC, tried to enact an experiment that addressed what they saw as a pressing social concern for the U.S.—poor educational outcomes for men. They were especially concerned about the educational fate of white working class men. Cohen's analysis of the data on CCC enrollees demonstrated that approximately half of enrollees came from working-class backgrounds,⁴⁷ an estimate that agreed with Hill's figures.⁴⁸ This socioeconomic makeup of the CCC camps was especially important given the shifting views of government assistance. During the Great Depression, working people

⁴⁵ Ibid., 70. Per Figure 1 (above), roughly 59% of CCC enrollees had completed grade 8. So while Hill discusses boys ages twelve to seventeen, a minority of the total enrollees would not have been in school at these ages; most had left school by age 13. But Hill is painting a striking and hyperbolic image of the adolescent boy, physically larger than his women teachers, intolerant of their stereotypical persona, and no longer needing their nurturing. But, again, this does not comport with the data we have about actual enrollees and Hill offers us no direct evidence to the contrary. Rather, he is recycling tropes about feminization fears that have already been circulating in education circles for decades.

⁴⁶ Dearborn, *Once in a Lifetime*, 307.

⁴⁷ Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁴⁸ Hill, *The School in the Camps*.

were encouraged to look away from ‘ethnic institutions and welfare capitalist employers’ for assistance and toward federal government programs like the CCC for relief.⁴⁹

New Deal policies, which were simultaneously aimed at direct relief as well as developmental support to rebuild the economy, served to solidify a white working class identity out of the varieties of ethnic, religious, and regional identities present in the U.S. at that time.⁵⁰ This was a result of Southern Democrats using political leverage in Congress to design New Deal policies largely along Jim Crow segregation lines. For instance, occupations such as farm and domestic labor that employed large numbers of African Americans were generally excluded from direct worker relief programs. And where programs were established that might have served African Americans broadly, whether in practice or by policy, racial segregation was often incorporated into the implementation.⁵¹ Such was the case with the CCC. The ‘Civilian Conservation Corps Reforestation Relief Act’ of 1933 expressly prohibited racial segregation, yet racially segregated camps were immediately formed.⁵² Thus millions of young white men from urban and rural regions of the U.S. served in the CCC together and were treated as a distinct, if aggrieved, class of Americans distinct from women, African Americans, and other minoritized groups.

Hill and Dearborn argued that one of the key harms done to the young men enrolled in the CCC was the failure of the U.S. public educational system to provide male role models. Single women constituted approximately 70 percent of the public teaching force in 1900 and

⁴⁹ Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 252.

⁵⁰ Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action was White: The Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York, NY: W.W. North and Company, 2006).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps*. Salmond argues that Fechner, a native white Tennessean who grew up during the era of strict legal segregation, acquiesced to state and local pressures to isolate African American enrollees to their home states and to keep them segregated from White CCC members despite anti-segregation provision in the federal law. In Salmond’s view, Fechner prioritized the expedient establishment of the CCC over the civil rights provisions of the law.

were chosen over their married counterparts, since they were seen as unattached and easier to manage.⁵³ By the onset of the Great Depression, many districts made the unwritten rule of hiring single over married women an actual policy, arguing that married women were less in need of employment during the economic downturn.⁵⁴ This led to single women dominating the profession and what became known as the feminization of the teaching profession.

The charged rhetoric around the feminization of teaching warned that women would not only displace male teachers but weaken the masculinity of future generations of men. The demographic data on teaching demonstrates that women were indeed increasing in number, arming their naysayers with ammunition for their misogynistic cause. According to the Office of Education's *Biennial Survey* published in 1943, the teaching force across both the public and private sectors increased in the number of women and total percent of female teachers in both elementary and secondary schools in the early twentieth century.⁵⁵ In 1909-1910, women made up 83% of the elementary teachers and 57% of the secondary teachers in public and private schools.⁵⁶ In public schools alone, they comprised 81% of elementary and 53% of secondary teachers. By 1939-40, that increased to 91% of all elementary teachers and 60% of all secondary teachers with 88% of elementary and 58% of secondary teachers in public schools.⁵⁷

⁵³ Jackie M. Blount, 'Manly Men and Womanly Women: Deviance, Gender Role Polarization, and the Shift in Women's School Employment, 1900-1976', *Harvard Educational Review* (1996): 320.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ The private schools in this data set included schools sponsored by religious groups, e.g., Roman Catholic schools, Lutheran schools, and others, as well as independent schools. Of the private schools in operation at the time, Catholic schools represented the largest in number. Catholic school enrollment comprised some 7% of the total U.S. school enrollment in 1909-10 and rose to 9.4% by 1939-40. Emery Foster, *Statistical Summary of 1939-40, Biennial Survey of Education in the United States, 1938-1940, Vol. II Chapter I*, 35; *The Official Catholic Directory and Clergy List* (Milwaukee, WI: M.H. Wiltzius and Co., 1910), 1029; Thomas D. Snyder, *120 Years of American Education*, 38, 49.

⁵⁶ Foster, *Statistical Summary of 1939-40*, 35.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Educational leaders in the early 20th century offered explicit critiques of the feminization of public schooling. In his 1904 book, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*, G. Stanley Hall asserted, ‘The progressive feminization of secondary education works its subtle demoralization on the male teachers who remain [in the schools].... It is hard, too, for male principals of schools with only female teachers not to suffer some deterioration in the moral tone of their virility and to lose in the power to cope successfully with men.’⁵⁸ As a leading voice in the National Education Association, Hall’s words carried considerable weight at the time. However, he was not alone in his critique of the current state of education in the U.S., and similar arguments came from abroad.

Historian Victoria Bisell Brown described how the “fear of feminization” in Los Angeles public schools during the Progressive Era led to a significant reorganization of the system.⁵⁹ As young women’s enrollment, attendance, and graduation rates began to significantly outpace young men’s, the issue was framed as a problem in that ‘the typical academic regimen was not sufficiently challenging or imaginative to appeal to the masculine mind’.⁶⁰ This led to the creation of two new vocational high schools as well as an evening school paired with concerted efforts to increase the number of male teachers. Despite these efforts, boys’ enrollment fell independent of faculty sex ratios.⁶¹ The effect of these reforms was to increase the salience of gender in public school discourses ‘in order to insure boy’s place at the center of the schools’ mission and thereby quiet the dark fear of feminization’.⁶²

⁵⁸ G. Stanley Hall, ‘Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education’ quoted in Blount, ‘Manly Men and Womanly Women’, 322.

⁵⁹ Victoria Bissell Brown, “The Fear of Feminization: Los Angeles High Schools in the Progressive Era”, *Feminist Studies*, 16 (Fall 1990), 493-518.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 498.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 506.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 512.

Historian Úna Ní Bhroiméil discussed the concerns raised by the number of female teachers in American secondary schools in her analysis of the ‘Mosely Report’ of 1904.⁶³ This turn of the twentieth century report commissioned by British education authorities aimed to analyze how American schooling fueled its industrial successes. Bhroiméil noted that the lengthy report was peppered with concerns over the increasing feminization of teaching, threats to masculine character development of adolescent boys by the undue influence of female teachers, and the dangers of coeducation on male students. This concurs with Tyack and Hansot’s assessment that educators from other countries found coeducation in the U.S. odd, especially the practice of having women educate boys.⁶⁴ These educators commented that having female teachers would likely result in less masculine men.⁶⁵ This was also a time period when educating students differently based on their class or ethnic or racial background was met with some criticism (although it continued), while delivering different programs of education based on gender was widely accepted.⁶⁶

General approval of educating women and men differently led to an inherent bias against women in education. In the decades leading up to the CCC, American scholars built arguments, rooted in the pseudoscience of eugenics, that called for the further marginalization of women. Eugenicists argued that the sexual and reproductive lives of women should be more heavily regulated in an effort to manage the social order.⁶⁷ Progressive Era scholar Edward Alsworth Ross was one of the most prominent proponents of strictly managing women’s fertility and birth rates in pursuit of a harmonious natural order, such as that found in the idealized rural family on

⁶³ Bhroiméil, 2015, 335-349.

⁶⁴ David Tyack and Elizabeth Hansot, *Learning Together: A History of Coeducation in American Public Schools* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1992).

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁶⁷ Laura Lovett., *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1938* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 79.

the American frontier.⁶⁸ President Theodore Roosevelt extended the analogy by presenting eugenics as a science for managing the racial composition of American society directly akin to the science of managing natural resources⁶⁹. In this way, eugenics and conservation were intertwined as a “moral crusade”⁷⁰ for the sustainability of civilization.

In *Building a Better Race*, Historian Wendy Kline examined how eugenicists favored middle-class white women of the early-20th century leaving their professional positions and returning to full-time motherhood ‘...to ensure that the white race would once again be healthy and prolific’.⁷¹ This was a kind of conservation of women’s bodies conceptually similar to the conservation of other natural resources. Further, women who were employed and who dominated particular fields, such as education, found themselves criticized for being too feminine or too masculine; ‘women were damned if they did, damned if they didn’t’.⁷² This catch-22 promoted white middle class men and furthered their superior social status. Historian Nicole Hahn Rafter noted that although men met with some scrutiny from eugenicists, women, and particularly working class women and, within them, those who ‘ended up in poorhouses, especially if they had children of indeterminate origin’, became targets of their social policies including sterilization.⁷³ Consequently, eugenics was a key part of a complex and diffuse, though not

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 110.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁷¹ Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality and Eugenics: From the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 14.

⁷² Tyack and Hansot, *Learning Together*, 160.

⁷³ Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press), 48; Daniel. J. Kevles ‘From Eugenics to Genetic Manipulation’ in *Companion Encyclopedia to Science in the Twentieth Century*, eds. John Krige and Dominique Pestre (New York: Routledge, 2003), 301-18. Kevles argued that eugenics kept a keen focus on managing women given the social importance of bearing children.

universally shared, ideological nexus with conservation and misogyny that prompted consternation about American masculinity and the future of white men.⁷⁴

Masculinity and Conservation

The perceived loss of masculinity for men, specifically white middle class men, was what Allen deemed as one of the major cultural narratives about American society during the Depression that informed and reinforced New Deal policies.⁷⁵ These were ‘[c]ivic stories that celebrated virile white manhood, hard at work on New Deal relief projects, that aligned residual white male authority with the emergent welfare state’.⁷⁶ These stories came in the form of several ‘genres’⁷⁷: the ‘forgotten man’, a turn of phrase Roosevelt introduced in 1932 to describe a traditional breadwinning head of the household who struggled to find work and who would be supported by New Deal policies; ‘the wild boys’, consisting of unemployed young men alternately roving the nation in search of work or waylaid by big city vices; and ‘women-blaming’, which pinned many of the problems experienced by the nation on married women who worked, nagging wives, and sexually promiscuous unmarried women. Historian Holly Allen argued that these Depression Era civic stories served as a culturally conservative ballast during a time of extreme economic and social change.⁷⁸ In turn, the CCC as a direct relief program for veterans and young men, run entirely by men, aimed to serve as a programmatic response to these ills plaguing the nation.

⁷⁴ Gail Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization: a Cultural History of Gender and Race In the United States, 1880-1917* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 5.

⁷⁵ Holly Allen, *Forgotten Men and Fallen Women: The Cultural Politics of New Deal Narratives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 3

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Historians Bryant Simon and Neil Maher, both focusing closely on the CCC, argued that its administrators saw unemployment as a direct blow to the masculinity of American men.⁷⁹ There was also a larger concern about men becoming too soft and too educated, therefore unable to defend their nation.⁸⁰ These fears grew out of the post-World War I era when it was common to perceive military recruits as underprepared mentally and physically⁸¹, in part due to a roughly 29 percent rejection rate for conscripts due to physical or mental impairments.⁸² According to CCC leadership, the CCC would educate enrollees' bodies through the work of conserving nature and, as a result, these ethnically diverse boys would become strong white American men.⁸³ This educational model was, in part, designed to stop the perceived deterioration of American masculinity. Indeed, New Deal advocates and those leading the CCC saw the young men in their charge as natural resources in need of and worthy of conservation.⁸⁴

During their development of the educational component of the CCC, Hill and Dearborn drew on ideas originating from the Progressive Era that tied masculinity to nature.⁸⁵ James McEntee, the original executive assistant director and then second, final director of the CCC, made this connection explicit. He explained, 'If it was urgent that something be done to conserve the soil, the forests and waters of the nation, it was even more urgent that something be done to conserve the youths who were being damaged by the economic catastrophe.'⁸⁶ This was a direct

⁷⁹ Bryant Simon, 'New men in body and soul: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the transformation of male bodies and body politic' in *Seeing Gender Through Nature*, ed. Virginia J. Scharff (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 2003), 80-102; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*.

⁸⁰ Simon, 'New men in body and soul', 80-102.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bernard D. Karpinos and Albert J. Glass, *Disqualifications and Discharges for Neuropsychiatric Reasons, World War I and World War II (A Comparative Evaluation)*, <https://history.amedd.army.mil/booksdocs/wwii/neuropsychiatryinwwiivoli/appendixa.htm>

⁸³ Simon, 'New men in body and soul'; Maher, *Nature's New Deal*.

⁸⁴ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*.

⁸⁵ Benjamin Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City: Fear and Hope in Progressive-Era Conservation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017); Maher, *Nature's New Deal*; Simon, 'New men in body and soul'.

⁸⁶ James J. McEntee, *Now They Are Men* (Washington, D.C.: National Home Library Foundation, 1940), 6.

echo of analogies made by Progressive Era policy makers that ‘children were a natural resources that needed management as much as forests did to insure future prosperity’.⁸⁷

As historian Gail Bederman notes, the first decades of the 20th century saw a reconfiguration of the relationship between masculinity and race, namely for middle class white men, for whom whiteness became inextricable from the power of masculinity.⁸⁸ This found expression in educational youth programs such as the Boy Scouts and the YMCA.⁸⁹ In particular, the Boy Scouts of America, founded in 1910, articulated a strict delineation of gender roles in the context of education in nature in an effort to combat the feminization of young men.⁹⁰ With antecedents in both the U.S. and England, the Boy Scouts were recognised by a U.S. Congressional charter in 1916 to teach ‘patriotism, courage, self-reliance, and kindred virtues’.⁹¹ The organization initially prohibited Black scouts, but by 1915 began to allow racially segregated troops to form.⁹² The multiple segregated organizations of education for masculinity through nature—by gender and by race—became archetypal in the Progressive Era.

This connects with the Progressive Era nature study movement, where nature was theorized as having a benign and healthy influence on all people, and in particular city youth.⁹³ The academic and moral purposes of nature study evolved over time as students were recast as ‘soldiers of the soil’ during WWI for growing food stuffs⁹⁴ and, during the 1920s, to help male

⁸⁷ Lovett., 2007, 110.

⁸⁸ Bederman, *Manliness & Civilization*, 5.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁹⁰ Susan A. Miller, “Trademark: Scout”, in *Scouting Frontiers Youth and the Scout Movement’s First Century*, eds. Tammy Proctor and Nelson R. Block (Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009), 28-41.

⁹¹ David I. MacLeod, “Original Intent: Establishing the Creed and Control of Boy Scouting in the United States”, in *Scouting Frontiers Youth and the Scout Movement’s First Century*, eds. Tammy Proctor and Nelson R. Block (Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009), 19.

⁹² Janice A. Petterchak, *Lone Scout: W. D. Boyce and American Boy Scouting* (Legacy Press, 2003), 75.

⁹³ Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Popularizer of America’s Conservation Ethic* (University of Kansas Press, 2009), 196-204; Sally G. Kohlstedt, *Teaching Children Science: Hands-on Nature Study in North America, 1890 – 1930* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), 59-76.

⁹⁴ Armitage, 2009, 197.

students combat the effects of feminization in schools through active engagement with nature.⁹⁵ By the 1930s, ‘the idea of immersing students in applied science to further conservation was a direct continuation of the one important goal of nature study’.⁹⁶

Johnson argued that the conservation movement of the Progressive Era had clear consistencies with and distinctions from the New Deal era movement.⁹⁷ Both involved beliefs in scientific management and a deep connection between nature and man. In a clear connection to the early-twentieth century eugenics movement, both conservation movements argued that land and society could be engineered carefully and purposefully. As Historian Benjamin Johnson notes, Madison Grant, a widely influential author of the eugenicist tract who authored *The Passing of the Great Race*, was also a prominent conservationist.⁹⁸ Grant often drew parallels between eugenics and conservation.⁹⁹ Johnson noted: ‘As Grant once explained to his friend and collaborator Henry Fairfield Osborn, eugenics and conservation were both “attempts to save as much as possible of the old America”’.¹⁰⁰

Historical geographer Gray Brechin also explores the overlapping eugenics and conservation influence of Gifford Pinchot, the first head of the U.S. Forest Bureau and initiator of the first National Conservation Congress in 1909. Pinchot, also a charter member of Battle Creek, Michigan Race Betterment Society, included a number of prominent eugenicists and colonialists in Congress’ proceedings. Here, A.F. Knudson, a theosophist from Hawaii, declared ‘Let conservation herald a new civilization and a new race!’¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Ibid., 201.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 204.

⁹⁷ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*.

⁹⁸ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*, 90.

⁹⁹ Jonathan P. Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*, 91.

¹⁰¹ Gray Brechin, 1996, “Conserving the Race: Natural Aristocracies, Eugenics, and the U.S. Conservation Movement,” *Antipode*, 28, no. 3 (1996): 236.

A little more than two decades later, the imagery intended to sell the CCC to recruits reflected how the camps would restore nature, relaying a message that men would be reinvigorated in the process. In a poster published by the CCC and the U.S. Forest Service, *Spirit of CCC*, three young white muscular men stride forward with the aim of ‘saving’ nature (Figure 2).¹⁰²

Insert Figure 2 about here.

This image echoed that of another promoted by the Eugenics Society in Britain during the same time period in which a slightly abstracted, but idealized man a glow in white light drops seeds to the ground.¹⁰³ Under the headline, ‘Only *healthy* seed must be sown!’ follows the caption, ‘Check the seeds of hereditary disease and unfitness by eugenics’.¹⁰⁴ This eugenic message aimed to communicate to white men, and specifically white healthy men of good stock, that their mission was to ‘save’ the human race.

Insert Figure 3 about here.

Another CCC recruitment poster, *Great Oaks from Little Acorns* (Figure 3), depicts a healthy young white man as the trunk of a large tree among a forest of tall, imposing oaks.¹⁰⁵ The imagery here recalls a poster (Figure 4) from the 1920s in which eugenics is compared to a tree.¹⁰⁶ The artists making posters for the CCC as well as the administrators approving them for use were drawing on symbols and aesthetic elements developed by eugenicists to convey the

¹⁰² Harry Ludwig Rossoll, *Spirit of CCC* (Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1938).

¹⁰³ Haywood, ‘Only Healthy Seed Must Be Sown!’, (Norfolk, N.C., c.1935), Archives of American Psychological Society and Eugenics Society Archives. SA/EUG/G.43, Wellcome Institute Library, London.

¹⁰⁴ Erna Kurbegovic, Colette Leung, and Amy Dyrbye, *First International Eugenics Congress*, University of London (n.d.). There was a good deal of transatlantic collaboration between eugenicists. This included sharing ideas about effective promotion of eugenic policies, legislation and education. There were three separate international eugenic congresses between 1912 and 1932. The first took place in London and the second and third in New York City.

¹⁰⁵ Reg Manning, ‘Great Oaks from Little Acorns’, *The Arizona Republic* (1938).

¹⁰⁶ Second International Congress of Eugenics (New York, 1921).

sense that the conservation of the land is fundamentally tied to the conservation of white manhood.

Insert Figure 4 about here.

The imagery used to promote the CCC reflected the well-established connections between the eugenics and conservation movements during the late-nineteenth and into the early-twentieth century in the U.S. Historian of biology Garland Allen maintained that the use of government programs by the more powerful and wealthier social classes to reinforce dominance over those less powerful and more impoverished groups demonstrated the problematic connection between eugenics and environmentalism.¹⁰⁷ According to Allen, Madison Grant and figures like Charles M. Goethe, a California businessman and naturalist, promoted the ecological concept of niche, ‘where all organisms existed in and adapted to their specific “place”’.¹⁰⁸ This concept fit squarely with the eugenic ideas of superior and inferior ‘races’, and this particular strand of Progressive Era thinking found its way into the minds of some New Dealers.

Although the conservation movements of the Progressive Era and the New Deal Era both relied on perceived parallels between eugenics and conservation, Johnson also posited that there was a key shift in the aims of Depression Era conservationists.¹⁰⁹ Where the Progressives sought to constrain or direct economic activity away from nature, the New Deal focused on using nature to promote economic activity. McEntee’s urgent call to conserve youth reflects a similar change, one from weeding out the weak to cultivating them for a great good.¹¹⁰ Hence the CCC, focused

¹⁰⁷ Garland E. Allen, ““Culling the herd”: Eugenics and the conservation movement in the United States, 1900–1940, *Journal of the History of Biology*.46, no. 1 (2013): 31-72.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰⁹ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*.

¹¹⁰ McEntee, *Now They Are Men*.

on conserving natural resources and American men, was an effort to remake the land and society simultaneously.

Conclusions

Historian Steven Gross argued that the CCC and other federal works projects of the New Deal served as models for the life adjustment education movement that took root in the latter half of the 1940s.¹¹¹ That curriculum emphasized education focused more on inculcating life and work habits, rather than solely preparing secondary school students for college. It sought to instill values such as ‘learning how to be dependable, a good worker, obedient and reasonably content with one’s lot.’¹¹² Our research suggests that the CCC, in its argument for alternative, practical, male-centered education focused on preparing enrollees for a working class station in the economy, was indeed a precursor for the life adjustment curriculum. Gross demonstrated that the life adjustment aspects of the CCC curriculum offered to enrollees was emphasized more for African American CCC members than for others.¹¹³ This came in the form of emphasizing character and citizenship education, while white men’s camps focused on ‘social education dominated by finding maintaining employment, fitting in with community members, starting a family and learning to use leisure time constructively.’¹¹⁴

In his guide to camp life, *Once in a Lifetime*, Dearborn offered all enrollees advice on such topics as life skills, vocational interests, traditional academic subjects, recreational activities, camp life, safety, life after the CCC, and more.¹¹⁵ With this overall guidance, Dearborn laid the foundation for life adjustment curriculum. However, Dearborn’s writings were informed

¹¹¹ Gross, ‘Civic Hands Upon the Land’, 42-57.

¹¹² Gross, ‘Civic Hands Upon the Land’, 43.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Dearborn, *Once in a Lifetime*.

by the Cardinal Principles of 1918, which attempted to shift high school education to include a stronger emphasis on preparing secondary students for their lives as citizens rather than their intellectual development.¹¹⁶ The *Cardinal Principles* also built on the vocational education movement of the late-nineteenth century, which had taken root in the public schools as enrollments rose with compulsory schooling legislation.¹¹⁷ While important to note these curriculum movement connections, it is essential to address that fact that these movements were constituent components of broader developments aimed at shuttling particular races and classes of students, including adult males, into specific vocations or roles within society.¹¹⁸

Although there was a connection between the CCC and positive eugenic thinking, New Dealers saw the variety of white ethnic groups as redeemable and potentially beneficial to society, rather than as ‘degenerates’.¹¹⁹ That redemption would come through conservation work, which drew a parallel between reengineering the American landscape and reengineering ethnic white men as both essential to the survival of the United States during the Great Depression. However, similar to eugenicists, New Dealers, including Hill and Dearborn, believed that there was a limit to the progress that the enrollees would or should make. One of the major goals of the CCC camps, and in this case the education program within the camps, was to bring an ethnically diverse group of working class men together and educate them outside the public schools into white working class Americans who would be ready to take their proper place in the American economy.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Herbert M. Kliebard, ‘The Cardinal Principles as Archeological Deposit’, *Curriculum Studies*, 2 (1995): 197-208.

¹¹⁷ Gross, ‘Civic Hands Upon the Land’, 42-57; Kliebard, ‘The Cardinal Principles’.

¹¹⁸ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*; Allen, ‘Culling the Herd’; Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*; Simon, ‘New men in body and soul’, 80-102.

¹¹⁹ Simon, ‘New men in body and soul’, 80-102.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *Escaping the Dark, Gray City*; Allen, ‘Culling the Herd’; Maher, *Nature’s New Deal*; Simon, ‘New men in body and soul’, 80-102.

This goal was pursued openly outside of the bureaucratic structures of the public school system. Though still relatively new, the United States' compulsory public schooling system already entailed many layers of governance with high degrees of local control distributed across the country.¹²¹ The decentralized, bureaucratic organization of American schooling served as a buffer against major reforms, whether wise or ill-conceived. Dearborn and Hill sought to provide an alternative educational program to combat what they saw as the over-feminization of the institutions within the polices and structures of formal schooling. They promoted a vision of schooling riddled with eugenic and misogynistic thinking by stepping into a newly created educational space in the form of the CCC. With national publicity, the program was brought to nearly 3 million men over eight years and endorsed with the weight of the United States government. In the history of American public schooling, this may appear as a brief interlude, yet provides clear view of ideas woven deep into the institutions' fabric.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Michael Bowman, Michael Hines, Daniel Perlstein, and Christine Woysner for their comments on earlier drafts of this project as well as to our reviewers for their very helpful feedback.

¹²¹ Tracy L. Steffes, *School, State, and Society*.