



Outside In: Minorities and the Transformation of American Education

Paula S. Fass

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Ever since the massive immigration from Europe of the late 19th century, American society has accommodated people of many cultures, religions, languages, and expectations. The task of integration has increasingly fallen to the schools, where children are taught a common language and a set of democratic values and sent on their ways to become productive members of society. How American schools have set about educating these diverse students, and how these students' needs have altered the face of education, are issues central to the social history of the United States in the 20th century.

In her pathbreaking new book Paula S. Fass presents a wide ranging examination of the role of "outsiders" in the creation of modern education. Through a series of in-depth and fascinating case studies, she demonstrates how issues of pluralism have shaped the educational landscape and how various minority groups have been affected by their educational experiences.

Fass first looks at how public schools absorbed the children of immigrants in the early years of the century and how those children gradually began to use the schools for their own social purposes. She then turns to the experiences of other groups of Americans whose struggles for educational and social opportunities have defined cultural life over the last fifty years: blacks, whose education became a major concern of the federal government in the 1930s and 1940s; women, who had access to higher education but were denied commensurate job opportunities; and Catholics, who created schools that succeeded both in protecting minority integrity and in providing Catholics with a path to American success. Along the way, she presents a wealth of fascinating and surprising detail. Through an examination of New York City high school yearbooks from the 1930s and 1940s, she shows how a student's ethnic identity determined which activities he or she would engage in and how ethnicity was etched into schooling. And she examines how the New Deal and the army in World War II succeeded in educating large numbers of blacks and making the inequalities in their educational opportunities a critical national concern.

A sweeping and highly original history of American education, *Outside In* helps us to understand how schools have been shaped by their students, how educational issues have merged with wider social concerns, and how outsiders have recreated schooling and culture in the 20th century. By opening up new historical terrain and rejecting a vision of outsiders as merely victims of American educational policy, the book has important implications for contemporary social and educational issues.

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