Montessori and the Mainstream: A Century of Reform on the Margins

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Background/Context: *Montessori education has flourished as an alternative approach to schooling for a hundred years. In the century since the first Montessori school opened in the slums of Rome, the movement has undergone sustained growth while simultaneously enduring efforts to modify the method in order to reach a wider audience. Despite Montessori's endurance and reach, the movement remains largely unstudied by educational researchers. This article presents a historical treatment of the method and the movement by treating Montessori as a case study of enduring and ambitious educational reform.*

Purpose/Objective: *This article is an examination of the American Montessori movement as it has evolved over the course of the past one hundred years. Situated within an international context, the study traces the development of the movement from its failed introduction to the United States in 1991, to its rebirth in the 1960s, to its current resurgence as a time-tested alternative to conventional public schooling. Key questions revolve around Montessori's ongoing status as an influential yet marginal force in American educational reform.*

Research Design: *This is a historical case study drawn from archival data, interviews with Montessori leaders and practitioners, and secondary sources (biographies, memoirs) generated between 1906 and 2007.*

The educational system known as the Montessori method presents a unique historical case study. It is international in scope; currently there are Montessori schools in at least 110 countries. It is enduring; the original Casa dei Bambini opened in Rome in 1907. It has undergone sustained growth; today, there are over 22,000 Montessori schools world-

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wide.[1] It has consistently won parental supporters who tout the schools as places where the basics are stressed and high levels of academic achievement occur using a humane, child-centered approach. Educational policy researchers who study Montessori point to the coherence of the program, a coherence that is distinctly at odds with that found in most schools. Yet, even with its current popularity, Montessori education worldwide continues to be viewed as a marginal movement with minimal significance for those interested in contemporary school reform.[2]

In this article, we examine the American Montessori movement, from its failed introduction to the United States in 1911, to its rebirth in 1958, to its current resurgence as a time-tested alternative to conventional public schooling. We situate Montessori in an international context, exploring the manner by which an essentially European import was transformed into a predominantly American export, and we analyze the development of the movement in light of the changing educational landscape within which the growth took place.

We divide our analysis into three phases. The first, 1911–1918, scrutinizes an intense but short-lived flourishing of Montessori education in the United States until a convergence of forces—powerful critics, World War I, and personality conflicts being most notable—led to the demise of the movement in the United States.[3] Phase 2, 1952–1979, concentrates on the reintroduction of Montessori schooling to the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s. This new Montessori movement was embraced by a generation of middle-class progressives who saw in Montessori's child-centered, developmentalist theories the promise to revitalize the progressive movement and elevate early childhood education.

While the earliest chapter of the story of Montessori in America chronicles the rise and fall of a specific set of ideas, the story in the 1950s and 1960s spotlights the formation of the organization, the American Montessori Society (AMS), which initially served as the sole representative of Montessori in the United States. A unique interplay of people, events, and historical context led to both an expansion of the method and, eventually, to a splintering of the U.S. movement. Our treatment of Phase 2 traces the sometimes subtle, sometimes flagrant modifications of the method and the internecine squabbles generated by these modifications as the "progressive" wing of the movement sought to forge a version of Montessori infused with core American values of pluralism, secularism, and inclusiveness.

Phase 3 begins in the mid-1990s and encompasses the current wave of interest in Montessori. Along with tracing a steady expansion of Montessori both within and beyond U.S. borders, we look closely at a new source of growth: public school Montessori programs. Just as previous

phases of the movement reflected the particularities of historical time and place, the current wave rises out of a contemporary reform culture aiming to ensure achievement for all students in time-tested, results-oriented models of school improvement. Thus, what began as a revolutionary response to traditional, state-sponsored public schooling has evolved to a point where, today, Montessori is embraced, if tentatively, by a new educational establishment.

Throughout the story of Montessori—the woman, the method, and movement—are woven a series of questions: Was Montessori (the woman) a progressive? Was Montessori (the method) "scientific"? Could Montessori (the movement) be assimilated into existing educational frameworks and capture a viable constituency? Taken together, the questions underscore a central irony that, we argue, goes to the core of American education and culture. Throughout its history, Montessori education has managed to exert a strong influence on the American educational establishment even while remaining on the margins of that establishment. Elements found today in many elementary classrooms—mixed-age grouping, individualized instruction, manipulative materials, child-sized furnishings—all originate in principles developed by Maria Montessori and practices that have been elaborated by Montessorians over the course of the past hundred years.[4]

Influencing American schools while firmly entrenched on the margins is an irony rooted in what we characterize as clash of worldviews. Tensions between cohesion and pluralism, tradition and innovation, radicalism and liberalism play themselves out over the course of a century of social reform, political upheaval, and educational practice. What follows is a chronicle of these tensions as they recur throughout the story of Montessori in America.

PHASE 1: MONTESSORI ARRIVES . . . AND DEPARTS

Maria Montessori opened her first school, the Casa dei Bambini, in the San Lorenzo ward in Rome in 1907. Created as part of an experimental effort in urban reconstruction, the school was located in a rebuilt tenement serving the working poor. Building on her earlier work with children with special needs for the Italian government in Rome, over the course of the next several years, Maria Montessori developed both a philosophy of education and a set of didactic materials from which children learned.[5]

The Montessori method was, and still is, a system of education that is radically different from conventional approaches to teaching and learning. Though not the first approach to assume the central importance of

the child as the constructor of knowledge, Montessori was the first to elaborate a comprehensive, child-centered, developmentalist philosophy in a concrete, pedagogical method.[6] Montessori education is exceedingly well organized while allowing a great deal of individual choice and freedom.

A typical classroom, known as a "prepared environment," is large and open, with many shelves upon which carefully arranged "materials" are placed. Children are free to move about the room, selecting materials with which to work, and are expected to return materials to their proper place when finished. Students may work alone or in self-formed groups. Lessons are given when children are developmentally ready for new concepts, a judgment that the teacher must make in the course of careful and continual observation. The materials on the shelves are aesthetically pleasing and designed to attract children, and (in most cases) must be used in prescribed ways. While the materials—the graduated rods and cylinders, the dressing frames and child-sized brooms and mops—are among the most recognizable elements of a Montessori classroom, respect for both the learning environment and other students is a hallmark of Montessori education.[7] Maria Montessori described the process this way in 1909:

> There are forty little beings—from three to seven years old, each one intent on his own work. One is going through the exercises for the senses; one is doing an arithmetical exercise; one is handling the letters, one is drawing, one is fastening and unfastening the pieces of cloth on one of our little wooden frames, still another is dusting. Some are seated at tables, some on rugs on the floor. There are muffled sounds of objects lightly moved about, of children tiptoeing. Once in a while comes a cry of joy only partly repressed, "Teacher! Teacher!" and eager call, "Look! See what I've done." But as a rule there is entire absorption in the work in hand.
>
> The teacher moves quietly about, goes to any child who calls her, supervising operations in such a way that anyone who needs her finds her at his elbow, and whoever does not need her is not reminded of her existence.[8]

Remarkably, a visitor to a typical Montessori classroom today—whether in Rome, Osaka, Los Angeles, or Sao Paolo—will witness a similar scene.

Maria Montessori's approach toward teaching and learning burst upon the American educational landscape in the spring of 1911 in a series of

articles in the highly popular muckraking journal, *McClure's Magazine*. Formerly the home to famed journalists Ida Tarbull, Ray Stannard Baker, and Lincoln Steffens, who in the first decade of the twentieth century exposed abuses in big business and corruption in politics, *McClure's* had a circulation of well over 400,000 in 1911. The publisher and owner of the magazine, S. S. McClure, used his journal to bring articles of public interest to a largely urban and middle-class readership.[9]

In May 1911, *McClure's* published the first of many articles in that magazine on Montessori education. Given the title, "An Educational Wonder-Worker: The Methods of Maria Montessori," the piece described in seventeen pages and fourteen photographs how young children achieved near miraculous results using the method. "A Frenzy of Writing Takes Possession of the School" and "Children of Four Learn to Write in Six Weeks" were two of the headings of the flattering article written by Josephine Tozier, an American who had spent months in Rome talking with Montessori and visiting her schools. McClure later wrote in his autobiography that both he and Dr. Montessori were overwhelmed by the response. "It seemed," he wrote, "as if people everywhere had been waiting for her message."[10]

Indeed, public reaction to the initial article describing Maria Montessori and her methods was so intense that McClure printed numerous letters commenting on the ideas of Montessori in subsequent issues. Always both the entrepreneur and a "sensitive barometer" of the public,[11] McClure saw great promise in the issue. In short order, he promised his readers that the magazine would publish additional articles describing the method in considerable detail. He noted that Harvard's Department of Education was directing an English translation of Montessori's recently published *Il Metodo della Pedagogia Scientifica applicato all'educazione infantile nelle Case dei Bambini* (eventually translated as *The Montessori Method*), and he convinced Montessori to travel from Rome to the United States to give both a series of public lectures and a course for teachers.[12]

In the fall of 1911, the first Montessori school opened in Tarrytown with the financial backing of the president of the country's leading bank, National Bank of New York (now Citicorp), Frank Vanderlip.[13] This private school did not emulate either the location or clientele of Maria Montessori's schools in the slums of Rome, but instead served children from the financial and business elite in a fashionable home overlooking the Hudson River. The teacher in this school, Anne George, wrote about the school for *McClure's* at the end of the first academic year:

> Externally, Dr. Montessori's *Casa dei Bambini* bore little resemblance to this first American school. She made her first

> experiments in the model tenements of the San Lorenzo district in Rome—a section which has the same relation to the Eternal City that the East Side has to New York. . . . My children all came from cultured families, whose greatest ambition it was to give their children everything possible in the way of education and rational enjoyment.[14]

From the beginning, the American version of Montessori differed substantially from its Italian forerunner. Where Dr. Montessori's educational experiment grew out of a larger social initiative, it was the "miracle children" who captured the attention of wealthy American supporters.

One American supporter, best-selling author Dorothy Canfield Fisher,[15] wrote of the "deep-rooted, wide-spread dissatisfaction with the way modern children are being educated." She spoke of the need for a dramatic transformation of schooling:

> The truth seems to be that we are suddenly demanding more of education than we ever before dreamed possible. It is not that our school or our methods of education are worse than those which have preceded them, but that we see them to be so far, far below what they might be—what they ought to be.

After highlighting the faults of modern education, Fisher then spoke of a solution. As she put it, "Dr. Montessori to the Rescue." She spoke glowingly of the doctor, a "scientist" who observed children with care and who had "discovered certain laws about the intellectual activities of childhood."[16]

In this dazzling period of favorable publicity, additional Montessori schools opened around the country. Montessori's American backers, never missing an opportunity to create a civic organization, founded the Montessori Education Association. Mabel Bell, the educational philanthropist and deaf wife of Alexander Graham Bell, was the association's first president. Both Bells were education advocates and became strong initial supporters of Maria Montessori. The board of trustees of the Montessori Education Association included the daughter of Woodrow Wilson, the editor of National Geographic, the General Secretary of the YMCA, S. S. McClure, Alexander Graham Bell, and the U. S. Commissioner of Education.

American parents and teachers continued their clamor for information about the new pedagogy. In the years 1912–1914, there were 187 English language publications, almost all published in the United States, on Montessori education.[17] In Rome in 1913, Americans outnumbered

trainees from all other countries in the first international training course for teachers offered by Dr. Montessori. Sixty-seven of the eighty-seven enrollees were from the United States.[18] Later that year, Maria Montessori made a triumphant visit to the United States. A welcoming dinner held at the Washington home of the Alexander Graham Bell and Mabel Bell became the social event of the season. Ambassadors, foreign ministers, the Secretary of the Navy, the Bishop of Washington, and numerous lesser lights attended the A-list dinner. This success with influential policy makers was followed up by lecture to the general public held on December 9 in Carnegie Hall. More than a thousand people were turned away at the door, and a second lecture was given just six days later.[19]

For three weeks, Maria Montessori tirelessly toured major cities in the United States touting her program. Her public lectures were always sold out, professors and policy makers clamored for an audience, and newspapers ran complimentary features about her and her method of teaching (frequently mangling her message in the process). Moreover, many progressive Americans were buoyed by the possibilities of her approach to education. In the years from 1911 to 1916, just over 200 Americans undertook training with Montessori in Rome. The first Montessori school in the United States opened in 1911. By the 1916–1917 academic year, there were 104 Montessori schools in existence.[20]

Like a falling meteor, however, the bright Montessori blaze quickly died out. By the time of her second trip to the United States in 1915, Dr. Montessori faced numerous influential critics. Stories about the promise of her system disappeared from newspapers and magazines, replaced by fearful stories about the "cult" of Montessori.[21] Her early backers were no longer in her corner, having moved on to other interests. By the time of American entry into World War I in 1916, American Montessori mania had died out. A few Montessori schools were in operation, but essentially the movement was a nonentity in American education.

Patterns established during this first phase of American Montessorianism, however, set the stage for future developments. Key patterns revolve around (1) the manner in which Americans received Montessori, (2) the strategies employed to promote the method, and (3) the quality of relationships that developed between the European originators and the American interpreters of Montessori education. Taken together, these patterns highlight the importance of context in the rise (and fall) of educational movements.

The American tendency to tinker with educational innovation, a recurrent theme in the history of American educational reform, is prominent in the Montessori story.[22] Montessori's method came to the United States at a unique moment. The United States was emerging from a period of

intense debate about how best to educate young children. An Americanized version of kindergarten, one that Froebel would have only partially recognized, had already found a place in the mainstream.[23] Indeed, for some Americans, the notion of an alternative to the predominant kindergarten narrative was precisely the appeal of Montessori. Most early childhood educators, on the other hand, sought to cherry-pick ideas that could supplement the American kindergarten experience. The 1912 and 1913 meetings of the Kindergarten Department of the National Education Association focused on Montessori education. In these sessions, preschool educators grappled with the ideas of Montessori and contrasted them with their own views. One author wrote in the *Kindergarten-Primary Magazine,* "Altogether it behooves us to be liberal, not dogmatic, and to listen to the tale with interest."[24]

In a tepid introduction to *The Montessori Method*, Harvard professor of education Henry W. Holmes highlighted the belief in pragmatic cherry-picking:

> Practically, it is highly probable that the system ultimately adopted in our schools will combine elements of the Montessori programme with elements of the kindergarten programme, both "liberal" and "conservative. In its actual procedure school work must always be thus eclectic. An all-or-nothing policy for a single system inevitably courts defeat; for the public is not interested in systems as systems, and refuses in the end to believe that any one system contains every good thing.[25]

The call for an eclectic and liberal approach to school reform, so clearly articulated here, recurs in later chapters of the history of Montessori in America.

The Montessori story also highlights the importance of "match" in successful educational reform. A case can be made that the Montessori method failed to take hold in this early period because of what the historian Patricia Albjerg Graham describes as "discontinuities in Progressivism."[26] Prior to World War I, "progressive" schools were places that brought to life the ideas of prominent Americans reacting to the swell of immigrants and the working poor entering urban public schools. These reformers were involved in creating curricula that would foster American middle-class values about work, home, and civic responsibility to the newcomers to American education. The reforms introduced included vocational education, assimilation programs, and efforts to keep children in school. The ideas of Montessori were examined by these

reformers and found lacking in fostering their curricular and social objectives.

Postwar progressive education leaders, by contrast, were more likely to be academics or administrators. Many of their ideas were supportive of the middle-class families and private schools. A progressive school in this latter era was experimental and drew upon the theories of the emerging social sciences.[27] It is possible that this latter group, with their child-centered focus and concern for social reform, might have been more receptive to Montessori. By the time these progressive educators came upon the scene, however, the Montessori method had been vilified and placed aside.

The vilification of Montessori is itself a fascinating story, which helps underscore discontinuities within the social and intellectual worlds of prewar America. Almost immediately following the introduction of Maria Montessori's pedagogical ideas in the popular press, critics began to emerge. The best known of these was William Heard Kilpatrick of Teachers College. Kilpatrick began his study of Montessori education in 1912. After visiting several American Montessori schools, talking with American proponents of the method, and traveling to Rome to visit the *Dottoressa* herself, he pronounced his verdict. And the judgment was negative.

In 1914, Kilpatrick published his critique. In a comprehensive denunciation, Kilpatrick accused Montessori of shoddy science, misunderstanding child development, thwarting children's self-expression, developing didactic materials that inhibit learning, failing to connect the curriculum to larger societal concerns, supporting "outworn and castoff psychological theory," and foisting books and reading and writing on children at too early an age.[28]

Although subsequent work in cognitive learning theory and brain research would validate Dr. Montessori's approach, Kilpatrick's dramatic response was important for two reasons. First is the power of the academy. Even though he was at the beginning of his career, Kilpatrick held an influential position at Teachers College, then the leading school of education in the United States, and was, consequently, able to publicize his critiques with ease. Professor Kilpatrick's denunciations reached other "teachers of teachers" in the newly created departments and schools of education in the colleges and universities of the United States. Already a bit unsure of their standing in the academic pecking order of the university, professors of education were not about to wholeheartedly support the "unscientific" claims, at least in their view, of a female from another country. Other academic progressives joined Kilpatrick's attack.

A professor at the University of Omaha called the method a "fad promoted and advertised by a shrewd commercial spirit" that made dupes of the "novelty loving American public."[29]

Second, Kilpatrick's critique persisted among mainstream academics and educational policy makers for decades. Montessori has never been considered a scientist by anyone other than her followers,[30] in part because she seems to have deliberately shunned the scientific/academic community in favor of a more direct, mission-oriented approach to developing and diffusing the method. Despite her own rigorous scientific training as a medical doctor, Montessori's style of talking and writing about the method also tended toward the florid and romantic, further distancing her from the university world that legitimated contemporaries such as Piaget. The perception of Montessori as a "priestess" leading a cult has hovered over the movement since this moment, and a significant part of the story of Americanization revolves around efforts to lift that shadow.[31]

Finally, and perhaps most important, competing conceptions of the meaning of educational reform led to the scanty success of Montessori in this period. One view—what might be called the European view—held that the value of the Montessori method lay in its radical vision of the child, a vision that could only be preserved if the integrity of the method was carefully guarded. Until her death in 1952, Maria Montessori made it her personal mission to safeguard the purity of the method by controlling its diffusion and insisting that its practice be monitored by a small group of hand-picked individuals whom she had personally trained. By contrast, what we identify as an American view called for rapid and widespread diffusion and an inclusive approach toward other educational approaches.

The tension between preserving the purity of the method and promoting widespread dispersion caused considerable conflicts between Montessori and her American supporters. The list of early American followers who came to disfavor with the *Dottoressa* over this issue constitutes a who's who of progressivism: Alexander Graham Bell, Mabel Bell, Margaret Wilson, Helen Parkhust, and S. S. McClure. Surely some of the conflict was attributable to the clash of strong personalities, which was compounded by communication barriers caused by language and geography. More significant, however, were the tensions that arose out of competing conceptions of reform.

While the first phase of Montessori education in America concluded with Montessori's abrupt departure from U.S. shores, it is important to note that the seeds of the movement had taken root. As the American Montessori movement lay dormant for nearly forty years, a global

Montessori movement continued to grow, and Americans continued to travel to Europe to study with Dr. Montessori. Moreover, the difficulties that appeared during this period remained alive and set the stage for the development of Montessori as an educational movement that lived, and continues to live, in a state of tension.

PHASE 2: MONTESSORI RETURNS AND REMAINS

By 1952, the year that the 81-year-old Maria Montessori died while sitting in a garden in the Netherlands, Montessori education had virtually disappeared from the United States. At that decade's end, however, a distinctly American version of the system would begin to take shape. The leader of the American revival was yet another well-educated, charismatic Catholic woman, Nancy McCormick Rambusch. The young Nancy McCormick became aware of the writings of Maria Montessori while a student at the University of Toronto in the late 1940s. Later, as a postgraduate studying in Paris, she saw firsthand Montessori schooling in action. It was not until after marriage, a return to the United States, and the birth of her first child in 1952, however, that the now Mrs. Rambusch began to seek an alternative to traditional schooling for her own child—thus causing her to reexamine Montessori's pedagogy. In 1953, she traveled to Paris to attend the Tenth International Montessori Congress, where she met the new face of Montessori, Maria Montessori's son Mario,[32] the newly installed leader of Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).[33]

Based in Amsterdam, AMI was the sole official outlet for Montessori support, materials, and teachers. Authorization to start national societies, orders for Montessori didactic materials, and appeals for teacher trainers all flowed through AMI and, ultimately, through its head, Mario Montessori. At this conference, Mrs. Rambusch discussed with Mario the possibility of starting a Montessori-*type* school in the United States. Foreshadowing the future tension between the two, Mario famously replied, "Madame, there is no such thing as a Montessori type school; there is only a Montessori school."[34]

Over the course of the next several years, Rambusch, at the prompting of Mario, took Montessori training in London, an experience that she subsequently dismissed as uninspired and without academic rigor. She remained, however, in touch with Mario, who was supportive of attempts to return Montessori to the United States. In 1958, in collaboration with a group of prominent Greenwich, Connecticut, families, Rambusch was instrumental in opening the Whitby School. Also in 1958, pleased with the work and energy of Nancy Rambusch, Mario named her his personal emissary to the United States and strongly supported the creation of the

American Montessori Society (AMS) with Rambusch at the helm.[35]

In the hands of Rambusch, Montessori achieved a degree a stability that was elusive to American Montessori promoters in earlier decades. Rambusch herself attributed this achievement to her persistent focus on promoting Montessori as a "social movement" rather than a method. Rambusch constantly maintained that "American Montessori" was not the same thing as "Montessori in America." For her, the goal was "the creation of a viable American Montessori educational experience for as many children as possible."[36]

When Nancy Rambusch assumed the mantle of Montessori leadership in the United States, she did so within a culture that, unlike that of the turn of the century, was uniquely matched to the social, spiritual, and intellectual thrust of the Montessori system. It was also a country that was on the brink of electing a young, charismatic liberal Catholic—John F. Kennedy—to its highest office. Both Kennedy and Rambusch lived in an America of seemingly unbridled promise. Given the economic, military, and intellectual might of their land, all things seemed perfectible if the proper amount of expertise and ingenuity were employed. Kennedy's reliance on an establishment elite of the "best and the brightest" has been masterfully told by David Halberstam, and Rambusch's orientation toward the diffusion of Montessori generally, and teacher education specifically, serves as a vivid case study of this theme.[37]

Both Kennedy and Rambusch looked to an educated elite for nurture and support. Kennedy acquired advisors from universities and leading American corporations. Rambusch wanted the approval and support of the American educational establishment—college professors in schools of education and state and federal education leaders. She surmised that she could only garner their support if Montessori training became scientific, at least as defined by the prevailing research establishment, following the most up-to-date precepts.

Furthermore, the early sixties were a time when liberal American Catholics might challenge tradition in seeking to better the human condition. In the United States, a liberal Catholic president articulated the need for a New Frontier to "deal with unsolved problems of peace and war, unconquered pockets of ignorance and prejudice, unanswered questions of poverty and surplus."[38] In Rome, a new leader, Pope John XXIII, was about to convene the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, better known as Vatican II, to remake centuries-old Catholic traditions seeking to bring the message of Jesus to the world in light of the modern world's ever-changing trends.[39]

Beyond larger social and historical events, Rambusch herself attributed

the appeal of Montessori to an additional anxiety: that of educated m others in search of "the best for their children":

> I would say that parents, understandably, are anxious to do the best for their children. They are extremely upset at the notion of leaving their children in the vestibule of life until the age of six. Now, whether or not the Montessori approach might be construed as a valid alternative to existing nursery school, kindergarten approaches, is really not the question. The fact is that the college-educated parents, many of whom are better educated than the people teaching their children, are like natives in an underdeveloped country, and are restless. They want something.[40]

While her reference in this publication is to "educated parents," Rambusch was really talking about educated mothers, those primarily responsible for the rearing of their children in suburban middle-class America: her target audience.

Just as important was the religious identity of her most immediate audience. Though not overtly identified as such, The Whitby School was under the jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic diocese of Connecticut. Indeed, the initial appeal to the citizens of Greenwich was made by a group of prominent Catholic women (including the sister of Ethel Kennedy) who were dissatisfied with parochial schools and refused to send their children to public schools. From a practical standpoint, these parents were accustomed to the notion of paying tuition for parochial schools, and from an ideological standpoint, they were particularly receptive to the Catholic worldview[41] that permeated Montessori philosophy.

As Rambusch's small band of Roman Catholic mothers grew into larger band of Roman Catholic men and women, the appeal of the social and spiritual dimension of Montessori's worldview grew as well. One of the first published accounts of Whitby, in the liberal Catholic magazine, *Jubilee*, featured a full-page image of Nancy Rambusch teaching the meaning of Holy Communion to children in the school. A large cross hanging over a communion alter in the classroom completed the visual.[42] Unlike the earlier attempt to frame Montessori as a transplanted pedagogical method, Rambusch seized on the notion of Montessori as a social movement concentrated on elevating the status of early childhood development that focused equally on intellectual and spiritual growth. Writing previously in the same magazine, Rambusch commented, "Dr. Montessori devoted much thought to the most effective method of

teaching religion to small children. She emphasized the presence in the small child of an acute sensitivity to religious matters, but she knew that religion must be taught in relation to what the child already knows of life."[43] Here she explicitly links the natural spiritual sensitivity of the child to an equally natural drive to learn. Within the Montessori worldview, as described by Rambusch, spiritual and intellectual development was a reciprocal process, the recognition of which prompted a profound reverence for the child. It is important to note that this overt emphasis on spirituality marked a contrast to the earlier introduction of Montessori to American audiences.

Just as important, it was a social movement that, at least in Rambusch's hands, fit the social context of a post-Brown United States. That is, Montessori's utopian vision of social harmony, exemplified by the intentional and peaceful manner in which children, properly taken care of, go about "constructing their personalities,"[44] fit with the tenor of middle-class suburban culture. Rambusch made a point of speaking to any available audience, emphasizing the social and spiritual goals of the approach. Some observers argue that the still-nascent feminist movement also played a role—both in Rambusch's fervor and in the groundswell of support that grew among middle-class mothers in search of a better way to school their young children.[45]

At this point, we argue, the story of Montessori in America becomes, largely, an institutional history. The key events in this 1960s revival all revolve around the formation of the American Montessori Society and its evolution from the sole representative of the International Montessori movement in the United States to a uniquely American instantiation of Montessori philosophy and technique. That evolution, recorded chiefly in the correspondence between Rambusch and Mario Montessori, is wrought with political, ideological, and cultural tensions.

Mario Montessori—an exile from the Italy of Mussolini, a refugee from civil war-torn Spain, a resident of war-ravaged Amsterdam since 1946—acted as a counterweight to Rambusch. For the younger Montessori, a Montessori method that was pure and untainted offered a sanctuary from the horrors of nihilism and modernism. While America might see endless possibility in social change, this war refugee saw a modern world fraught with danger. When Mario heard Nancy Rambusch ask for permission to change Montessori training to better suit a modern, progressive America, the prospect startled him. He wrote in reply,

> Speaking about the necessity of helping children to adapt to the culture of their country: A proposal was made to Dr Montessori to start a "Montessori Hitler Jugend." She refused, after which

> Montessori was banned both in Germany and Italy, and Dr. Montessori's effigy and books were publicly burned in Vienna.[46]

In the face of the horror that was Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, the revolutionary vision of Dr. Montessori—now institutionalized in the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), preserved in her writings, and guarded by a generation of followers—was much more than an educational philosophy. It was a lifeline imbued with hope, tradition, and the promise of redemptive peace. In the context of a world in turmoil, preserving the integrity of the vision, itself under assault, seems a logical mission indeed.

The political tensions inherent in the rise of AMS were played out on two levels. The first, and most obvious, was as a clash of personalities. The correspondence between Rambusch and Montessori reveals two strong, charismatic figures, both deeply committed to Maria Montessori's ideals, and both more than a little contemptuous of the other's interpretation of those ideals and their proper enactment in American culture. Their correspondence began in the early 1950s and accelerated around 1956 as Rambusch sought to institutionalize an American version of Montessori.

In June of 1959 (one year following the founding of Whitby), Nancy Rambusch was appointed by Mario Montessori as the "representative of the Association Montessori Internationale for the USA with the special tasks of starting Montessori schools in the country, taking steps necessary to start a Montessori society affiliation to the Association Montessori Internationale, and an institution for training teachers in the Montessori method."[47] Six months later, the American Montessori Society was established. Later that same year, Mario Montessori appointed AMS as the sole representative of AMI in the United States, with exclusive authority to set up and administer teacher training programs. However, by 1963, relations had broken down to such a point that AMS voted to sever its relationship with AMI, and Montessori, in turn, resigned his position on the AMS board of directors.

On an institutional level, Rambusch and Mario Montessori held contrasting views on how best to bring Montessori to the American public. Where Montessori insisted (as had his mother) on the absolute authority of the Association Montessori Internationale, Rambusch believed that the only feasible way to bring Montessori education to large numbers of Americans was through diffusion. In a series of letters and in public appearances, both repeated their arguments. Mario Montessori rehearsed his central goal of preserving the "integrity" of the method through tight control of standards of practice and teacher training in statements such as these:

> *On standards*: It is very necessary for people who do not know the Montessori method. They go to one school and see the Montessori method taught one way, and in another school another way, and then they say in the Montessori method you can do anything you want.
>
> *On authority:* I am at the head of the Pedagogical committee of the whole world, automatically just because I am I. Any change in any proposed procedure must come back to us. . . . Even for the Greek, the Pedagogical Committee of Greece has to send to AMI what they have done and explain the reason for us to determine whether or not it breaks the Montessori method or does not affect the integrity.
>
> *On teacher training*: The original function of the Montessori society was to protect Dr. Montessori's work so the only valid course was Dr. Montessori's and mine. . . . Now we started after Dr. Montessori's death to institute certain courses to certain people who had worked with Dr. Montessori or us and under our guidance.[48]

The example of teacher training, in fact, became the central axis around which tensions were enacted. Rambusch responded to Mario Montessori's attempts to concentrate both practical and governmental authority in the institution of AMI by declaring the need for a uniquely American version of the movement. Rambusch wrote in 1963,

> There is a good reason to believe that the American Montessori movement will be destroyed as intellectually and pedagogically substantive if it is representative of the fossilized outlook of those Europeans whose fidelity to Dr. Montessori's memory is as unquestioned as is their innocence of the complexity of American culture.[49]

Like both Maria and Mario Montessori, Rambusch believed that teacher training would serve as a primary (though not exclusive) avenue for institutionalizing Montessori in the United States. Unlike Mario, however, she sought to design a version of Montessori teacher training that would conform to American professional standards. To that end, she initiated a relationship with John McDermott, then a professor of philosophy at City University of New York, and over the course of a decade, he assumed the role of legitimating voice within the academy. Advocating

the introduction of Montessori education through teachers colleges, he argued for an inclusive approach to the method and an acceptance of the "ideology of pluralities" as a key element of American Montessorianism.[50]

In contrast to the European strategy of "transplanting" a pure version of Montessori education and controlling the growth of the seedling, Rambusch argued that the movement would more likely take root if the governing metaphor was "transmutation."[51] She exhibited this concept in action most ardently in her reaction to efforts by Mario Montessori to install Margaret Elizabeth ("Betty") Stephenson as his hand-picked "expert" to serve as the primary transmitter of Montessori pedagogy and philosophy. Rambusch characterized the approach of Miss Stephenson (as she was known) and her like-minded supporters as mistakenly "oriented almost exclusively in the direction of Montessori training as 'mystical initiation,' and not professional formation."[52]

The rejection of Montessori "dogma" became a consistent theme in communications originating from the American Montessori Society. For nearly two years, AMS struggled with Mario Montessori's staffing training courses, first in Greenwich and Oklahoma City, and later in Washington, D.C. The Washington course ultimately became the final impetus for rupture as Rambusch claimed difficulty in attracting students, while Montessori reported dismay with efforts to "dismiss" Stephenson. At the same time, Rambusch and Stephenson grew increasingly contemptuous of one another. In August 1962, AMS finally concluded that they could not support the course and informed Stephenson by letter of their decision. Mario Montessori's incensed telegram response to the rejection of Miss Stephenson followed a week later: "IF MISS STEPHENSON NOT REASSUMED AS COURSE TRAINER, PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT AMS AND AMI BECOMES VOID AND AMI WILL FEEL FREE TO RECOGNIZE COURSES NOT RUN BY AMS." In other words, if AMS continued in its rejection of Betty Stephenson as a teacher trainer, then Mario Montessori would recognize others as the official arm of Montessori in America.[53]

Thus, what was ostensibly a squabble over how and under what conditions to run a single training course became the event that prompted AMS and AMI to sever their relationship. Of course, the battle over Stephenson's course was only the most concrete manifestation of deeper ideological, cultural, and practical tensions between the American and European approaches to Montessori education. Even as the ostensible cause for thwarting the Washington course appears to have been procedural, by 1963, there were reports of AMI and AMS trainers "screaming" at one another in the midst of training sessions and of a walkout by one AMI trainer.[54]

In the end, Stephenson went on to run the course at Washington Montessori Institute (WMI) for the next 30 years. In the process, she personally trained a generation of Montessori educators. Other AMI trainers ran additional courses in other cities as well, fulfilling Mario Montessori's desire to preserve a "pure" version of the method in the United States.[55]

In the meantime, AMS went on to authorize a variety of training courses all over the country, though very few managed to penetrate the universe of mainstream teacher education.[56] Where Rambusch sought to find inroads into mainstream education by running Montessori training courses through traditional university-based teacher preparation programs, Mario Montessori preferred the master class structure formulated by his mother. These competing approaches to furthering Montessori point to ideological and cultural factors that undergird practice.

As a practical matter, differences between "purist" and "pragmatic" approaches to classroom life are not easy to describe. Both AMI and AMS now publish a set of "standards," which, in the main, highlight more of their similarities than differences. Both, for instance, call for "large blocks of uninterrupted time" for work and "appropriate three-year groupings of students." In practice, however, trained observers report significant differences with regard to the length of work periods (AMI periods tend to be longer), grouping of students (AMS practice is more favorable to, for instance, setting up freestanding programs for five-year-olds), classroom apparatus (AMI stipulates the need for a "complete set" of "AMI approved" materials, while AMS encourages teachers to expand beyond Montessori materials) and student-teacher ratios (AMI classrooms are more likely to have larger student-teacher ratios).[57]

Even more than pedagogical dissimilarities, contrasting approaches to institutional authority remain a prominent theme in the two organizations' standards. In contrast to AMI's brief listing of standards, all of which are pedagogical in nature, AMS accreditation is determined by a twenty-six-page booklet of guidelines addressing all aspects of school life—from personnel ("written job descriptions should be prepared for all positions") to facilities ("classroom has appropriate storage space for classroom materials"). The AMS booklet, which was originally drafted by Rambusch, reflects an abiding concern with mainstream notions of legitimacy, which are here instantiated in a set of procedural guidelines. By contrast, the overriding source of authority for AMI pedagogy remains AMI-approved training and materials.

From an ideological perspective, the struggle between Nancy Rambusch, the American, and Mario Montessori and Betty Stephenson, the Europeans, was a struggle between liberalism and radicalism. Mario Montessori's strong commitment to preserving a pure form of the

method with a deep focus on correct practice as the only proper instantiation of the method left him willing to abandon the enterprise of Americanization, at least on an institutional level. For Montessori, the power of the method was located in the knowledge base held by "experienced"[58] trainers. Without that expertise, there could be no movement.

Yet, in the middle-class suburban world in which American Montessorianism developed, liberalism, not radicalism, held sway. Americanization, it seemed, would necessitate adaptation, and adaptation would remain a threat to the radical vision of childhood and the coherence of the method itself. As AMS promoted the liberal vision of Montessori education, the Washington Montessori Institute became the keeper of the radical vision. In 1979, AMI-USA was established, further institutionalizing the tension.

While the American players had clearly changed, in Europe, the core of the movement remained deeply attached to the founder and, at least doctrinally, remained committed to preserving the purity of the method as had been formulated by Dr. Montessori. In terms of sheer numbers, the growth of the Montessori movement in the United States attests to the success of Rambusch's campaign to "get the word out." Nonetheless, we want to draw attention to both the limits of the movement and to the importance of tension in forging a distinctive American Montessori identity.

Despite their steady growth in number, Montessori schools have never succeeded in breaking into the mainstream of education, early childhood or otherwise. Most Americans today remain uninformed about Montessori education and, however fractured, the Montessori movement retains distinctive cultural practices, which ensure its marginality. AMI and AMS share more in common with one another than either does with mainstream educational culture, and we maintain that the Americanization of Montessori was a legacy not of a single leader but of the tensions themselves.

PHASE 3: THE CURRENT REVIVAL

On January 6, 2007, more than 1,200 Montessorians from 55 countries gathered in Rome to mark the opening of the first Casa dei Bambini with fanfare, reverence, and a commitment to renew global attention to the universal cause of the child.[59] The Association Montessori Internationale and the Opera Nazionale Montessori (Italy's local Montessori society) jointly sponsored the event. In addition to the AMI and ONM faithful, numerous educational researchers from around the world and the president and executive director of the American Montessori Society were in

attendance. Two months later, the AMS held its own celebration in New York. Along with the thousands of AMS members, conference attendees included a substantial number of American educational researchers and the president of AMI. Both celebratory conferences, in other words, prominently displayed two themes. First is an interest in understanding the profusion of recent scientific research confirming the validity of Montessori's claims about children and education. Second is a belief that now is the time for respect and unity within the Montessori movement worldwide in order that Montessorians might reach larger numbers of children.

The centenary marks a period when Montessori is experiencing what we characterize as a "third wave" of intense interest in the United States. Like previous phases, the current revival is the product of a convergence of social, political, and cultural forces. Unlike previous revivals, the scope and intensity of this one appears to be wider, leading potentially to Montessori pedagogy becoming more thoroughly embraced by the mainstream.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, at roughly the time that charter schools acquired currency as a viable approach to school reform, public Montessori programs began to proliferate alongside other comprehensive reform models such as Accelerated Schools, Success for All, and, more recently, KIPP. Using a combination of statistics available through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and a survey of U.S. school districts, we were able to identify approximately 240 public Montessori programs in thirty-two states. Of those, more than half have either opened or received charters in the past decade. The highest concentrations of public Montessori schools are found in the states of Arizona, California, Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas, each with more than fifteen schools identified. The vast majority of these schools report no affiliation with a Montessori professional association (AMI or AMS).[60]

Determining growth in the public sector is difficult. The NCES database is only able to identify schools with Montessori in the name. Moreover, a fair number of programs may be unidentified as Montessori because they operate as a school within a school, such as the program at Watkins Elementary in the District of Columbia. Additionally, we know of several schools that are in the process of converting from conventional elementary education programs to Montessori programs, and these are not represented in our database. As a result, our count likely underestimates the true number of Montessori programs currently operating in the United States. What is clear from the available data, however, is that public Montessori is a growth sector of the movement.

Increased attention to the public sector has been identified as a

priority for both AMS and AMI. Both organizations view the extension of Montessori education to larger numbers of children as a key, mission-based priority. "If we truly believe that Montessori education is effective," announced AMI president André Roberfroid on the occasion of the Centenary Conference, "then we cannot be satisfied with serving small numbers of privileged children."[61]

In addition to growth in the public sector, private Montessori school enrollment also has risen steadily in the past decade. From one school in 1959, to 355 schools in 1970, to roughly five thousand schools in 2007, the growth has been considerable. The percentage increase in the number of students in attendance at Montessori schools is greater still. In 1980, the average American Montessori school served between twenty and eighty children between the ages of three and six. Today, nearly half of all schools registered with either AMI or AMS report an enrollment of over one hundred. These programs also report serving children well beyond the age of six, with elementary and/or adolescent programs constituting the greatest area of growth within the private sector.

Researchers, too, have started to notice Montessori and have begun to study its contributions. While a rich collection of "insider" literature on Montessori has existed since the start of the movement,[62] the first century of Montessori witnessed only a handful of studies conducted by scholars within the mainstream educational establishment.[63] In the years 2000–2005, there were thirty-two research studies of Montessori education completed in the United States alone.[64] These studies were followed up in 2006 by the publication in the prestigious mainstream journal *Science*, with research findings indicating significant performance gains for children educated in Montessori schools.[65] The study, conducted by a respected cognitive psychologist (though also a Montessori insider), drew from a population of inner-city public Montessori school students in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In part because its subjects were not children of privilege, and in part because the findings were so decisive in their validation of Montessori as an educational approach, the article drew international attention.

Just as Rambusch's emphasis on the progressive, social aspect of Montessori struck a chord among middle-class parents in the 1950s and 1960s, Lillard's focus on scientific validity speaks directly to the concerns of her generation. This focus on academic achievement has been embraced by all sectors of the Montessori movement: Lillard was a keynote speaker at both the AMI and AMS centennial celebrations. In a policy environment obsessed with standards and accountability, evidence demonstrating that Montessori children can in fact achieve—particularly evidence strong enough to be published in the journal *Science*—has the

potential to reframe the national conversation about educational reform. Likewise, new research on motivation, embodied cognition, and brain development provides striking confirmation of Maria Montessori's early claims regarding sensorial learning, attention, and intrinsic versus extrinsic rewards. Taken together, a new generation of research both dispels the notion that Montessori is "quaint" or "unscientific" and answers the increasingly desperate call for a reform solution that works.

Not only does Montessori appear poised to be embraced by the American mainstream, but American Montessorianism also is now a world leader in size and influence. According to the Secretariat of Association Montessori Internationale, there are five thousand Montessori schools in the United States. Only China, with six thousand schools, has more. The countries next in number are Japan with four thousand schools, Canada with one thousand, and the United Kingdom with 750. Beyond the numbers, in many of the areas of the world where Montessori teachers are needed, school founders are turning to the United States for either teachers or trainers. At the International Centenary Conference in Rome, thirty-five percent of the twelve hundred attendees were from the United States or Canada, more than from any other region except for the host countries of Italy and the European Union (forty-eight percent of attendees were from the E.U.). Americans, in other words, have become the exporters of Montessori to the world.[66]

The final trend of the current era is the further splintering of the American Montessori movement. Mario Montessori in 1959 worried that a cleft in the movement would cause AMI to lose control of content and of standards. Today in the United States, there are at least six organizations through which a school may be affiliated. Schools that wish to identify themselves as Montessori schools without any organizational affiliation are free to do so; the name Montessori is not protected by copyright or patent. While many fundamental elements of Montessori remain in most schools that call themselves Montessori, there is no unified governing body that regulates quality or checks to see if actual Montessori curriculum is being followed. Mario Montessori's fears, in other words, have come to pass. At the turn of the second century of Montessori education, the competing demands of inclusion and integrity, pragmatism and purity, liberalism and radicalism remain as poignant as they were at the movement's birth.[67]

CONCLUSION: TENSIONS, TRADE-OFFS, AND TENACITY: A CASE OF ENDURING EDUCATIONAL REFORM

From the start, Americans have demonstrated deep regard for

Montessori—the woman, the method, and the movement. And because the Montessori story spans the course of an entire century, its development provides unique perspective on the dynamic interplay of culture, politics, and personality that have influenced the shape of educational practice—Montessori and otherwise—over the past hundred years. While other movements and methods, rooted in similar notions of childhood and development, have withered under the force of American political and social pressures, Montessori alone continues to function as a distinctive educational approach. We attribute the endurance of the method to a history lived in tension, which has allowed Montessori to evolve while at the same time remaining stable. In this article, we have attempted the show the role that Montessori has played in the American educational scene—a role that has been both influential and, until quite recently, largely invisible. Moreover, we argue, the story of Montessori in America offers deeper insights into American attitudes toward education, social reform, childhood, and progress. The story of Montessori in America offers a window into the American character and the relationship of that character to the rest of the world.

The dominant thread of our analysis has involved a tension between what we characterize as European and American worldviews. The themes of progressivism and assimilation run throughout a narrative that chronicles political, ideological, and cultural tensions as they have played themselves out over the past century. Viewed through a political or institutional lens, the story of Montessori in America might be seen as an illustration of the tension between concentration and diffusion of power. Viewed through an intellectual lens, the tension between radicalism and liberalism runs through the heart of the story. Viewed through a cultural lens, tensions between preservation and innovation come to the fore. Taken together, these tensions have forged a unique identity for the American version of this worldwide movement.

In highlighting these tensions, we are drawn back to questions we posed at the start of this article: Was Montessori (the woman) a progressive? Is Montessori (the method) "scientific"? Can Montessori (movement) be assimilated into existing educational frameworks and capture a viable constituency? The answers to these questions change depending on the era in which they are posed.

The question of Montessori's progressivism highlights the ubiquity of the progressive narrative in American culture. For nearly a century, American education has been nearly synonymous with progressive education, even as the parameters of progressivism have changed over time.[68] For Kilpatrick, along with much of the academic establishment of the early twentieth century, Maria Montessori's educational practice did not

resemble the brand of progressivism they promoted. It was, in part, their failure to recognize themselves in her emphatically child-centered and optimistic vision that prompted them to dismiss her and, by extension, her method. Yet, thirty years later, *Time* magazine pronounced the nearly "forgotten" Montessori "the founder of progressive education." The claim may have been overstated, but it certainly illustrates both her bona fides as a progressive educator and the power of the progressive message.[69]

Immediately upon its arrival in the United States, Montessori's method, which she named "scientific pedagogy," was dismissed as "shoddy science" by American academics working in schools of education. A century later, however, Montessori's ideas about how children learn are supported by a strong body of empirical evidence and championed by developmental psychologists, even though they may be unaware that Dr. Montessori came up with the ideas initially. One developmental psychologist has written a highly regarded book exploring the scientific basis for Montessori education and concluded that none of the central ideas of Montessori has been disproved. Maria Montessori was not a theorist, at least not in the conventional academic mold. She was a physician and a careful observer of children who sought to create a practical system of education that brought about optimal learning. Her observations and her ideas have stood the test of time.[70]

Finally, for fifty years it seemed that Montessori education would not be part of the larger American pattern of education. After an initial flurry of excitement, Montessori schools largely ceased to exist in the United States. The rebirth of the 1950s and 1960s, however, has been followed in the past two decades by a resurgence that seems both more widespread and more firmly grounded in the dominant educational culture than ever before in the movement's history. As the mainstream beckons, a new wave of enthusiasm, this time bolstered by "science" and a century-long track record of success, Montessori faces what may be its most significant challenge—widespread acceptance into the mainstream of American public education.

That acceptance and growth can be viewed as a challenge highlights the irony of the Montessori experience in the United States. For one hundred years, promoters and advocates of Dr. Montessori's ideas have unsuccessfully sought recognition and approval from mainstream educational policy makers and academics. Being placed on the margins, however, allowed the small number of independent Montessori schools in operation to follow the time-honored practices of the founder and, in the process, avoid the fads and trends of conventional education. If the current trend of growth and diffusion into the public sector continues,

Montessorians may find remaining pure to their tradition becoming much more difficult.

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Notes

1 Statistics on Montessori schools, unfortunately, are imprecise. Difficulties in determining numbers of schools or students in attendance arise from two primary factors: (1) Montessori is not a registered trademark. Any organization, or any individual, can start a school and advertise it as using the Montessori method. There is no requirement to affiliate with a Montessori organizing body. (2) There are dozens of Montessori organizations around the world. Each is independent with its own standards for membership and methodology in reporting members. Our figures come from the Centenary of the Montessori Movement Web site: "Media Briefing: Montessori Around the World," December 2006, http://montessoricentenary.org / (accessed February 21, 2007).

2 Randi Lynn Mrvos, "Gentle Hands, Quiet Voices: Secrets of Montessori," *Mothering*, May/June 2003, http://www.mothering.com/articles/growing_child/education/montessori.html (accessed February 17, 2007); Jacqueline Cossentino, "Ritualizing Expertise: A Non-Montessorian View of the Montessori Method," *American Journal of Education* 111 (2005): 211–44; Angeline Stoll Lillard, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

3 Sol Cohen, "Montessori Comes to America," *Notre Dame Journal of Education* 2, no. 4 (1972): 358–72.

4 Lillard, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, 3–37.

5 Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind* (Oxford: ABC-Clio Ltd., 1988).

6 Froeble's kindergarten shared Montessori's focus on materials (called "gifts" in the Froebel system) but did not span the developmental continuum from birth to adulthood.

7 Lillard, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, 18–28.

8 Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method*, trans. Anne E. George (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1912), 346–47, http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/montessori/method/method-XXI.html (accessed February 17, 2007).

9 According to McClure documents, the circulation was 660, 000 in October 1911. Those figures may have been exaggerated, however, as the leading directory of newspapers and journals put the circulation at 410,000 in 1910 and 425,000 in 1912. See James Woodress, *Willa Cather: A Literary Life* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 532–33. All three of this trio of muckrakers had moved on to other journals by 1911 after falling out with *McClure's* quirky owner.

10 Josephine Tozier, "An Educational Wonder-Worker: The Methods of Maria Montessori," *McClure's Magazine,* May 1911, 3–19; Rita Kramer, *Maria Montessori: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 160–62; S. S. McClure, *My Autobiography* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1914), 252–53.

11 Peter Lyon, *The Life and Times of S. S. McClure* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963).

12 "Information about the Montessori Method," *McClure's Magazine,* October 1911, 702–04.

13 "A School without Desks, or Classes, or Recitations," *New York Times*, December 24, 1911; Anne E. George, "The First Montessori School in America," *McClure's Magazine* (June 1912): 178; Citigroup, "Citibank, N.A," http://www.citigroup.com/citigroup/corporate/history/citibank.htm (accessed February 17, 2007)

14 George, "First Montessori School in America," 178.

15 Dorothy Canfield Fisher (February 17, 1878–November 9, 1958) was already a well-known American author when she published her two books on Montessori education in 1912 and 1913. In addition to her popular writing, she was a staunch advocate of women's rights and championed the education of children. For twenty-five years, she was on the editorial board of the Book-of-the-Month Club and helped shape the literary taste of the middle class. Dr. Montessori took umbrage at her Montessori publications, fearing that the unqualified dispersal of her ideas might lead to their dilution. "Dorothy Canfield Fisher Dead; Author of Vermont Novels, 79," *New York Times*, November 10, 1958; Kramer, *Maria Montessori*, 173–74.

16 Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *The Montessori Manual for Teachers and Parents* (New York: W. E. Richardson, 1913), 9–10, 16–17.

17 Gilbert E. Donahue, "Dr. Maria Montessori and the Montessori Movement: A General Bibliography of Materials in the English Language, 1909–1961," in *Learning How to Learn: An American Approach to Montessori*, ed. Nancy McCormick Rambusch (Baltimore: Halicon Press, 1962), 139–75.

18 "Learn Montessori Method," *New York Times*, March 16, 1913.

19 Virginia Tatnall Peacock, "Society," *Washington Post,* December 7, 1913; "Entertain Dr. Montessori," *New York Times*, December 7, 1913; "Dr. Montessori's Aim," *New York Times*, December 9, 1913.

20 Lorene K. Wills, "Conditions Associated with the Rise and Decline of the Montessori Method of Kindergarten-Nursery Education in the United States from 1911–1921" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1966), 37–39.

21 "The Montessori Cult's Eclipse," *Sunset,* October 1915, 657–58.

22 *Tinkering toward Utopia*, the marvelously titled book by historians David Tyack and Larry Cuban, argued that incremental reform, in contrast to millennial patter that usually accompanies the rhetoric of schooling in this country, generally served the country well. David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

23 Barbara Beatty, *Preschool Education in America: The Culture of Young Children from the Colonial Era to the Present* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Ann Taylor Allen, "Let Us Live with Our Children": Kindergarten Movements in Germany and the United

States, 1840–1914," *History of Education Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (1988): 23–48.

24 Jenny B. Merrill, "A New Method in Infant Education," *The Kindergarten-Primary Magazine* 23, no. 5 (1910): 143.

25 Henry W. Holmes, "Introduction," in Montessori, *The Montessori Method*, pp. xix–xx.

26 Patricia Albjerg Graham, *Progressive Education: From Arcady to Academe: A History of the Progressive Education Association, 1919–1955* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1967), 1–16.

27 Harold Rugg exemplifies this latter progressive. Originally trained as a civil engineer, Rugg studied sociology and psychology in graduate school, graduating with a Ph.D. in 1915.

28 Kilpatrick, *The Montessori System Examined*. A sympathetic portrait of the Kilpatrick critique is offered in Robert H. Beck, "Kilpatrick's Critique of Montessori's Method and Theory," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 1, no. 4–5 (1961): 153–162.

29 John A. Beineke, *And There Were Giants in the Land: The Life of William Heard Kilpatrick* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 66–74; Geraldine Joncich Clifford and James W. Guthrie, *Ed School: A Brief for Professional Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); David F. Labaree, *The Trouble with Ed Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Walter N. Halsey, "A Valuation of the Montessori Experiments," *Journal of Education* 77 (January 1913): 63, cited in Gerald Lee Gutek, ed., *The Montessori Method: The Origins of an Educational Innovation: Including an Abridged and Annotated Edition of Maria Montessori's The Montessori Method* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 32.

30 William Heard Kilpatrick continually referred to Maria Montessori as Madame Montessori, not Dr. Montessori, in his book.

31 Sol Cohen, "Maria Montessori: Priestess or Pedagogue?" *Teachers College Record* 71, no. 2 (1969): 313–26.

32 To avoid confusion surrounding use of the name "Montessori," we observe the following conventions: when referring to Montessori as a movement or method, we use the term "Montessori" or "Montessori education"; when referring to the founder of the movement, we use the honorific term "Dr. Montessori"; and when referring to Maria Montessori's son, Mario, we use his first name because these are the terms most often used by Montessorians themselves.

33 Nancy McCormick Rambusch, "The 'American Montessori' Experience," *American Montessori Society Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (1977): 1–27. The quote is from p. 8.

34 Rambusch, "The 'American Montessori' Experience," 8.

35 Nancy McCormick Rambusch to Mario M. Montessori, December 19, 1962. American Montessori Society Records, Archives and Special Collections, Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, Storrs, Connecticut (hereafter known as AMS Records).

36 Rambusch, *Learning How to Learn*; Rambusch, "The 'American Montessori' Experience," 16.

37 David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972).

38 John F. Kennedy, "Address of Senator John F. Kennedy Accepting the Democratic Party Nomination for the Presidency of the United States," Memorial Coliseum, Los Angeles, July 15, 1960, in John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Historical Resources, http://www.jfklibrary.org (accessed February 17, 2007).

39 Pope John XXIII was named *Time* magazine's Man of the Year for 1962, a year that featured President Kennedy's resolute management of the Cuban Missile Crisis and John Glenn becoming the first American to orbit the earth. The article celebrating the Pope's selection is representative of American beliefs in promise and possibility. "Man of the Year," *Time*, January 4, 1963, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,829723,00.html (accessed February 23, 2007). The most complete history of Vatican II is the five-volume series edited by Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A Komonchak, *History*

of Vatican II, 5 vols. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995–2005). A good summary is Giuseppe Alberigo, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

40 Nancy McCormick Rambusch, "Montessori Insights and American Children Today," *Catholic Reporter*, May 31, 1963.

41 See Jacqueline Cossentino, "Big Work: Goodness, Vocation, and Engagement in the Montessori Method," *Curriculum Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (2006): 63–93, for a fuller discussion of Montessori and its connections to a Catholic worldview.

42 Oona Burke, "Whitby School: Catholic Laymen follow the Montessori Method in a New Venture in American Education," *Jubilee,* February 1959, 22.

43 Nancy McCormick Rambusch, "Learning Made Easy," *Jubilee*, September 1953, 47.

44 Montessori, *The Montessori Method.*

45 Phyllis Povell (née Appelbaum), personal communication, September 2004.

46 Mario Montessori, "A Long Letter to Montessorians in America, in Answer to Some of the Many Questions I Receive" (Amsterdam: M. J. Portielje, 1963), 8. The letter is frequently referred to as the Yellow Letter because in the first printing, the message was printed on yellow paper.

47 Mario Montessori to Nancy Rambusch, June 15, 1959, AMS Records.

48 AMS seminar, Greenwich, Connecticut, June 4, 1962, tape recording cited in Phyllis Appelbaum, The Growth of the Montessori Movement in the United States, 1909–1970, (unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1971), 150–57.

49 Nancy McCormick Rambusch, "The American Montessori Picture: Some Reconsiderations," *The American Montessori Society Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (1963): 1.

50 John J. McDermott, "Montessori and the New America," in *Building the Foundations for Creative Learning*, ed. Urban H. Fleege (New York: American Montessori Society, 1964), 25.

51 Appelbaum, *The Growth of the Montessori Movement in the United States*, 1999.

52 "Calendar of Events with Reference to Organization of AMS Course in Washington, D.C., p.1 (n.d.), AMS Records.

53 Mario Montessori, telegram to American Montessori Society, September 11, 1962, AMS Records.

54 Lakshmi A. Kripalani, "Rambusch Sparked Montessori Renaissance," *Public School Montessorian* 7, no. 2 (1995): 2.

55 In addition to Stephenson, AMI approved Montessorians such as Lena Wikramaratne and, later, Hildegard Solzbacher, to be granted the status of Trainer by Mario Montessori either prior to or soon after the AMI/AMS split, thereby ensuring AMI-approved teacher training at various locations in the United States.

56 The best example of a fully integrated Montessori mainstream teacher training program can be found at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Other programs, such as the Washington Montessori Institute at Loyola College in Maryland, function as self-contained Montessori programs within degree-granting graduate institutions.

57 American Montessori Society, "Standards for American Montessori Society Schools" (n.d.), http://www.amshq.org/scanda/std.pol.html (accessed February 26, 2007); Association Montessori Internationale, "AMI School Standards" (unpublished document). See Carolyn J. Daoust, "An Examination of Implementation Practices in Montessori Early Childhood Education" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2005) for the first systematic account of varieties of Montessori practice.

58 Throughout the AMI/AMS collaboration, Mario Montessori expressed mounting dismay at the manner in which AMS was attempting to "Americanize" Montessori. By early 1963, he was particularly disturbed by the dissolution of the AMS Pedagogical Committee,

a move made in response to disagreements over the structure and format of training courses. Whereas Rambusch maintained that her position constituted fidelity to the method, Mario insisted that Rambusch's disagreements were the result of her lack of "experience" as a Montessorian. Mario Montessori to Nancy McCormick Rambusch, February 4, 1963, AMS Records.

59 Centenary of the Montessori Movement, 1907–2007, "Champion the Cause of All Children," http://montessoricentenary.org/ (accessed February 17, 2007).

60 Data gathered from the following online databases: National Center for Education Statistics, "Search for Schools, Colleges, and Libraries," http://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/; Jola-Montessori.com, "Search the Jola Database," http://everythingmontessori.com/search/index.php; Association Montessori Internationale, "AMI/USA Schools' Listing," http://www.montessori-ami.org/; American Montessori Society, "AMS Member Schools," http://www.amshq.org/schools.htm; and searches of major metropolitan school systems known to have public Montessori schools.

61 André Roberfroid, "Address to the Montessori Centenary Conference" (lecture, Association Montessori Internationale and Opera Nazionale Montessori, Rome, Italy, January 6, 2007).

62 Along with Maria Montessori's voluminous corpus of writings and lectures, work by Montessori teachers and promoters continue to appear on the reading lists of Montessori training centers and in the librarians of practicing Montessorians. See, for example, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, *A Montessori Mother* (New York: Henry Holt, 1912); Florence Elizabeth Ward, *The Montessori Method and the American School* (New York: Macmillan, 1913); Anna Maccheroni, *True Romance: Dr. Maria Montessori as I Knew Her* (Edinburgh, UK: Darien Press, 1947); Paula Polk Lillard, *Montessori: A Modern Approach* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972); and John P. Blessington, *Let My Children Work* (New York: Anchor Press, 1974).

63 See Jane Roland Martin, *Schoolhome* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Nell Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in School* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992).

64 *MontessoriConnections*, http://montessoriconnections.com (accessed February 20, 2007); April Jones, *Montessori Education in America: An Analysis of Research Conducted from 2000–2005* (unpublished master's project, the College of William and Mary, 2005).

65 Angeline Lillard and Nicole Else-Quest, "Evaluating Montessori Education," *Science,* September 29, 2006, 1893–94.

66 Joke Verheul, e-mail correspondence with authors, February 26, 2007; Marlene Barron and Marie Dugan, interview with authors, West Side Montessori School, February 4, 2005.

67 A listing of the six major organizations in the United States today may be found at the Montessori Accreditation Council Teacher Education (MACTE) Web site: http://www.macte.org/organizations.htm (accessed February 26, 2007).

68 See Kieran Egan, *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002) for a fuller discussion of dominance of progressive ideology in American educational culture.

69 "The First Progressive," *Time,* October 20, 1947, http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,804340,00.html(accessed February 20, 2007).

70 Lillard, *Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, vii–ix.

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