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James L. Leloudis. *Schooling the New South: Pedagogy, Self, and Society in North Carolina, 1880-1920.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996. xx + 338 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2265-4.



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The old question of continuity versus change from the Old South to the New is one that can still stir up an argument among historians. Part of the debate is easy: slavery ended, cotton mills grew, one-room common schoolhouses began to disappear. But these obvious statements hide more subtle issues. Did sharecropping differ substantively from slavery? Was the power structure of the New South's urban industrial order significantly different from the Old South's plantation elite? Many of these questions are still up in the air, but James Leloudis's *Schooling the New South* has just about settled the question of continuity and change in the field of public education.

The main thesis of the book is a simple one: the move from old-fashioned common schools to modern graded schools was closely related to the rise of the New South ideology. Common schools were inefficient by modern standards (students of all ages and abilities were taught in one room by a poorly-trained teacher; pedagogy stressed memorization; attendance was lax), but they were well-adapted to the lives of middling farmers, men and women who placed scant faith in acquisitiveness and social mobility but labored instead for a competence and a respectable start in life for their children (p. 17). But the common school approach was not so well suited to the needs of New South society, with its emphasis on the ur-

ban and industrial values of individual ambition and enterprise. In the words of one public education reformer, each individual in this new society had to win for himself his place, and must show himself worthy of [that] place, by winning it anew every day. In the new South, not birth but worth determines place, and the criterion of worth is social efficiency (p. 20). In graded schools, students would learn at the pace of the group, rather than at their own pace, creating a competitive environment that had not existed in the common schools. Regular report cards, a rarity earlier, were an accepted part of the new pedagogy, and students had to prove that they had mastered the knowledge and skills expected of the group before promotion to the next grade.

Reformers looked to the schools to spread and inculcate these new values—using public education reform as a foundation for a new social order. The leaders of the graded school movement in the South (the system had originated several decades earlier in New England) tended to be young men who were born, or at least reached adulthood, after the Civil War and who attended the University of North Carolina during its years of growth and curricular innovation in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Leloudis uses the trio of Edwin Anderson Alderman, Charles Duncan McIver, and James Yadkin Joyner (names still familiar to Chapel

Hill students) as an example of how the “new” post-Reconstruction university provided students with a vision of New South society and the educational background to attain it.

After their graduation, Alderman, McIver, and Joyner spread the word throughout the state, especially at the new “Normal and Industrial School for Women,” the state’s first school for white women teachers. Prior to the school’s opening in 1891, fewer than half of the state’s teachers were women; by 1920, 86 percent were women. Leloudis shows that the new pedagogy offered women a status and an independence that was otherwise denied them. At the same time, of course, the system reinforced existing sexual stereotypes, since women were teachers while men were principals, administrators, and so forth. “We were ever in awe of [Charles McIver],” said a graduate of the normal school in a statement that demonstrates this ambiguity. “He had a vision and we were following him. No, we weren’t following him. We were all going along together” (p. 106).

These reformers, male and female, reshaped public education in North Carolina, creating the foundation for the system still seen today. Graded school reforms had a

number of detractors, however. Religious conservatives were concerned that traditional sources of moral authority, like the family and church, would lose influence (I especially enjoyed the discussion of Baptist Populists who worked against the movement). African Americans, worried (as they should have) that the new system would do nothing to improve their educational opportunities, also opposed reform.

The breadth of Leloudis’s research (dozens of manuscript collections, government documents, school board records, newspapers, and so on) and his historical imagination (by which I mean his ability to see connections through the past) have allowed him to produce a book that tells us a good bit about race, politics, gender, religion; we learn much more about the South than simply public education reform. With this book, James Leloudis has done more to advance educational history than anyone since Lawrence Cremins and Carl Kaestle.

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