

IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE

Literature, Society, and Cross-National Variation in Education Systems

By CATHIE JO MARTIN*

INTRODUCTION

HAS there ever been a more winsome protagonist in a coming-of-age story than David Copperfield? Charles Dickens' David remains plucky against victimization by unjust social structures and triumphs through perseverance and unflagging optimism. In contrast, young Valdemar is the architect of his own undoing in H. F. Ewald's Danish novel, *The Youth of Valdemar Krone*. Unlike David, the hapless Valdemar has only himself to blame for his youthful transgressions, but life improves when he submits to the moral strictures of God, society, and the Danish fatherland. These stories illustrate the tendency in many British novels for the hero's personal struggle to enable eventual triumph while Danish novels more frequently locate success in interventions that guide youth back to societal duties. Authors in both countries write novels of accountability (protagonists confront internal

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limits) and empowerment (they battle repression).¹ But even in British novels of accountability, personal struggles with morality rather than acquiescence to societal norms enable coming of age.

These seemingly innocuous stories of young boys forging their way to maturity have profound implications for the counterintuitive trajectories of modern education systems in Britain and Denmark. Despite their nineteenth-century political economies, poor, agricultural Denmark became a leader in public, mass primary education (1814) and secondary vocational training, while rich, industrial Britain did not create public, mass schooling until 1870, and embraced unitary, academic secondary education.

I suggest that differences in literary narratives about education, the individual, and society influence education policy choices in Britain and Denmark. British narratives helped to construct an individualistic educational culture (initially for upper- and middle-class youth) by portraying schooling as essential to individual self-development. Reformers later sought general, rather than vocational, secondary schools to assure equality of educational opportunity across classes. Conversely, Danish narratives nurtured a collectivist educational culture that posited schooling as crucial for building a strong society. Early mass education constituted social investment, and differentiation of secondary education tracks was necessary to meet diverse societal needs.

Writers are political agents in this story. They collectively debate issues in their works and thereby convey their views to political leaders in predemocratic regimes prior to reform episodes. They rework cultural symbols and themes from an earlier age to address new challenges, and embed assumptions about education, the individual, and society in their stories. Authors' narratives contribute to cognitive frames about social and economic problems and help other elites to formulate preferences regarding education options. Fiction is particularly well-suited to imbuing issues with emotional salience, as readers are moved by the suffering and triumphs of protagonists in ways that scholarly essays find difficult to achieve. Thus fiction may enhance the emotional commitment to schooling and influence assessments of marginal groups. Writers' depictions are not deterministic, but like political policy legacies, the cultural touchstones of these created worlds constrain political institutional development.

I engage two methods to substantiate these claims. First, I analyze corpora of 562 British and 521 Danish works of fiction from 1700 to 1920 with computational linguistics techniques to show how narratives,

¹Brown 2013.

through their reading, may have provided meaning to policymakers developing education options. I document cross-national and temporal differences, and discuss their association with diverse education system choices. Quantitative analyses show significantly higher frequencies of individualism, feeling, and upper-class words in British text surrounding education words than in Danish text, supporting the idea that education in Britain is geared to individual self-development. Danish education snippets have significantly higher frequencies of words referencing societal goals than the British snippets.

Second, I use case studies to show that writers are crucial political actors in important reforms, and suggest mechanisms by which literary narratives contribute to policy paths. For example, Ludvig Holberg, the father of Danish literature, depicted a model education system in his popular eighteenth-century utopian novel, *Niels Klim's Journey Under the Ground*.² He gave his fortune to the Sorø Academy, a school for elite Danish children, which hired his former students as teachers and then implemented his educational ideas. The academy educated the future ministers and estate owners who, deeply inspired by Holberg, designed the Danish mass education system.³

My primary theoretical ambition is to advance our understanding of how literary narratives contribute to political development and to offer a dynamic view of cultural impacts. Culture seems intuitively important to policy design, yet is difficult to study using traditional methods, and as a result, many political scientists have abandoned cultural investigations.⁴ Cultural sociologists tell us much about how narratives shape identities and guide strategies, but the complex association between literary influences and policy change complicates causal claims.⁵ Systems of governance have multiple purposes, coercive elements, and inequitable applications, and one wonders whether authors largely legitimize coercive institutions or challenge the political order. My cross-national comparisons are suggestive rather than definitive, but they offer insight into the relationship between literary narratives and political reform. My findings show that authors focused attention on education in decades preceding major reforms. Moreover, British writers as social reformers challenged political inequities; however, the assumptions embedded in their plots about the relationship between the individual and society reinforced the status quo power relations.⁶

² Holberg 1845.

³ Holm 1900.

⁴ But see McNamara 2015; Wedeen 2002; and Berman 1998.

⁵ Griswold 1987; Lamont and Thévenot 2000; Swidler 1986; Berezin 2009; Santana-Acuña 2014.

⁶ See Berezin 2009.

This project has theoretical implications for welfare-state studies because it demonstrates that distinctive cultural narratives shaped policies before the creation of electoral, party, and industrial relations institutions. Although institutions certainly channeled political struggles over education policy, fictional narratives helped groups to define their interests and encouraged policy choices that resonated with social constructions of the individual, society, and class. The narratives also offer insight into elite thinking in eras predating public opinion polls.

Finally, historical distinctions between British and Danish cultural narratives have bearing for contemporary political concerns. British authors cum education reformers sought equal access to education, but their celebration of individuals conquering challenges with self-initiative made it easier to blame those who fail and justified the neglect of marginal youth. Commitment to a strong society drove Danish investment in education innovations; neglect of low-skill youth was viewed as a waste of societal resources and a threat to the social fabric. In Denmark, high socioeconomic equality has been a felicitous but fortuitous side effect of the mandate to educate all the people.

CROSS-NATIONAL VARIATION IN EDUCATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Britain and Denmark diverge in the *timing* of mass schooling, attitudes toward *diversity* of primary schooling (private share, urban/rural differences, degree of local autonomy, and instructional pluralism), and the *differentiation* of secondary tracks.⁷ In 1814, Denmark established public primary schools and seven years of compulsory education. Britain developed some private, church-affiliated schools in this period, but did not establish mass public education until 1870. (Both states had a national church, but in Britain conflicts between the dominant Church of England and dissenting sects delayed mass public education, whereas similar religious divisions in Denmark did not have this effect.) Denmark embraced education diversity with 1855 legislation allowing parents to form their own schools while Britain sought to regulate it. Denmark created early, extensive, vocational training and formalized a vocational secondary education track with labor support in 1903. British policymakers largely eliminated secondary vocational training in 1902 with the support of labor.⁸

Different scholarly traditions theorize variations in cross-national

⁷ On classifications of education systems: West and Nikolai 2013; Ansell 2008; Busemeyer and Trampusch 2011.

⁸ Larsen, Nørr, and Sonne 2013; Peterson 1973; Glenn 2007.

education system development, yet each tradition addresses only some dimensions and none fully captures the British-Danish comparison. In addition, each explains only one role of education systems—to cultivate shared norms of citizenship or to provide differentiated skills required by socioeconomic hierarchies.⁹

A sociological literature approaches education as a mechanism for constructing citizens and for nation-building, and explores cross-national variation in the timing of compulsory education, expansion of enrollment, centralization of educational controls, and reduction of public/private distinctions.¹⁰ Early education innovators had strong states (associated with early timing of mass schooling) and a state church (associated with early enrollments). These theories reject industrialization and interest-group conflict as causal factors, noting that education systems developed before industrialization. The frontrunners that created public systems before 1850 with enrollments over 50 percent, were Denmark, Norway, Prussia, and Sweden.¹¹

A political economy literature explores cross-national variation in the differentiation of education systems (vocational versus uniform secondary systems) and emphasizes skills-building. Denmark, Germany, Norway, and Sweden (until the 1960s and '70s) encouraged strong education specialization at a very young age, whereas Britain and the United States had limited differentiation. Industrialization broadly drove education, yet diverse patterns of schooling resulted from the skills requirements of coordinated versus liberal industrial economies, legacies from preindustrial guilds, and the organization of social partners.¹²

Although these approaches contribute much to our understanding of cross-national education development, one longs for an integrative model that explains why similar countries are leaders in both early public schooling and education differentiation. Education systems are undoubtedly motivated for multiple and possibly competing goals. Neither theory captures how people view education at moments of system creation, or why some perceive mass schooling to foster social stability while others believe it foments revolution.

I suggest that Britain and Denmark have different educational cultures that shaped historical trajectories in education system development. Education is viewed primarily as a vehicle for individual

⁹ Bjerg et al., 1995, 31–32.

¹⁰ Boli, Ramirez, and Meyer 1985; Soysal and Strang 1989; Ansell and Lindvall 2013.

¹¹ Soysal and Strang 1989, 278.

¹² Wilensky 2002; Busemeyer 2014; Ansell 2008; Hall and Soskice 2001; Thelen 2004; Iversen and Stephens 2008; Martin 2011.

self-development in Britain, but as a means for building a strong society in Denmark. In Britain, the ideal individual has a proscribed knowledge base and a set of intellectual competencies; therefore, education is designed to teach students specified content. The Danish collectivist model of education is organized around the conception of *dannelse*, the project of constructing useful citizens. Thus whereas, education (*uddannelse*) trains a person in a specific field, *dannelse* helps the individual to become a good social actor who makes a collective contribution to society.¹³ Today, many Danes worry that the emphasis on teaching individual competencies (together with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development campaign to persuade countries to embrace neoliberal-inspired education reforms) is eroding the *dannelse* project of cultivating collectivist citizens.¹⁴

If individualistic Britain and collectivist Denmark hold different views about education goals and the role of the individual in society, we expect to find differences in education system choices. Specifically, these differences pertain to the expansion of mass education, the diversity in the content and instruction of primary education, and the differentiation within secondary education tracks. On *timing*, Danish politicians developed mass education early on to invest in society and to nurture useful citizens. British politicians did not view workers and farmers as societal resources, and only expanded mass public education after voting rights. Danish educators embraced primary education *diversity* (types of schools, content, and instruction) to ensure that citizens with varied capacities and class positions made appropriate contributions to society. Although there were stark class differences in Britain between those attending elite private versus church and public schools, reformers increasingly sought uniform school content and instructional methods in the church and public schools to assure specific competencies and knowledge. They embraced the monitorial approach, inspection regimes, and later, uniform curriculum.¹⁵ Danish politicians chose *differentiated* upper-secondary education tracks to meet society's diverse skills requirements, whereas British progressive reformers sought uniform tracks to further equality of educational opportunity. Table 1 presents the variation on education dimensions between the individualistic British and collectivist Danish systems.

¹³ Kliebard 1987; Moos 2017; Wiborg 2004.

¹⁴ Olsen 2016.

¹⁵ Larsen, Nørr, and Sonne 2013; Kliebard 1987, 10.

TABLE 1
DIMENSIONS OF ENGLISH AND DANISH EDUCATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>England (Individualist System)</i>	<i>Denmark (Collectivist System)</i>
Primary goal	individual self-growth	building a strong society
Timing of public system	created in 1870	created in 1814
Factors associated with expanded mass education	Christian education; mass suffrage	Christian education; social investment
Diversity of rules governing primary/lower secondary; regional diversity and local autonomy	disputed local control; 19 th century reformers sought national regulation/assessment	undisputed local control and variation; separate rules for urban and rural students
Diverse instructional methods for students with different abilities	early uniform curricula with rote memorization and cramming; rejection of alternative school types (e.g., pupil/teacher schools)	experiential learning techniques rather than memorization; growth of alternative schools (e.g., Grundtvig/Kold rural schools with no written assignments)
Attitudes toward and role of private schools	private church schools developed first and political battles to reduce their scope; private upper-class schools	public system developed first and then private (often rural) schools were encouraged to proliferate; few private upper-class schools, but two-tier education within public system; fee schools for bourgeoisie and folk schools for peasants
Differentiation of upper-secondary education	uniform secondary education track based on classical studies to cultivate perfect individual	vocational education tracks and multiple gymnasium tracks to meet diverse societal needs

CULTURE, LITERATURE, AND POLITICS

If cultural assumptions shape education choices, it is important to understand how this process transpires. Political scientists historically offered national cultural explanations, yet these essentialist views were overly deterministic and empirically difficult to falsify.¹⁶ More recently, scholars in cultural sociology and political science have developed dynamic, actor-centered models in which cultural artifacts are produced and mobilized for political purposes.

¹⁶ But see Almond and Verba 1963 for the best of these.

Culture consists of a heterogeneous tool kit of symbols, habits, and stories that may be accessed to shape practices, beliefs, and strategies for action.¹⁷ Cultural resources are most influential when they solve puzzles, are readily available, and resonate with extant sympathies.¹⁸ Narratives are a crucial cultural tool for providing frames that ascribe meaning to political problems and solutions.¹⁹ Cultural repertoires of evaluation influence our assessment of what is worthwhile, draw boundaries between positive and negative, and suggest symbolic boundaries among social groups. Although cultural repertoires are not deterministic, they influence cross-national policy variations because they are unevenly distributed within countries, and citizens are more likely to access some cultural repertoires more than others.²⁰ Moreover, nation-states constitute consolidation regimes.²¹

This research explores the influence of authors and literary narratives on political developments. Because fiction is widely disseminated and generates powerful emotional responses, it provides an influential source of narrative. The articulation of “self” in literature suggests patterns of engagement between individuals and society.²² Fictional narratives shape individual and collective identities, attitudes toward individual freedoms, and conformity to social order.²³ Narratives may construct collective identities that are not predicted by structural positions. Although individual acts may fail to challenge oppressive institutions, as stories of resistance they become crucial weapons in movement mobilization.²⁴

Fictional narratives foster cleavages among economic, religious, and ethnic groups. Novels’ depictions of villains and blame may politicize or demobilize marginal people; *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, for example, famously contributed to the revolt against slavery.²⁵ Literacy rates influenced citizen rebellion during the French Revolution, and precommunist literacy rates predicted postcommunist democratic institutions.²⁶

Literary narratives also depict political institutions and policy, and legitimize new forms of governance. Tales of industrialization suggest individual versus structural reasons for stunted employment trajectories.

¹⁷ Swidler 1986, 273–76.

¹⁸ McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory 2017; Schudson 1989, 160.

¹⁹ Williams 1958; McNamara 2015; Wedeen 2002, 713.

²⁰ Lamont and Thévenot 2000, 5–6.

²¹ Berezin 2009.

²² DiMaggio and Markus 2010, 351; Damrosch 1989, 34–35.

²³ Griswold and Wright 2004; Engelstad 2003; Lamont and Small 2008, 83–84.

²⁴ Polletta et al. 2011; Ewick and Silbey 2003.

²⁵ Swidler 1986; Lamont and Thévenot 2000; Weerssen 2004.

²⁶ Markoff 1986; Darden and Grzymala-Busse 2006.

Literature from liberal and coordinated market economies offer divergent views of capitalism. Stories about courts influence attitudes toward legal systems.²⁷ Victorian novelists as social reformers use stories to criticize industrial capitalism; Dickens anticipated that *A Christmas Carol* would have “twenty thousand time the force” of a pamphlet on child labor laws.²⁸

If cultural influences affect policy, we need to grasp the steps linking literary narratives to policy outcomes. We cannot simply assume that political outcomes reflect fictional messages—writers have diverse opinions about the issues of the day. Great artists with unique voices should have greater impact than pulp-fiction writers, whose formulaic writing is driven by marketing strategies.²⁹ Some novels criticize coercive institutions while others justify them, as when a *Bildungsroman*, or coming-of-age novel, conveys norms of appropriateness.³⁰ Thus it is necessary to show that creators of cultural artifacts have intended effects, and that political actors receive, comprehend, interpret, and use artifacts to analyze policy problems.³¹ At the same time, the subtext of cultural artifacts may differ from the explicit message, and, like policy legacies, may inspire familiar responses to new challenges and insinuate meaning even when ideology is absent.³² Fictional narratives may be mobilized to support new political agendas, yet their embedded assumptions may contribute to continuities in modes of political action, even when the goals of politics change.³³

Thus groups of authors may use their works to debate economic, political, and social concerns in the decades preceding policy reforms and to convey opinions to political elites in predemocratic regimes.³⁴ Their depictions of schools, the role of the individual in society, and social groups may influence political leaders’ choices, shape other actors’ perceptions of material interests, influence assessments about the culpability of marginal groups, and enhance emotional commitments to resolving social problems.

I develop two research methods to explore the complicated associations between literary narratives and education policy choices in Britain and Denmark between 1720 and 1920. First, a computational

²⁷ McNamara 2015; Griswold and Engelstad 2008; Lacey 2001.

²⁸ Henderson 2000, 140–43.

²⁹ Schwarz 1983; Corse 1995, 1279–81.

³⁰ Claybaugh 2003–2004, 45–46; Apol 2000; Gargano 2008.

³¹ Griswold and Wright 2004; Griswold 1987.

³² Berman 1998; Schmidt and Thatcher 2013; Berezin 1994.

³³ Berezin 2009.

³⁴ Keen 1999, 29–33.

linguistics analysis of large corpora of British and Danish literature allows us to make a weaker argument about literary impacts on cross-national policy variation: fictional works present cross-nationally distinctive cultural narratives about education, and policymakers who likely read these works are influenced by these narratives in their education choices. Second, (space-constrained) case studies enable a stronger version of the argument: authors debate education options in the decades preceding policy reforms and influence crucial political struggles.

RESEARCH METHODS

First, I use systematic, empirical testing of observable differences in the corpora of British and Danish literature to identify distinctive national frames about education, the individual, and society, and I associate these with variations in British and Danish educational development. Computational linguistics processes allow us to show that certain cultural scripts are more plentiful in one corpus of national literature than in another, and permit assessment of the causal sequencing of shifts in cultural narratives and policy reforms. These techniques using large bodies of work improve on analyses that must defend a choice of works. If cross-national differences in assumptions of the literary narratives resonate with variations in education reform choices, we should observe the following distinctions between the British and Danish corpora:

1. If literary discussions influence (and predate) political action, then frequencies of education words in literature should be higher in the decades before major education reforms in both countries (Denmark in 1814 and Britain in 1870).
2. If education is about individual self-development in Britain but social investment in Denmark, then passages about education should have higher frequencies of words about individualism in British literature than in Danish works.
3. If education is about individual self-development in Britain but social investment in Denmark, then education passages should also have higher frequencies of feeling words in British works than in Danish ones because feeling words reference the inner lives of individuals.
4. If education is more about social investment in Denmark than in Britain, education passages should have higher frequencies of societal words in Danish literature than in British works.
5. If education is more likely to be viewed as a state activity to build a strong society in Denmark than in Britain, education passages should have higher frequencies of political governance words in Danish literature than in British literature.
6. If education is initially largely for upper-class children in Britain

but for all classes in Denmark, education passages should have higher frequencies of upper-class words in British literature than in Danish literature, at least before 1870.

7. Topic modeling of education passages should have topics related to individual development and the upper classes in British literature.

8. Topic modeling of education passages should have topics related to collective social goals in Danish literature.

The quantitative analysis uses computational linguistics techniques (in Python) to identify differences in the corpora of British and Danish novels, poems, and plays between 1700 and 1920 (after which copyright laws limit access). I use the major works discussed below to derive dictionary words by identifying the top two hundred words in each, and coding these words into appropriate categories. After stemming the corpora and taking out stop words, I explore temporal and cross-national variations in word frequencies. I construct snippets of fifty-word text around education words, and calculate the frequencies within these passages of words referencing individualism, feelings, social goals, political governance, and the upper class. I also calculate difference of proportions tests to assess whether the differences between British and Danish word frequencies are statistically significant. (See the section on difference of proportions tests in the supplementary material.)³⁵

Scholars use supervised learning techniques to classify or scale documents within a corpus, treating texts as collections of words to derive word frequencies.³⁶ But my object is not to assess how an individual document fits into a corpus. Instead, I assess cross-national and temporal differences among works that are presorted by country, language, and era. I predict differences from theories about how cultural differences give rise to diverse types of education systems, and compare the characteristics of presorted works along these dimensions. Word frequencies alone cannot convey the full meaning of texts; therefore, latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA) unsupervised topic modeling allows us to investigate whether topics in education snippets address individualistic concerns in Britain and collectivist ones in Denmark. (See the supplementary material for discussion of these methods.)³⁷

It is possible that the linguistic structures of English and Danish could skew the results. For example, because “the” in Danish is a suffix (“the man” becomes “manden”), there could be higher word frequencies of nouns in Danish than in English. I address this by removing

³⁵ Martin 2018b.

³⁶ Hopkins and King 2010; Laver, Benoit, and Garry 2003.

³⁷ Martin 2018b.

stop words, such as “the,” and by observing that neither country has consistently elevated frequencies of words in the different categories that I measure. I also compare frequencies of the British word “give” and its Danish equivalent “giver” to ensure that they track as closely as expected.

Britain and Denmark represent archetypal cases on many independent variables explaining cross-national policy divergence. Scholars label Britain as a liberal market economy, in which firms compete on cost rather than quality, pay low wages, and coordinate through markets. Denmark is labeled as a coordinated market economy, with firms competing in high value-added sectors using nonmarket coordination and paying higher wages for a highly skilled workforce.³⁸ Britain has a liberal welfare regime, whereas Denmark has a social democratic welfare regime. Britain is a leader in industrialization; Denmark is one of the laggards. Yet both have Protestant supermajorities and few Catholics.

In selecting works, I draw the Danish corpus of 521 works from the Archive of Danish Literature and from online lists of Danish authors from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. The corpus of 562 British works is constructed from multiple online lists of fiction writers from the same period. Full-text files of all British and some Danish works are provided by HathiTrust. Because available full-text files are often not first editions, I alter manually the dates of works to reflect their initial publication and evaluate the sequential relationship between literature and education reform.

My second method constructs case studies of authors’ views on education and their involvement with specific education debates by using archival sources and a close reading of four matched pairs of major British and Danish works. I choose works by leading authors who consistently appear on national lists of literature, write about young men coming of age, and come from literary periods that encompass periods of educational development. The British and Danish authors knew of one another’s work, wrote in the same aesthetic genre, were in some cases friends, and viewed their works as similar to those of their foreign counterparts. I draw works from the prose fiction and novels of the early 1700s, which inspired the early Danish commission on school reform, the Romantic period around 1770 to 1820 (when Denmark enacted public mass education and Britain created private schools), the Realist novels of the mid-1800s (when Britain passed mass education reform in 1870 and both countries made choices about diversity), and the early Modernist novels between 1870 and 1920 (when both countries made

³⁸ Hall and Soskice 2001.

choices about upper-secondary tracks). The British works include Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Samuel Coleridge's play *Remorse*, Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*. The Danish works include Holberg's *Niels Klim's Journey Under the Ground*, Adam Oehlenschläger's play *Hakon Jarl*, Hans Christian Andersen's *Only a Fiddler*, and Henrik Pontoppidan's *Lucky Per*.

Literature must be read to have an impact, and the matched works were widely read by educated elites and later by mass readers. Although space constraints inhibit a full discussion of readership, by the late eighteenth century literature was a crucial medium for intellectuals to debate issues, to shape public consciousness, and to influence rulers in predemocratic regimes.³⁹ In Britain, fifty to sixty percent of men were perhaps functionally literate by the mid-1700s, and a mass audience for fiction certainly existed by the mid-1800s.⁴⁰ Eleven editions of *Robinson Crusoe* were issued by 1759, and readership expanded with its reprinting in the *Original London Post*.⁴¹ The original issue of *David Copperfield* totaled sales of 25,000 books, and 83,000 copies of the penny version sold in three weeks in 1871. Dickens's publishers sold 4,239,000 books by 1882 in England alone. Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* sold 20,000 copies in the first three months.⁴² In Denmark, works by Holberg; Oehlenschläger, a famous poet and author of the Danish national anthem; Andersen, an internationally acclaimed author; and Pontoppidan, a Nobel Prize winner, were widely read.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Analyses of the British and Danish corpora using computational linguistics techniques show significant and largely predicted differences. First, the frequencies of education words are much higher in the Danish corpus until 1870, when Britain extends voting rights to the working class. (See Figure 1 and the supplementary material for difference of proportions analyses.)⁴³

Figure 2 demonstrates that frequencies of education words rise in both countries in advance of major education acts. Danish frequencies increase before the 1814 mass education act and decline after implementation of public schools, as authors shift their focus to the industrialization project. The frequency of education words is low in Britain

³⁹ Keen 1999, 33. Moretti 2005.

⁴⁰ Feather 1988, 90–91; Altick 1954, 4–6.

⁴¹ Editions of *Robinson Crusoe* in English 1936, 22; Watt 1957, 42.

⁴² Altick 1957, 384; Altick 1986, 238.

⁴³ Martin 2018b.

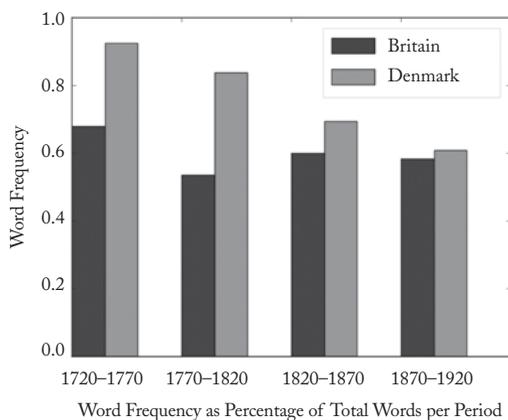


FIGURE 1
EDUCATION WORD FREQUENCIES IN CORPORA^a

^aEducation words include: number (*nummer*), learn (*lære*), history (*historie*), knowledge (*viden*), read (*læse*), study (*studie*), write (*skrive*), count (*regne*), school (*skole*), book (*bog*), word (*ord*), college (*universitet*), education (*uddannelse*). All words are stemmed, so that all noun, verb, etc., forms are included, and stop words are removed.

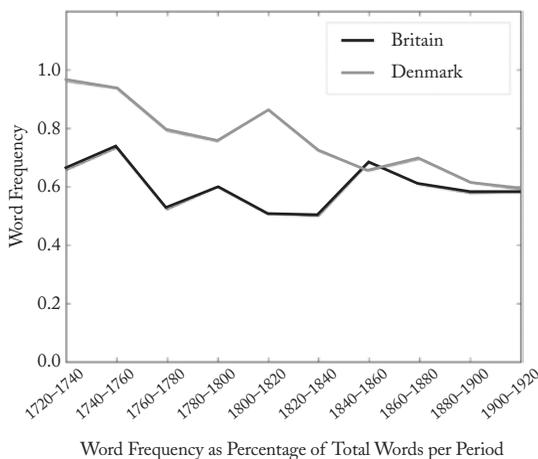


FIGURE 2
FREQUENCIES OF EDUCATION WORDS^a

^aEducation words include: number (*nummer*), learn (*lære*), history (*historie*), knowledge (*viden*), read (*læse*), study (*studie*), write (*skrive*), count (*regne*), school (*skole*), book (*bog*), word (*ord*), college (*universitet*), education (*uddannelse*).

from 1800 to 1820, when churches develop some schools in lieu of government action, but educational inadequacies become a popular theme and education words rise before the 1870 reform. The findings also show that as the education question is resolved in Denmark, references to it decline.

Within passages about education, frequencies of individualism words (Figure 3) and feelings words (Figure 4) are dramatically and significantly higher in Britain than in Denmark. Denmark shows elevated references to individualism from 1720 until 1770, when the Enlightenment inspires attention to individuals, but these drop off during the next century of state-building. Individualism words then increase slightly in the latter nineteenth century with modernization. These findings strongly support that education is more about individual self-development in Britain than in Denmark.

The passages also show that Denmark has significantly higher frequencies of references to social goals (Figure 5) than Britain, although societal references increase in Britain after the voting rights expansion in 1870. Denmark also has significantly higher frequencies of references to political governance words from 1770 until 1870 (Figure 6). Danish references to political governance words peak from 1820 to 1870, when Schleswig-Holstein is lost in the German-Danish War and the constitution is created. Britain has higher frequencies of political governance words than Denmark after 1870, which probably reflects the rise of the Danish model of industrial cooperation that replaced governmental policy-making with negotiated agreements.⁴⁴

Figure 7 shows that in the education snippets, Britain has significantly higher frequencies of upper-class words than Denmark, as expected. These findings shed light on the greater support for mass education in Denmark than in Britain; Denmark seeks to educate all the people to build a strong society and in Britain, early musings about education concern the self-development of elite children.

The countries move toward one another in the 1870 to 1920 period in the frequencies of education, individualism, political governance, social goals, and upper-class words. Britain declines in individualistic and upper-class words, whereas it increasingly supports education and collective societal goals. British shifts are associated with greater collectivism after mass suffrage and a search for order amidst anxieties about industrialization, globalization, technological change, and world

⁴⁴ Martin and Swank 2012.

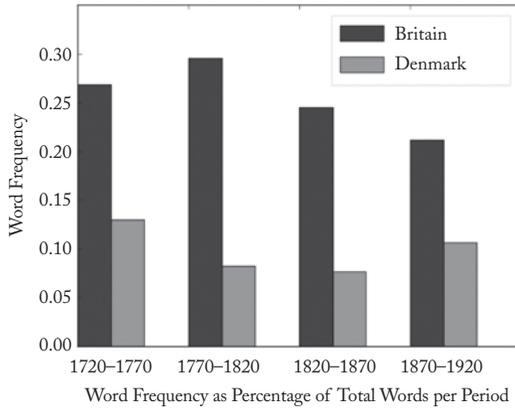


FIGURE 3
FREQUENCIES OF INDIVIDUALISM WORDS IN EDUCATION SNIPPETS^a

^a Individualism words include: individual (*individual*), independent (*uafhængig*), person (*person*), character (*karakter*), liberal (*liberal*), self (*selv*), himself (*selv*), herself (*selv*), and myself (*selv*).

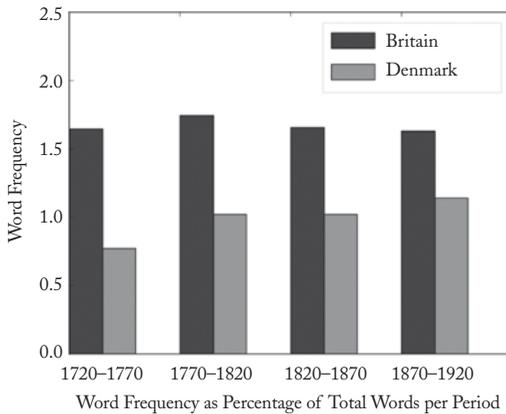


FIGURE 4
FREQUENCIES OF FEELING WORDS IN EDUCATION SNIPPETS^a

^a Feeling words (viewed as another measure of individualism because they reflect the inner life of a person) include: concern (*bekymring*), fear (*frygt*), love (*elsker*), dear (*kære*, also *kærlighed*), heart (*hjerter*), human (*menneskelig*), feel (*føle*), guilt (*skyld*), pity (*medlidenhed*), joy (*glæde*), gratitude (*taknemmelighed*), remorse (*anger*), fancy (*fancy*), anguish (*kvaler*), innocence (*uskyld*), hate (*had*), fool (*fool*), rage (*raseri*), scorn (*hån*), sweet (*sød*), pang (*pang*), hope (*håb*), proud (*stolt*), forgive (*tilgive*), doubt (*tvivl*), tear (*tår*), felt (*følt*), glad (*glad*), happy (*lykke*), afraid (*bange*), and cry (*græde*).

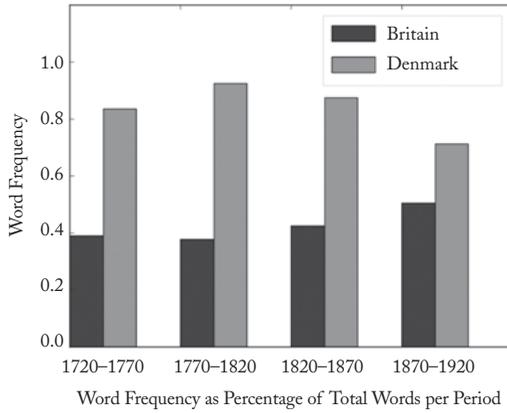


FIGURE 5
FREQUENCIES OF COLLECTIVE SOCIETY WORDS IN EDUCATION SNIPPETS^a

^a Collective society words include: England, Britain (*Danmark, Dannemark*), English, British (*Dansk*), country (*land*), folk (*folk*), people (*mennesker*), collective (*kollektiv*), communal (*fælles*), war (*krig*), enemy (*fjende*), battle (*kamp*), custom (*skik*), peace (*fred*), and social (*social*).

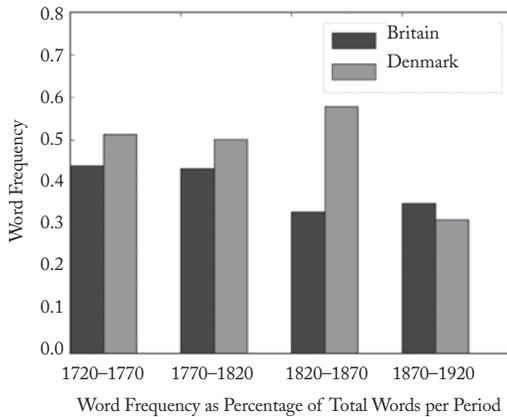


FIGURE 6
FREQUENCIES OF POLITICAL GOVERNANCE WORDS IN EDUCATION SNIPPETS^a

^a Political governance words include: law (*lov*), power (*magt*), nation (*stat*), council (*råd*), public (*offentlig*), king (*kong*), judgment (*vrdering*), government (*regering*), kingdom (*rige*), emperor (*kejser*), judge (*dom*), crown (*krone*), and throne (*trone*).

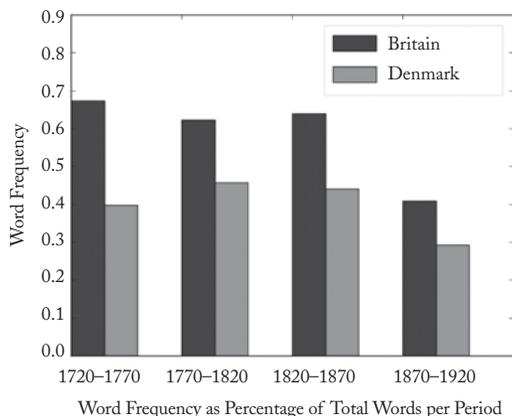


FIGURE 7
FREQUENCIES OF UPPER-CLASS WORDS IN EDUCATION SNIPPETS^a

^aUpper-class words include: lord (*hersk*), lady (*dame*) gentlemen (*herre*), aristocracy (*aristokrati*), master (*mester*), nobility (*adel*), countess (*grevinde*), earl (*jarl*), captain (*kaptajn*). *Herre*, in Danish, also means “mister,” and this elevates the number of upper-class words in Denmark, making the findings even stronger.

war—all themes of modernist literature.⁴⁵ Denmark declines in references to education as it shifts focus to other issues and in the frequencies of political governance words as nonstate, industrial relations organizations increasingly drive policy.

Figure 8 provides added confidence in the findings by showing that the frequencies of the British word “give” and the Danish word “giver” (both stemmed) track quite closely. These data also support Greenfield’s assertion that frequencies of “give” should drop over time because earlier commitments to duty and obligation decline with modernization and socioeconomic change.⁴⁶

Additionally, unsupervised topic-modeling techniques are used to further explore differences between the corpora over time. I request that five unspecified topics be identified within British and Danish snippets of fifty words surrounding the terms “school” and “education.” Unsupervised topic modeling produces probabilistic results (each run delivers a different organization of words), but I have run many trials and observe similar sets of topics for each country across the repeated trials. As Table 2 demonstrates, British and Danish snippets of text surrounding education words have starkly different topics. Table 2 presents

⁴⁵ Crosthwaite 2010.

⁴⁶ Greenfield 2013.

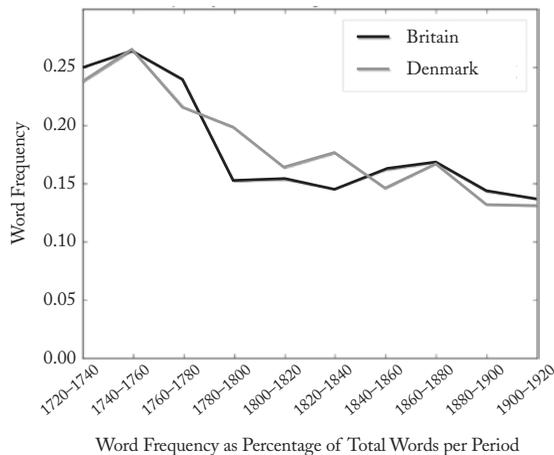


FIGURE 8
FREQUENCIES OF BRITISH “GIVE” AND DANISH “GIV”^a

^aThis test demonstrates that to show the dramatic cross-national differences observed between other word frequencies, calculations are not related to the structure of the English and Danish languages.

results from one such trial for 1720–1770. (I decided in advance to report this particular trial).

Topic modeling provides added confidence that Britain seeks to educate upper-class individuals whereas Denmark seeks to educate citizens for society. The British topics emphasize how knowledge may cultivate a good nature and a great mind. Gentlemen will be prepared for going out into the world; ladies will be inclined to help the poor and to attain hope, love, and happiness. The Danish topics refer to nationalism, foreign influences, and religion, which are consistent with the authors’ campaign against instruction in Latin and concerns about building national identities, as discussed below. The first and third Danish topics concern learning the meaning of truth and cultivating wisdom for those lost or wild. The second and fifth refer to the issue of instruction in Latin and the study of foreign philosophers (hotly debated themes of this period). The fourth links education to king, God, and church. (See Table 2).

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS: TIMING OF MASS EDUCATION, 1720–1820

The case studies bolster the quantitative findings by showing how British and Danish authors contribute to dimensions of education systems.

TABLE 2
TOPICS IN BRITAIN AND DENMARK 1720–1770^a

<i>Britain</i>	
1.	learn, knowledge, word, nature, man, life, great, mind, part, men, world, education, prince
2.	read, history, great, book, lady, chap, Dr., trim, knowledge, Mrs., work
3.	word, book, hand, write, uncle, read, count, half, head, eye, turn, world
4.	word, history, great, man, good, never, lady, think, thought, miss, give, letter, write, answer, book
5.	write, read, dear, sir, good, lady, letter, hut, word, think, give, hope, love, happiness
<i>Denmark</i>	
1.	people, learn, meaning, truth, give, wise, right, word, wild/lost, hand, hold, rector
2.	discuss, part, Greek, writing, translate, Latin, book, philosophy, learning, indicate
3.	man, wild/lost, right, same/together, old, number, people, hold, calling, learning, learn
4.	king, fault, learn, God, church, hold, right, less, follow, give, love, wise
5.	hand, poem, learning, name, Latin, man, philosophy, book, write, rector

^aProper names deleted.

I compare matched works and writers' influence on three periods of education reform in which dimensions of education systems emerge. Literary influences in the first era, 1720–1820, matter for the timing of mass, public schooling; they shape views about diversity of primary education in the second era, 1820–1870; and in the third era, 1870–1920, they matter for the differentiation of secondary education.

We begin before the creation of national education laws, when British and Danish authors of the Enlightenment and the Romantic Movement had bearing on political discourse about early reforms. Writers in both countries came to view education as crucial to self-development. But Danish authors went further in emphasizing education's primary purpose as the fortification of state and society, which contributed to Denmark's earlier experiments in mass education. The period ended with Denmark enacting mass public education in 1814, and British national societies forming voluntary religious schools for lower classes.

The differences in authors' views toward education appear in Enlightenment-era English novels (with their first-person perspective; realistic, character-driven plots; and resonance with rising cultural individualism) and contemporaneous prose fiction in Denmark.⁴⁷ The literary importance and adventure-story themes of Holberg's *Niels Klim* and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* make them appropriate for comparison, but the works demonstrate different views of liberalism, education, the

⁴⁷ Watt 1957, 12–21, 60; Fitting 1996, 99.

individual in society, social group relations, and political institutions. *Niels Klim* demonstrates greater appreciation for liberalism in social relations, whereas *Robinson Crusoe* pays homage to economic liberalism and growing individualism.

These differences persist with the rise of romanticism in the late eighteenth century, when authors move from rationality to emotional truths, and embrace romantic views of the child. British Romantic works explored individual psychology and drew inspiration from the individualistic consciousness of classical Greek writings, while Danish works probed historical themes in Nordic myths that bolstered national identity, monarchy, and organic society.⁴⁸ Given the perceived contribution of education to building a strong society, it is not surprising that Denmark moved forward with schools for the masses in this era.

BRITAIN

The eighteenth century was a period of rapid economic change and instability in Britain, with a decline in state-led mercantilism, growing industrialization, urbanization, and war. The enclosure movement, which began in 1773, consolidated small landholdings into larger farms and eliminated common land, turned poor agricultural workers into wage laborers, and fomented growing unrest in the countryside. Apprenticeships declined in the early nineteenth century after the Napoleonic Wars.⁴⁹ Religious divisions reinforced political disagreements about how to cope with socioeconomic change. Dissenting Whigs with urban commercial interests fought the Anglican Tories, who were drawn from the landed gentry. Moreover, ever since the English Civil War, many elites viewed mass literacy as a threat to social stability.⁵⁰

Defoe and others wrote about economic liberalism, but Defoe devoted scant attention to education in *Robinson Crusoe* (or in his journalism).⁵¹ In the 1719 novel, Crusoe readily admits that formal schooling holds no allure, due to “something fatal in that propensity of nature” and a “wandering inclination.”⁵² Crusoe does not learn a trade while at sea, where he “in time might have qualified myself for a mate or lieutenant.”⁵³ Only on the desert island does he learn to create products with preindustrial technology; his success depends entirely on technical cunning rather than formal education.

⁴⁸ Leerssen 2004; Payne 1900, 131–32.

⁴⁹ Doheny 1991, 335.

⁵⁰ Stone 1969; Brantlinger 1998; Parille 2011, 25.

⁵¹ Marshall 2007.

⁵² Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 3.

⁵³ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 10.

Crusoe reads like an ode to individualism—Crusoe lives outside of society and defies social convention, leaving home (on a whim) without saying goodbye. Despite initial guilt, Crusoe masters a complete “victory over conscience”⁵⁴ and amasses a sizable fortune, using his own initiative and capitalist opportunities. Crusoe feels no shame, and notes that youths “are not ashamed to sin, and yet are ashamed to repent.”⁵⁵ Although his father extolls the middle classes that have “the fewest disasters . . . all kind of virtue and all kind of enjoyments,”⁵⁶ Crusoe leaves that class and pursues the slave trade without regard for justice or equality.

Noneconomic political and social institutions are largely absent from this novel. Instead, Defoe dwells on technological innovations and economic opportunities. Crusoe’s logic is deeply economic; he masters despondence with reason by making a check list—like a creditor—and itemizing his comforts versus miseries.⁵⁷ Reason is crucial to success and helps him become a master of mechanics.⁵⁸

The focus on individualism continues with the rise of the Romantic Movement in the late eighteenth century, as can be seen in Coleridge’s popular poetic play, *Remorse* (1797). The play’s major themes are psychological redemption and human rights. Desiring Teresa, the fiancé of his brother Alvar, Ordonio asks an associate to kill Alvar, who is away in battle. Alvar returns in disguise, but rather than seek revenge, he seeks to save Ordonio’s soul: “The more behoves it I should rouse within him Remorse! That I should save him from himself.”⁵⁹ The play depicts Alvar’s noble impulses and Ordonio’s redemption.

In Coleridge’s play, structures of governance or society are ignored except when social norms violate individual freedom. Alvar deplors the Moors’ loss of religious freedom, and recalls fighting “for the native liberty of faith.”⁶⁰ Teresa is appalled by the “ghastly punishments” inflicted upon these people.⁶¹ Shocked by the conditions of a dungeon, Alvar contemplates, “[W]hat if guilty? Is this the only cure?”⁶² Social norms are dictates of “proud men, that loath mankind.”⁶³

Unlike their enlightenment predecessors, British romantic writers

⁵⁴ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 6.

⁵⁵ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 9.

⁵⁶ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 3.

⁵⁷ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 35.

⁵⁸ Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 36.

⁵⁹ Coleridge, *Remorse*, I.I.5.

⁶⁰ Coleridge, *Remorse*, II.II.5.

⁶¹ Coleridge, *Remorse*, III.II.25.

⁶² Coleridge, *Remorse*, V.I.5.

⁶³ Coleridge, *Remorse*, III.I.110.

said much about education, advocating learning as a means to individual self-discovery, but they seldom link schooling with contributions to society. Authors were drawn to romantic views of the whole child and the educational philosophies of Friedrich Eberhard von Rochow and Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi.⁶⁴ Coleridge's vision of the individualistic self influenced Ralph Waldo Emerson and other transcendentalists.⁶⁵ For example, in his 1798 poem, "The Tables Turned," William Wordsworth refers to books as "a dull and endless strife," and urges "Let Nature be your teacher."⁶⁶ Coleridge recognizes that schools make people more considerate: "a man . . . unblest with a liberal education, should act without attention to the habits, and feelings, of his fellow citizens."⁶⁷ Education would forge a "clerisy" of educated citizens to guide political action.⁶⁸

Two charitable societies developed to expand primary education for non-elites in this period. The Dissenters' British and Foreign School Society organized in 1808 to form schools following educator Joseph Lancaster's model, which focused on copying from placards and rote memorization. The Anglicans' National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor formed in 1811 to build schools based on Andrew Bell's model, which used similar methods.⁶⁹

Writers supported these national societies and helped to neutralize fears about mass literacy, but they showed limited support for a public system.⁷⁰ Coleridge was extremely influential in the Anglican society; his speech at the Royal Institution in 1808 is credited for launching the movement to educate the poor. He believed that education would "stimulate the heart to love."⁷¹ Dissenter philosophers Jeremy Bentham and James Mill supported the Lancasterian schools and criticized the Anglican schools as a mechanism for winning converts to the church. Bentham admired the Lancasterian efficiency: "In the new-invented system of instruction, all join in beholding an instrument of matchless and never-before-imagined efficiency."⁷²

DENMARK

Denmark was a primitive land with a low standard of living in the early 1700s, but important improvements to agricultural productivity were

⁶⁴ Pachori 1983, 26–31.

⁶⁵ Harvey 2013, 3.

⁶⁶ Wordsworth 1954, 78; Cordner 2016.

⁶⁷ Coleridge, 1796, IV.

⁶⁸ Harvey 2013, 18.

⁶⁹ Doheny 1991.

⁷⁰ Stone 1969.

⁷¹ Foakes 1989, 191, 8; Pachori 1983, 26–31.

⁷² Bentham 1818, 53; Taylor 1979.

made by century's end. The French Revolution did little to stir social unrest there. Land reform (enclosure) in 1788 gave peasants subsidies to purchase land and to improve productivity, which created both an expanded middle class and a group of poor cottagers.⁷³ Estate owners, the major proponents of land reform, believed that education was central to farmers' participation in productivity-enhancing agricultural technologies.⁷⁴

Authors helped to advance education as necessary to a well-ordered society, and Holberg stands out in this effort. The schools in his 1741 book, *Niels Klim's Journey Under the Earth*, emphasize real questions and contributions: "[S]tudents are employed in solving complicated and difficult questions. . . . No one studies more than one science, and thus each gets a full knowledge of his peculiar subject."⁷⁵ Engagement in scholarly disputations is tolerated only as amusing spectacle, fit for the stage and subject to gambling.⁷⁶ Holberg ridicules the "philosophical-land" outside the utopian capital, with its filthy, starving inhabitants. "Intelligence resulting from methodical and practical study is preferable to the torpid insanity incident to much learning."⁷⁷

Holberg's view of the individual in society differs significantly from Defoe's. Like Crusoe, Klim explores the world, but at the behest of societal elders who ask him to enter a cave leading to the underground planet of Pontu. Crusoe finds his true self when left alone on a desert island; Klim is deeply shaped by the social values and anthropomorphic tree people of Pontu. Klim's initial "contempt was changed to admiration" for their profound insights into life.⁷⁸ When the tree people doubt Klim's "obtuse and miserable judgment," Klim boasts of his university degree. Degrees are important in Copenhagen because "the shadow was regarded more than the substance," but in Pontu, "the kernel was more important than aught else."⁷⁹ Requesting a change in station befitting his talents, Klim is told, "Merit ought to be rewarded, but the reward should be adapted to the object, that the State may not suffer."⁸⁰ Societal needs triumph over individual desires and capacities.

Social relations in Pontu are based on respect for those who contribute most to society and are "noted for virtue and industry."⁸¹ Laws

⁷³ Pedersen, Johansen, and Christiansen 2010, 111–15.

⁷⁴ Larsen, Nørr, and Sonne 2013.

⁷⁵ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 491.

⁷⁶ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 310.

⁷⁷ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 645–55.

⁷⁸ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 306.

⁷⁹ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 333.

⁸⁰ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 807.

⁸¹ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 404.

partial to certain classes are rejected as not “conducive to the general interest.”⁸² Tree people “elect those to take charge of affairs who are proved to be the most worthy.”⁸³ Children represent the greatest societal contribution—a “generation law” accords “advantages of the people according to the number of children each one possess.”⁸⁴

Although *Niels Klim* extensively describes political and social institutions, it ignores technology and economic exchange. All government offices, apart from the monarchy, are “subject to the will of the people, all of whom should be allowed to vote, who could read and write.”⁸⁵ The king “must be accurately acquainted with the opinions of his subjects, and must strive to keep union among them.”⁸⁶

The Romantic Movement writers shared these assumptions about the individual in society, relations among social groups, and education. Society is all-important in Oehlenschläger’s famous 1805 play, *Hakon Jarl*, which depicts a Nordic saga.⁸⁷ Desperate to become king, Hakon Jarl violates societal norms; steals women; cannot stand praise for others; and differs from the ancient king, the humble and self-sacrificing Harald Graafeld. Graafeld “was a king! . . . who, labouring for his country’s weal, Threw off the purple mantle with its gold. And reign’d, in humble sheep-skins simply clad.”⁸⁸ Hakon is “haughty and imperious” and “encroaching on the people’s rights, He seized their [farmers’] goods, their heritage.”⁸⁹ Hakon is “as afraid of his own warriors as he is of” the enemy,⁹⁰ and prefers to rely on slaves.⁹¹ Olaf, who rightfully deserves the throne, becomes king to protect society.⁹² Olaf wins with a peasant uprising,⁹³ and the farmers meet at the Thing, a forum for discussing collective problems, to choose him as king.⁹⁴

Denmark developed a national school system early, in 1814, with primary schools controlled by local municipalities, improved grammar schools, and seven years of compulsory education (fewer for working rural children).⁹⁵ The road to mass education began in 1787 with the

⁸² Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 446–57.

⁸³ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 277.

⁸⁴ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 404.

⁸⁵ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 446.

⁸⁶ Holberg, *Niels Klim*, 474.

⁸⁷ Oehlenschläger 1840.

⁸⁸ Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 10.

⁸⁹ Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 51.

⁹⁰ Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 93.

⁹¹ Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 105.

⁹² Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 54.

⁹³ Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 113.

⁹⁴ Oehlenschläger, *Hakon Jarl*, 170.

⁹⁵ Anordning for Almue-Skolevæsenet paa Landet i Danmark 1814.

Great School Commission, set up by King Frederik VI. The commission included Ernst Heinrich von Schimmelmann (state's minister), and major estate owners and enlightenment devotees, Johan Ludvig Reventlow and Christian Ditlev Reventlow (who was named secretary of state in 1797). The landowners had created schools and teacher training on their own estates in advance of the commission, as they were deeply committed to Danish nationalism and wished to educate peasants to help adopt agricultural productivity enhancements.⁹⁶ The commission's 1789 report recommended school construction, better teacher training, and tax-financed free education. Several regions enacted reform before the national law was enacted in 1814.⁹⁷

Holberg and other writers supported education reform in advance of the school commission.⁹⁸ Holberg, for example, gave his fortune to the Sorø Academy before his death in 1754 and brought into the school's faculty his own former students, including Jens Schelderup Sneedorff, who subsequently became tutor to King Frederik VI, and Andreas Schytte, who wrote about the necessity of educating the public for the sake of the common good and general happiness. Holberg criticized universities for their metaphysical focus, instruction in Latin, and medieval logic, and advocated for more practical, scientific education taught in the Danish vernacular.⁹⁹ The academy implemented Holberg's educational ideas, including teaching in Danish. The Reventlow brothers and other estate owners and statesmen were deeply influenced by Holberg's ideas during their education at the academy.¹⁰⁰

Romantic writers in Denmark also contributed intellectually to the school reform project. In 1785, two writers started a liberal literary magazine, *Minerva*, which advocated liberal political reforms and included forty-one members of the extended royal family among its 496 subscribers.¹⁰¹ The philosopher Henrik Steffens lectured widely about organic social unity and the harmony of the natural world, and celebrated education as a means to building a strong society.¹⁰² Influenced by Steffens and by Nordic myths, Oehlenschläger's "It Is a Beautiful Land," one of Denmark's two national anthems, links learning to the virtues of society: Denmark is as strong as in the old Nordic myths;

⁹⁶ Holm 1900, 33–40; Lundgreen-Nielsen n.d.

⁹⁷ Pedersen, Johansen, and Christiansen 2010, 119; Knudsen 2000.

⁹⁸ Also see Falster's "Den Latinske Skrivestue" for writers' commitment to Danish authors and native language (Salmonsens konversationsleksikon 1915–30).

⁹⁹ Campbell 1918, 98–100.

¹⁰⁰ Larsen, Nørr, and Sonne 2013, 54–69.

¹⁰¹ Munck 1998, 216.

¹⁰² Gyldendal Den Store Danske n.d.

sciences and art are the hope of the future; and hearts beat for girl, country, and king.

SCHOOL EXPANSION AND PLURALISM, 1820–1870

Between 1820 and 1870, the second period we consider, British and Danish reformers expanded enrollment of lower-class children, but Denmark increased educational diversity whereas Britain sought to restrain it. Britain created a mass education system in 1870 to fill gaps in the coverage provided by church-based voluntary schools, to meet industrial skills needs, and to educate citizens after electoral reform. The act retained religious schools, but eliminated alternative school types and expanded inspection of schools.¹⁰³ Denmark also filled gaps in coverage and expanded skills needs, but created many private school options, retained local control, and maintained urban/rural distinctions and distinctions between public (fee) schools and free schools for the poor. Victorian authors like Dickens and Andersen inspired social reform with their authentic depictions of real characters, aching social problems, and educational failures. Yet authors' different views of education contributed to why British politicians sought greater school uniformity whereas Danish ones favored plural school options.

BRITAIN

Britain finally created a public education system in 1870 and it included compulsory attendance and governance by local school boards. Religious factions lobbied to protect the voluntary schools, but the Elementary Education Act of 1870 effectively ended other alternatives, including ragged schools (schools dedicated to the education of destitute children) and technical schools at the primary level.¹⁰⁴ The act's architect, W. E. Forster, sought to increase uniformity via school inspection and to link funding to student performance.¹⁰⁵

In advance of the 1870 act, British authors supported a public school system because they wanted to extend the benefits of learning to the working class. John Stuart Mill sought education for enlightened rationality and self-development—education for the boy was the making of the man and individual autonomy.¹⁰⁶ Dickens resented education's class bias, Lancaster/Bell “cramming,” corporal punishment, and learning for

¹⁰³ Millgate 2004, 52.

¹⁰⁴ Roper 1975, 185–202; Marcham 1973.

¹⁰⁵ Doheny 1991, 336–38; Corder 2016; Shuman 2000, 12.

¹⁰⁶ Mill [1867] 1984, 217; Capaldi 2004.

capitalist ends. Championing children's rights, he advocated for "individual selfhood."¹⁰⁷

Writers aimed to reduce educational inequality. Matthew Arnold, a leading poet and a school inspector, was Forster's brother-in-law and he reviewed drafts of the bill. Arnold advocated for rationalization, a ministry of education, and connections between primary and secondary schools. William Gaskell, the husband of novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, lobbied Prime Minister William Gladstone on education along with other nonconformist ministers.¹⁰⁸ Dickens decried variation in school quality and sought schools for working class youth that were comparable to those for wealthier children. Mill feared "[t]he uncultivated cannot be competent judges of cultivation. . . . Education, therefore, is one of those things . . . that a government should provide for the people."¹⁰⁹

David Copperfield, written in 1850, depicts faulty educational institutions, hostile society, and individual self-determination. Dickens views schools with ambivalence. David suffers greatly at Mr. Creakle's Salem House, where "Half the establishment was writhing and crying, before the day's work began."¹¹⁰ He learns little there because the "boys were . . . too much troubled and knocked about to learn."¹¹¹ Later, Doctor Strong's school is "as different from Mr. Creakle's as good is from evil . . . with an appeal, in everything, to the honour and good faith of the boys."¹¹²

Society is not much help to David; indeed, the word "society" connotes upper-class social engagements rather than the organic union of citizens.¹¹³ Dickens lovingly portrays kind, working-class people, and despises the upper class who, like the odious Miss Dartle, treats workers as subhuman.¹¹⁴ Yet Dickens has little interest in trade unions and ridicules political institutions, such as courts and parties.

David must rely on his own resources to cope with his murderous stepfather and punishing factory work. The mature David applauds his youthful spirit: "I never could have done what I have done . . . without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time . . . whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well."¹¹⁵ Dickens sympathizes with victims of industrialization and abuse, yet the boy must save himself.

¹⁰⁷ Hughes 1913, x, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Connell, 2002, 88–89, 112.

¹⁰⁹ Mill 1848, 947–48.

¹¹⁰ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 88.

¹¹¹ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 93.

¹¹² Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 225.

¹¹³ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 833.

¹¹⁴ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 279.

¹¹⁵ Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 574.

DENMARK

Whereas Britain moved from volunteerism to consolidation in education, Denmark did the opposite by increasing private schools (for example, free schools) to fill gaps in coverage. The Law on School Freedom of 1855 gave parents the right to develop schools, in part to organize education around the need for child labor.¹¹⁶

Danish writers supported both the expansion of school attendance by poor children and the diversity of school options, for example, when Andersen advocated schools for the poor.¹¹⁷ Authors also depicted individuals as part of a larger, organic whole. Ditlev Monrad, author of the 1849 Danish Constitution and Council President from 1863–64, wrote, “‘The spirit does not exhaust its whole being in some single individuals, but in [their] totality’; because to ‘feel the pulse of the spirit’ the people must be organized as an organism.”¹¹⁸

Themes of the dangers of individualism, benefits of education, and youth deference to society appear in Andersen’s 1837 realist novel, *Only a Fiddler*. The protagonist, Christian, wishes to become a great artist, rejects societal conventions,¹¹⁹ and agrees with his absent father that “one must be free and alone, and then the whole world is open before one.”¹²⁰ These views bring Christian alienation, loneliness, and despair, and he questions his desire for individualistic achievement: “What comfort would it afford him, what comfort to mankind.”¹²¹ Christian views education as a palliative to his malaise: “School-life would have alone been able by its severe, rational discipline, to breathe a cool air into this sirocco of the imagination . . . [but] there was no regulated school for poor children in the whole town.”¹²² His landlady wonders, “Why should not poverty enjoy the advantage [of literature]?”¹²³

Authors also praised educational pluralism and experiential techniques to inspire the imagination. The influential author and theologian, N. F. S. Grundtvig, drew from ancient Nordic myths and conceptions of the organic society to depict schools where peasants and workers—the “workmen of the sun”—could gain literacy and knowledge of Danish history to participate fully in society.¹²⁴ Grundtvig favored learning through narrative (the “living word”), opposed written assignments

¹¹⁶ Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 125.

¹¹⁷ Zipes 2006.

¹¹⁸ Koch and Kornerup 1950–66, 17.

¹¹⁹ Anderson, *Only a Fiddler*, 37.

¹²⁰ Anderson, *Only a Fiddler*, 9.

¹²¹ Anderson, *Only a Fiddler*, 37.

¹²² Anderson, *Only a Fiddler*, 22.

¹²³ Anderson, *Only a Fiddler*, 117–18.

¹²⁴ Grundtvig 1968.

before eighth grade, and strongly supported parental control over children's education.¹²⁵

Political figures were deeply influenced by Grundtvig, and the 1849 Constitution motivated higher levels of citizen education. The Culture Ministry issued a report advocating further education in 1848. A landowners' prize committee solicited essays on the theme, "Reform, Not Revolution," which would help citizens appreciate "the unconditional necessity of duty." Within the Rigsdag there was broad consensus about greater freedom in the formation of schools and reduced national control.¹²⁶

Grundtvig inspired a private school-building movement led by his disciple, Christen Kold, in 1844. Kold developed free schools and folk high schools in rural communities to foster religious awakening, populism, and nationalism. In an essay for a prize competition that asked, "What should be done in the education arena after the country has gotten a new constitution?" Kold attacked the form and content of existing schools and rejected the textbook developed by Nicolai Balle, the Bishop of Sealand, in the 1790s. Kold's schools drew inspiration from the writings of Holberg, Oehlenschläger, and Bernard Ingemann, in addition to Grundtvig, and educational instruction used myths, narratives, the living word, and experiential techniques to stimulate the imagination.¹²⁷

DIFFERENTIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TRACKS, 1870–1920

The early twentieth century constitutes the third stage of education system development, when countries expanded upper secondary schools and decided to include or exclude vocational education options. Technical schools developed in Britain and Denmark during the latter nineteenth century, but in 1902, Britain moved to a one-track upper-secondary system that omitted vocational education and centered on classical, humanistic studies. In contrast, Denmark incorporated vocational schools into a multitrack upper-secondary system in 1903.

In both nations, authors influenced these policy choices through their depictions of global systemic risks and education as an antidote to those risks.¹²⁸ Appalled by unequal class relations, British writer-activists thought industrialization degraded the working class and that vocational education contributed to socioeconomic inequality. Danish

¹²⁵ Grundtvig 1968; Fain 1971, 78–82; Bjerg et al. 1995, 31–32.

¹²⁶ Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 66–67.

¹²⁷ Gjerløff and Jacobsen 2014, 117–19.

¹²⁸ Crosthwaite 2010, 331.

writers also denounced poverty but supported industrialization as a national project to increase growth; they saw vocational education as central to this ambition.

BRITAIN

In Britain, the 1870 Education Act increased access to schooling, but failed to rationalize schools or expand industrial skills. Different agencies monitored public and religious schools, and localities varied enormously in terms of school access, funding, and methods.¹²⁹ In 1895 a Royal Commission on Secondary Education report, led by James Bryce, a Liberal MP, proposed centralizing regulatory authority and rationalizing the education system. A centralized board of education was formed in 1899.¹³⁰ Other commissions (many led by William Cavendish, the Duke of Devonshire) recommended that technical or vocational schools be developed at the secondary level during this period, and some urban school boards created post-primary technical classes. County councils raised rates for the funding of technical education and Parliament passed several industrial acts expanding technical training to build skills.¹³¹

Yet in 1902, the Conservative government passed, with broad bipartisan support, an act that eliminated technical secondary education and the innovative pupil-teacher schools that used students to teach other students and supplemented education in communities in which other schools were scarce. The act strengthened central regulation with new local education authorities monitored by the Board of Education, and retained the religious schools. The bill's architect, Robert Morant, who rose to secretary of the Board of Education in 1903, embraced humanist over technological studies, and additional 1904 regulations developed national curricula guidelines and restricted math and science instruction.¹³² Legislation in 1918 revisited technical education, but the Labor Party distrusted "instrumental" motives for vocational schools for working class children.¹³³ Paradoxically, the rejection of vocational tracks ultimately limited workers' educational attainment.¹³⁴

Modernist British authors joined the movement against educational inequality, viewed vocational education as inferior, and lobbied for a

¹²⁹ Gosden 1962, 44.

¹³⁰ Maclure 1965, 140.

¹³¹ Maclure 1965; Gowing 1978, 1–12, 52, 58.

¹³² Eaglesham 1962, 156–7; Vaninskaya 2010, 952.

¹³³ Ward 1973, 38.

¹³⁴ Vlaeminke 2000, 5.

universal, humanistic, secondary education system. In their writings, Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, George Orwell, and H. G. Wells attacked substandard board schools. Bryce, who chaired the 1895 secondary education commission, founded the National Liberal Club, which included playwright and education critic George Bernard Shaw among its members.¹³⁵ Wells, Shaw, and the famous socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, praised the 1902 legislation for its efficiency and national regulation.¹³⁶ Hardy, who had been denied entrance to the University of Oxford, passionately sought classical education for the poor, and the April 1888 House of Commons debate on secondary education inspired him to write *Jude the Obscure*, which was published in 1894.¹³⁷ When Oxford created Ruskin College in 1899 to train working-class youth, Hardy quipped that Ruskin should be renamed the “College of Jude the Obscure.”¹³⁸

Jude the Obscure embraces themes of individual self-actualization and gaps in educational opportunities. Hardy biographer Michael Millgate, describes Hardy’s goals as “self-education, self-development and self-discovery.”¹³⁹ Jude’s dreams of self-actualization through classical education are Hardy’s own. Jude lacks David Copperfield’s pluck and has a “weakness of character, as . . . the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life.”¹⁴⁰ Society seems ignorant and hostile, and Jude feels fellowship with birds “in a world that does not want them.”¹⁴¹ People think Jude as “very stuck up, and always reading,”¹⁴² and enjoy his fall from grace: “All his reading had only come to this, that he would have to sell his books to buy saucepans.”¹⁴³

Learning is Jude’s great solace and imaginary escape from a desolate rural life. He moves to the “city of light,”¹⁴⁴ but is told that “you will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in your own sphere.”¹⁴⁵ Working men’s sensibilities transcend their social class, yet education is beyond their reach.¹⁴⁶ Ultimately Jude’s educational

¹³⁵ Wells [1937] 1966, 339, 341; Vaninskaya 2010, 959; Corder 2016.

¹³⁶ Manzer, 2003, 104.

¹³⁷ Millgate 2004, 318.

¹³⁸ Ruskin College Fellowship of Ex-Students 2015, 2.

¹³⁹ Millgate 2004, 88–89.

¹⁴⁰ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 13–14.

¹⁴¹ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 11.

¹⁴² Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 35.

¹⁴³ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 49.

¹⁴⁴ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 19–20.

¹⁴⁵ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 104.

¹⁴⁶ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 157.

aspirations produce failure: "It would have been far better for him in every way if he had never come within sight and sound of the delusive precincts, had gone to some busy commercial town with the sole object of making money by his wits."¹⁴⁷

DENMARK

Denmark's 1903 Act on General Secondary Education institutionalized multiple secondary education tracks to serve diverse student needs and to reinforce local control. The act created free middle schools that linked primary and secondary schools, gymnasiums (with three lines) for academically oriented youth, and additional private school funding. It emphasized learning by doing and eliminated written assignments before eighth grade.¹⁴⁸

Danish authors in the Modern Breakthrough Movement, around 1870–90, celebrated educational pluralism and collectivist industrial development. Inspired by Charles Darwin and Friedrich Nietzsche, these writers criticized traditional religion and middle-class morality, but expressed greater optimism than their British contemporaries about industrialization, coordination, and class relations. As they depicted it, industrialization offered an opportunity to move beyond rural poverty, and state institutions and private associations for industrial coordination were portrayed favorably. Georg Brandes, literary critic, writer, and the movement's leader, viewed economic emancipation as more vital than political suffrage, and saw British Victorian literature as overly wedded to parliamentary democracy.¹⁴⁹ His brother Edvard was an important figure in the Radical Liberal Party formed in 1905, which advanced welfare reforms, and the brothers were among the founders of the reformist newspaper, *Politikken*, in 1884.¹⁵⁰ Pontoppidan, like Hardy, supported education reform and worked in a folk high school at the beginning of his career; yet unlike the British author, Pontoppidan celebrated engineering and industrial life.¹⁵¹

Positive depictions of society, industrial development, and education appear in Pontoppidan's *Lucky Per*, the tale of a young man who seeks success but fails. Per is the opposite of Hardy's Jude. Given every advantage and a wonderful woman, Per misuses his talents and opportunities. He refuses to conform to society, to take personal responsibility, or to

¹⁴⁷ Hardy, *Jude the Obscure*, 103.

¹⁴⁸ Bjerg 1991, 133–37.

¹⁴⁹ Brandes 1890; Skilton 1980, 37–43.

¹⁵⁰ Lorenz Rerup: Edvard Brandes i. Gyldendal *Den Store Danske*. At <http://denstoredanske.dk/index.php?sideId=50519>, accessed January 18, 2018.

¹⁵¹ Borup 1905.

follow through with his (initially lauded) engineering plan. Like Jude, Per feels called to a higher purpose that exempts him from societal norms: “For men . . . called out for great work, the common, bourgeois law did not really count for much.”¹⁵² But unlike Hardy, Pontoppidan punishes Per for ceaselessly offending society.¹⁵³ One observer notes, *Lucky Per* “is one long tragedy of the lucky mortal that gets all he wants. It is the tragedy of the will.”¹⁵⁴

Pontoppidan portrays industrial institutions positively. Education and social protections compensate for industrial risk. Per’s fiancé, Jacob, establishes a school in Copenhagen and believes “school should gradually step in to take the place of home . . . the children will also be given the capital for a bright and fruitful sense of life.”¹⁵⁵ Manufacturing will improve Denmark’s economic fortunes¹⁵⁶ and “labor movements . . . [had] close ties with modern technical development.” Workers “did not quarrel with anyone and were held together by mutual respect.”¹⁵⁷ Per celebrates nationalism, saying, “Dear old Denmark!” when “a wave of patriotism swept through him.”¹⁵⁸

Both Hardy and Pontoppidan were criticized for their bleak, unrelenting, modernist stories. For example, *The Guardian* called *Jude* “a shameful nightmare, which one only wishes to forget as quickly and as completely as possible.”¹⁵⁹ Yet these novels hold different lessons for protagonists given different opportunities. Jude cannot overcome class rigidities, but Per rejects societal aid.

CONCLUSION

Cultural differences explain why poor, rural Denmark led in developing mass public education and vocational training, while early industrializing Britain was a laggard. Britain sought education to foster individualistic self-development and reformers there eventually developed one-track secondary schools to prevent two-tiered schooling and to offer equality of educational opportunity. In Denmark, education was associated with building a strong society, which facilitated both early mass schooling and plural secondary educational tracks to meet varied skill demands.

¹⁵² Pontoppidan, *Lucky Per*, 285.

¹⁵³ Pontoppidan, *Lucky Per*, 344.

¹⁵⁴ Robertson 1920, 376.

¹⁵⁵ Pontoppidan, *Lucky Per*, 477–78.

¹⁵⁶ Pontoppidan, *Lucky Per*, 333–34.

¹⁵⁷ Pontoppidan, *Lucky Per*, 480.

¹⁵⁸ Pontoppidan, *Lucky Per*, 286.

¹⁵⁹ Millgate, 2004, 22.

As creators of cultural narratives, fiction authors are crucial, under-acknowledged, political actors in struggles over educational policy choices. A close reading of major literary works suggests that cross-national variation in education systems has deep cultural roots. British and Danish writers hold different views of educational mandates, the role of the individual in society, relations among social classes, and political institutions. British protagonists are responsible for their own victories over adverse conditions even as their less-talented brothers fail. Danish protagonists mature with the wisdom of societal elders and succeed by contributing to society. Fictional stories help to construct the individual struggle for self-discovery at the heart of the Anglo education system and the need for participation in education for societal development and state-building in Denmark. These themes are often incidental to plot lines; but like the revealing backgrounds of paintings, they set the context for action.

Culture has been the third rail of empirical research in political science, a disrespected and residual category of explanation that at once seems overly encompassing and insufficiently predictive to offer much in the way of analytic utility. I follow cultural sociologists and like-minded political scientists in seeking to unravel the complicated interaction between culture and politics.¹⁶⁰ My research uses case studies and a new database of empirically testable corpora of British and Danish literature to document cultural literary differences between Britain and Denmark and their influences on the evolution of education systems. I confirm that fictional works present cross-nationally distinctive cultural narratives about education, and suggest that policymakers who likely read these works are influenced by these narratives in their educational choices. Space constraints prohibit the inclusion of fully satisfactory case studies of authors' relationships with policymakers in this article; however, in forthcoming work with extensive historical documentation, I offer even stronger evidence of writers as crucial political actors in education reform.

The major theoretical contributions of the article are to shed light on the specific mechanisms by which cultural narratives inform policy choices and to consider the relationship between culture and political institutional development. First, literature provides a site for imagining policy. Writers help to put mass education on the political agenda and to shape its ultimate form. My quantitative findings reveal that literary

¹⁶⁰ Griswold 1987; Swidler 1986; Lamont and Thévenot 2000; Berezin 2009; Santana-Acuña 2014; Berman 1998; Wedeen 2002; McNamara 2015; Edling, Petersen, and Petersen 2014.

references to schooling precede political reforms. Qualitative case studies further show that authors rallied attention to concerns about schooling, and advanced views on educational problems and solutions. The profound cultural differences in British and Danish narratives date to the early 1700s and predate institutions, such as parties, labor unions, and employers' associations, that form the institutional architecture of capitalist democracies. As education systems are a fundamental pillar of comparative political economies, these cultural distinctions may also contribute to the subsequent evolution of diverse types of capitalism and welfare states. Unlike in Britain, Danish literary narratives help link mass education to the successful adoption of new agricultural technologies in the late eighteenth century and to the industrial project of the late nineteenth century.

Second, fictional narratives help groups to define their interests and to shape the expressions of problems and solutions. Narratives influence possibilities for cross-class coalitions and foster solidaristic relationships in Denmark but class conflict in Britain. Conceptions of a strong society embedded in Danish stories help the right to focus on the needs of society and to support social investments to this end. Although the right partially accepts labor market coordination and social democratic welfare state policies to assert control over policy-making processes, culturally informed visions of a strong society also foster support for social investment across the political spectrum.¹⁶¹

Third, fictional narratives contribute to the perceived legitimacy of systems of governance. Their depictions of the locus of control over success and failure and attributions of blame for social problems suggest normative judgments about class inequalities. All political governance systems have distinctive contradictions, winners and losers, and coercive elements. Authors may help to reconcile the contradictions embedded in governing structures by according legitimacy to the social order, or they may highlight the problems of marginal individuals who are left out of the current order. I find that even while British novelists as social reformers attack unequal class relations, the individualistic content of their plot lines reinforce assumptions about individual culpability in society and a blame-the-victim mentality. In contrast, Danish authors hold society accountable for less fortunate members and also accept multitrack schooling that reinforces status hierarchies. Their cultural narratives anticipate a tenant of modern social democracy, namely, that one rises with one's class, not out of it.

¹⁶¹ Martin and Swank 2012.

Fourth, in showing how literary narratives contribute to continuity within institutional change, my work has implications for theories about institutional change. Narratives suggest continuity in familiar modes of problem solving, even as policy paths and political institutions adjust to shifting economic and social challenges. Each generation of writers draws from cultural artifacts of the literary tradition to produce works that are relevant to contemporary themes and challenges. This is a dynamic and nondeterministic process. Authors may well lose control of their initial intended message as future generations reinterpret their works, but the assumptions embedded in their narratives may live on in the avenues for political action, even when the *goals* of politics change. Thus, although Britain wishes to increase workers' access to secondary schools in 1902, the emphasis on classical studies (for self-improvement) over scientific courses limits skills development for nonacademic-oriented youth.¹⁶²

Yet there is also something of a recursive relationship between cultural narratives and political institutional development, the full exploration of which is beyond the scope of this article. Despite cultural continuity, perspectives and values shift with changing economic challenges and institutional developments. For example, the quantitative data reveal receding references to state institutions in Denmark after 1870, when industrial relations organizations partially substitute political regulation with industrial self-regulation.¹⁶³ In Britain, the development of voting rights is associated with subsequent increases in references to societal words, as the political power of workers increases attention to mass demands. Cultural narratives inform choices in institutional development, yet emergent institutions may also help to reimagine culture.

Finally, the lessons from past educational policy-making shed light on the current politics of social investment (or lack thereof) in low-skill youth. The British form of secondary education, rooted in equality of educational opportunity, has limited pragmatic value for poor workers, and ultimately reinforces inequality. Today the postindustrial lean-and-mean political economy makes a generation of young people scramble for a shrinking pool of good jobs. The hectic individualism of neoliberalism and the culture of self-blame make it easy to dismiss the youth that are left behind. Yet as current episodes of terror and instability constantly remind us, individual losers may well be society's losses.

¹⁶² Berezin 1994; Vaninskaya 2010.

¹⁶³ Martin and Swank 2012.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

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