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Master thesis

The Notion of a Self-hating White American Elite

Debates about how to define, teach, and morally assess America's culture

Jone Ramnefjell

European Languages
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Department of Literature, Area Studies, and European Languages
Faculty of Humanities

Abstract

This thesis explores anti-Americanism. More specifically, it explores the role that this concept plays in American conservative discourse about culture. American conservatives tend to value patriotism, and often accuse liberals of anti-American tendencies. An important reason for these accusations is a perceived double standard, namely the idea that liberals are more willing to criticize America than they would be to criticize other countries. Central to this idea is the liberal emphasis on tolerance and cultural respect. According to many conservative intellectuals, and some liberal ones too, this paradoxically causes many liberals to be more critical of America than of countries that are farther from the liberal ideal of egalitarianism. Another element to anti-Americanism that I explore in this thesis is its euphemistic nature, specifically the fact that accusations of anti-Americanism are often euphemistic for accusations of being overly critical of white America. This concept is closely related to the aforementioned double standard that upsets many conservatives, because this perceived double standard is allegedly a result of respect for other cultures, which tend to correlate with non-Western or non-white countries. A final element to the concept of anti-Americanism that my thesis explores is how and why it became so closely intertwined with that of liberal elitism.

There are many dimensions to the debate about how to fairly assess America's moral merits. My thesis approaches it from a specific starting point, namely how this debate manifests itself in education and school policies. In this particular arena, the question essentially comes down to what version of American history should be taught to students. I will use this as a starting point for further exploration, and connect it to other aspects of the broader debate about patriotism and anti-Americanism. More specifically still, I am centering my discussion on two specific books that relate to these topics, namely Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* and E. D. Hirsch Jr's *Cultural Literacy*. These books caused a significant amount of controversy, and the discourse that surrounded them is as important to my thesis as their actual content. They both came out in 1987, and their impact lasted for some time, so I am paying special attention to the late '80s and early '90s. However, a central point to this discussion is its parallels to cultural debates in America today. The ideological battle of how to assess the nation's merits has been particularly intense in recent years.

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Contents

Introduction

Twenty fourteen saw a revision of the content for Advanced Placement U.S. History (APUSH), a college-level course available to American high-school students. In the new curriculum, less time than before was devoted to the Founding Fathers, and more was devoted to slavery, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and other unflattering elements of the nation's history. This caused significant controversy, especially among conservatives who considered the curriculum to be anti-American. After political pressure from conservatives, the program was revised again in 2015. This version included a larger share of patriotic history, such as the role America played in both World Wars.[1]

What this incident shows is that the moral assessment of America, how its history and merits are presented in publicly financed institutions, is an item of political negotiation. Whether schools should primarily emphasize the bad or the good, the horrors of slavery or the triumph in overcoming it, is a question in which the political factions are divided much like they are in the questions of progressive taxation, gun control, and so on. In simplified terms, conservatives tend to see this as a question of righteous patriotism or treacherous anti-Americanism, while liberals tend to see it as one of bigoted chauvinism or critical self-knowledge. Perhaps the best example from the last few years is the 1619 Project, which was endorsed by many liberals, and the 1776 Report, which was the conservative response.

The 1619 Project was launched in a special issue of the *New York Times Magazine*, in August 2019, on the 400-year anniversary of the first African slaves arriving on the American continent. It treated this as the founding moment of the nation, to illustrate how permeating slavery had been to the history of the US. "Through centuries of Black resistance and protest," the project's lead developer Nikole Hannah-Jones argued in its introduction, "we have helped the country live up to its founding ideals." Despite acknowledging that America was closer to its ideals than it initially had been, her overall tone was largely one of indictment, as she also stated that "Anti-black racism runs in the very DNA of this country."[2]

In direct response to the 1619 Project, President Trump appointed the 1776 Commission to develop a patriotic curriculum. Days before the end of Trump's presidency, they published the 1776 Report, which explicitly stated that "educators must convey a sense of enlightened patriotism that equips each generation with a knowledge of America's

[1] Jonathan Zimmerman, *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 220-221.
[2] Nikole Hannah-Jones et al., "The 1619 Project," *New York Times Magazine* (August 2019): 16, 21.

founding principles, a deep reverence for their liberties, and a profound love of their country." It also condemned the concept of anti-Americanism, claiming that this was a permeating feature of many universities. As for American history, the writers adhered to the patriotic narrative. Slavery was included as part of a chapter called "Challenges to America's Principles," but was treated more like a challenge to the narrative about America's greatness. This chapter also included a section on progressivism, which was treated as equally severe. There was also a section called "Racism and Identity Politics," where these two concepts were treated as two sides of the same coin.[3]

When Trump left the White House, the 1776 Commission was disbanded, and their report was removed from the White House's website. But the conservative fight against anti-American curriculum has continued. Among its most persistent warriors is Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who has made it a core political issue through legislative action like the "Stop W.O.K.E" Act. The stated intention of this bill is to prevent schools from essentializing racial groups as oppressors and victims, meaning that teachers must not teach history in a way that foments guilt among white students, or feelings of victimhood among non-white students. A consequence of this, however, is that teachers are liable for lawsuits if they discuss racial discrimination.[4] As for the name of the bill, "woke" is a somewhat vague term that typically refers to liberal ideology, especially with regards to identity politics and an awareness of discrimination. When DeSantis's legal team was asked to define the term in the courts, they stated that it was "the belief there are systemic injustices in American society and the need to address them."[5] In other words, anti-Americanism was central to their definition of woke.

Such developments are not exclusive to the state of Florida. Schools across America have been accused of teaching Critical Race Theory, which is a scholarly lens for viewing society with an awareness of the impact that institutional racism might have had in shaping it. It has been around since the 1970s, and it is not on the curriculum for public schools. However, it has become a catch-all term for curriculum that acknowledges racial inequality,[6] and such curriculum has come under pressure from legal bans in several states.[7] These

[3] The 1776 Report (18 January 2021) pp. 10-18, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Presidents-Advisory-1776-Commission-Final-Report.pdf
[4] Heather Pfeifer, "Combatting Misinformation and the Assault on Academic Freedom with Research, Education, and Advocacy," *Justice Quarterly* Vol. 39, No. 5 (2022): 907, doi: 10.1080/07418825.2022.2086482.
[5] Philip Bump, "What does 'woke' mean? Whatever Ron DeSantis wants," *The Washington Post* (5 December, 2022) https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/12/05/desantis-florida-woke-critical-race-theory/
[6] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 245-246.
[7] Pfeifer, "Combatting Misinformation," 901.

concerns are similar in nature to those of Ron DeSantis and his supporters, because they are about the essentialization of demographic groups as oppressors and victims.

Similar to the concern about essentializing demographics, is the idea that failing to emphasize what people have in common will lead to disintegration of community. The APUSH-controversy of 2014 serves as a good example of this as well. Conservative critics considered the curriculum changes to be an ill-advised decision to look at America through the fractured lens of separate demographics, defined by race, gender, and class-identity. As was observed by some, this criticism implied an assumption that the traditional curriculum, centered on historical figures like the Founding Fathers, did *not* disproportionately emphasize the perspectives of a certain demographic, namely white America. Among those who made this point was the author and former Clinton White House official Eric Liu, who stated that "Americanness and whiteness are fitfully, achingly, but finally becoming delinked."[8] This point will be important.

The question of how to assess America's moral merits consistently divides Americans along the usual lines of liberals and conservatives, the Left and the Right. Hence, it is fair to consider it one of the recurring features of the broader American culture war. The term "culture war" used in the context of modern America, to describe the ideological divide between conservatives and liberals, was popularized by James Davison Hunter in his 1991 book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. In this book, he defined the concept as "a competition to define social reality."[9] One could also call it an intersection of culture and politics, where each of them is utilized to shape the other.

At the Republican National Convention of 1992, Pat Buchanan further popularized the term. He endorsed the presidential re-election campaign of George H. W. Bush, and condemned the Democratic candidate Bill Clinton, before making the statement that his speech would become famous for. The election, he claimed, was not only about who would get what, but about who they were, and what they stood for as Americans. "There is a religious war going on in this country," he stated. "It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the cold war itself, for this war is for the soul of America." Although it was phrased with a strongly conservative bias, Buchanan's summary of reasons why Americans should rally around Bush, and against Clinton, reads like an index of culture war topics. "George Bush is a defender of right to life, and a defender of Judeo-Christian

[8] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 220-222.
[9] James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 39.

values and beliefs upon which America was founded," he exclaimed. "Mr. Clinton, however, has a different agenda…. Abortion on demand, a litmus test for the supreme court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units."[10]

Andrew Hartman based the title of his book *A War for the Soul of America* on Buchanan's speech. He emphasized that the topics Buchanan listed only made up a fraction of a larger set of divisive issues, which also included affirmative action, feminism, sexual education, and so on.[11] Crucially, there tends to be strong correlations between where someone stand on one such topic and where they stand on others. After all, one would otherwise not be able to use the terms "conservative," "liberal," and "progressive," to describe a person holistically. Joseph Epstein, former editor of *The American Scholar*, described the 1960s, and the changes that occurred in that decade, as illustrative to this correlation of opinions. "Tell me what you think of that period," he stated, "and I shall tell you what your politics are."[12] Throughout the 1970s and '80s, there was a major backlash to the social changes of the '60s, with a new rise of American conservatism. It was nothing new for America to find itself torn between ideologies, but while some disputes have remained consistent throughout many years, every particular era has new topics for conservatives and liberals to clash over. This is why the cultural and political circumstances of the era is relevant to my thesis, which will be centered on the late '80s and early '90s, when the influence of the 1960s remained, but the conservative tide had washed across the nation.

I will focus on the late '80s and early '90s discourse about how to weigh and assess America's positive and negative merits. More specifically, I will examine how this cultural disagreement manifested itself in debates about education policies, like those from the current era discussed at the beginning of this introduction. My thesis will be centered on two books that contributed to this debate.

The first of these books is *The Closing of the American Mind*, written by the philosophy professor Allan Bloom. Its central thesis is that Americans of the late 20th century found themselves in a state of nihilistic aimlessness, because they lacked moral ideals to steer their lives towards. Bloom believed that this lack of ideals was the result of a misguided ideology, namely that of moral relativism, which imposed that all morals, and all sets of values, were equal in merit. Crucially, he claimed that this ideology had been imposed by the

[10] Youtube, "Pat Buchanan 'Cultural War' Speech," uploaded 15 August, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2olwuAy3_og

[11] Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 1.

[12] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 4.

New Left of the 1960s, whose adherents insisted that one must not discriminate against cultures by considering certain cultural sets of values superior to others. He therefore believed that the Left was responsible for the aimlessness that modern Americans found themselves in, which he described as a form of "spiritual entropy."[13] Bloom also named the universities as a culprit in this detrimental phenomenon. As he saw it, the universities had been far too compliant with the demands of left-wing student activists who sought to subvert what they considered discriminatory standards of excellence in the universities. Although Bloom did not make specific proposals for educational policies in his book, he discussed at great length the principles that he believed universities would have to reinstate if they were to serve their purpose, a purpose he defined as "the search for a good life."[14] Another element to his book, which is crucial to its relevance in my thesis, is that when Bloom criticized the concept of moral relativism, he frequently presented the morals and values of American culture as an ideal that people should live by. Therefore, when criticizing the New Left for their moral relativism, he also criticized them for being dismissive of American culture in particular, and also for promoting the narrative that their nation was fundamentally discriminatory. Bloom acknowledged that not everyone were treated equally in America, but he did not primarily blame the state. When referring to Franklin D. Roosevelt's wish for America to be a nation where no one was left out, Bloom claimed that "the natural rights inherent in our regime are perfectly adequate to the solution of this problem, provided … outsiders adhere to them (i.e., they become insiders by adhering to them)." In other words, outsiders, i.e., minorities, avoid discrimination by finding their place within the majority culture, which in America is the culture of WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) communities. This did not mean that everyone must convert to Protestantism (Bloom himself was from a Jewish family), but after stating that outsiders must become insiders, he explicitly emphasized that America's culture was one of Protestant faith.[15] This concept carries a further implication that will be central to my thesis: When Bloom referred to American culture, he was referring specifically to WASP culture.

The second book that I will analyze is *Cultural Literacy*, written by E. D. Hirsch Jr. Hirsch is a theorist of education, and this is evident in his book. Its style was more pragmatically minded than that of the philosopher Bloom, and it focused more directly on how to improve education through specific proposals for policy changes. Another important

[13] Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 51.
[14] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 34.
[15] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 30-31.

difference to note is that Hirsch was concerned with K-12 education (kindergarten to high school), while Bloom was concerned with the universities. Hirsch's central thesis was that American students did not share a culture with which they were all familiar. He defined this culture as a foundation of shared knowledge, which would allow students to better understand each other, better understand what they were taught in schools, and thereby retain information more comprehensively. By extension, this would allow them to excel educationally, and also professionally after graduation. Hirsch repeatedly emphasized that the goal of his proposal was to attain greater social justice in American society. The lack of a shared culture, he claimed, most significantly affected non-white students, because white culture was the closest thing to a common culture in America, which meant that white students were more familiar with it. As a result, non-white students were impeded in schools, and therefore performed worse on average. Had he proposed that the playing field should be leveled by developing a national culture that would borrow equally from different cultures in America, he would likely have gained a lot of favor from the Left. However, Hirsch believed that all students should instead be instructed in elements of the already-dominant culture of WASP communities.[16] In making this proposal, he also made it clear that he thought highly of this dominant American culture.

These books had plenty in common, beyond their contributions to the debate about how to assess American culture and history. To start with, this debate was not the primary concern for either of them. They were both dragged into this debate because of perceived pro-American biases in their observations about the education system. Because of these perceived biases, they were both considered supportive of the conservative agenda in education policies. Their authors repeatedly took issue with these interpretations, but they could not shake off the political element that were attached to them in the discourse about the books. And there was plenty of discourse, because they became the two best-selling non-fiction books of 1987 in the US. The fact that they were also published in the same year meant that they were often compared to each other in reviews and articles.

In sum, these books had a considerable impact on the broader debates that I will be exploring throughout the thesis. *The Closing of the American Mind*, in particular, has become something of a classic among intellectual works of American conservatism, regardless of whether or not Bloom considered himself a conservative. It has been referenced in education debates of the current era, as in the title of the 2018 book *The Coddling of the American*

[16] E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Cultural Literacy* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 106-107.

Mind, written by Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt. This book primarily focuses on a tendency in universities to shield students from opinions that they may find offensive or threatening. Crucially, these opinions tend to be conservative ones, which, as the authors illustrate, are underrepresented in universities to begin with.[17] The book does not use the term "anti-Americanism," likely because Lukianoff and Haidt, unlike Bloom, are avowed liberals. However, they also connect this concept to modern liberalism, and thereby reiterate its political nature. When discussing the kinds of conservative perspectives that have been criticized by liberal students, they point to humanities courses that were accused of being Eurocentric and racist.[18] With so many things in common with Bloom's book, beyond the concern about students facing challenges from a misguided culture, it is easy to see why the authors decided to reference it in their title. Hence, the legacy of Bloom lives on in the current era's discourse about patriotism and anti-Americanism.

My argument and contribution

To briefly recap for context: Bloom criticized the Left for being overly critical of American culture, and by claiming that minorities should find their place within the majority culture, he left no doubt that he meant the culture of white America. Scholars have pointed out that this equating of the terms "white" and "American" has often occurred.[19] Additionally, Bloom's book was frequently reviewed alongside that of Hirsch, who proposed that schools should work towards making (white) English culture a common culture for all Americans. Building on this tendency to equate "American" and "white," I propose the following statement:

> Accusations of anti-Americanism are often euphemistic for accusations of anti-whiteness, and integral to this phenomenon is a frustration with liberal elites being more critical of America than they are of non-Western or non-white countries.

To elaborate, when conservatives criticize curriculum for being anti-American, this cannot be reasonably interpreted as an accusation of being overly critical of African American slaves or Native Americans who were driven from their land. These demographics are the victims of

[17] Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas are Setting Up a Generation for Failure* (London: Penguin Books, 2018), 110-111.
[18] Lukianoff, Haidt, *The Coddling of the American Mind*, 6-7, 93.
[19] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), 6-7.

these stories, and white Americans are the oppressors. Therefore, concerns of anti-Americanism are expressed on behalf of the latter. Henceforth, I will summarize this concept with the term "anti-whiteness." For clarity, my claim is that *accusations* of anti-Americanism are often euphemistic for accusations of anti-whiteness, not that actual anti-Americanism is euphemistic for anti-whiteness. When criticism of America concerns discrimination, it likely has a euphemistic element to it as well. As previously established, such criticism must be directed at those who wield power to discriminate, and in America, this part of the population is still disproportionately white. However, even if this disproportion is integral to the point being raised, this does not justify assumptions of something as extreme as anti-whiteness.

An additional dimension to concerns of anti-whiteness, which are typically voiced by the Right, is a perceived double standard on the Left. Specifically, the idea is that those on the Left are more willing to criticize America than they would be to criticize other countries, especially non-Western ones. Connecting this to my previous point about euphemistic terms, "non-Western" could be interpreted as "non-white."

One more dimension that is integral to my central point is how closely the concept of anti-Americanism, and thereby anti-whiteness, is related to the concepts of left-wing elitism, political correctness, and its kindred concept of the current era, wokeness. This is integral because the narrative about anti-Americanism being a trait of the elites implies that America is not only being excessively criticized, but this criticism is coming from those with the power and intentions to subvert the national culture.

In my thesis, I am looking at the subjects in this broad discourse from the perspective of intellectual history. More specifically, I am centering it on the contributions of specific public intellectuals from a specific era, and framing my analysis through the long-running conversation that they were contributing to.

The battle to control the narrative of American history is not likely to ebb out in the current political climate of the US. Chances are it will have a continuous impact on the culture war stage, and for this reason, I believe it is worth exploring the precedents, to see how the discourse has evolved, and what elements remain consistent. This is what I will attempt to do, using the books *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Cultural Literacy* as my starting points.

Methodology, terminology, and layout

The Closing of the American Mind and *Cultural Literacy* are my central primary sources for this thesis, and they serve as the starting point for further exploration of the different debates that relate to my main topic. In addition to comparing the books themselves, I will look at a sizable selection of reviews and articles responding to them, and focus on their discussion of the topics most relevant to my thesis. Several of these articles deal with the two books in tandem, which provides me with yet another dimension of analysis, namely how others compared them to each other. All of this creates an interesting dynamic between these books, as there are many similarities, contrasts, and intersections to speak of.

To provide a proper historical context, I will discuss historical precedents to observations that their authors made, and precedents to the controversies and debates that these books got caught up in. This contextualization of my discussion will be based on a number of books dealing with intellectual history of debates in 20th century America. A couple of these are specifically about how America's history and culture is taught in public schools, such as Jonathan Zimmerman's *Whose America?* and Natalia Mehlman Petrzela's *Classroom Wars*. Books like Adam Laats's *The Other School Reformers* take a more specific approach still, by focusing on how conservative politicians and activists attempted to influence what American students were taught in public schools. This also overlaps with books that deal with conservative activism and developments more broadly, like William C. Berman's *America's Right Turn* and David Farber's *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*. To place these conservative politics in an even broader context, I have also made use of books that deal with the culture wars in general, such as the aforementioned *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* James Davison Hunter, and *A War for the Soul of America* by Andrew Hartman. Furthermore, these cultural schisms are placed in the context of external economic and political circumstances by books like the aforementioned *America's Right Turn* and *Fault Lines* by Kevin M. Kruse and Julian E. Zelizer. These are especially relevant for providing the political context of the era that I am focusing on, namely the 1970s and '80s. A book that has found a particularly interesting place in my thesis is *The Disuniting of America* by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, because I use this as both a primary and a secondary source. It is a primary source because it is a contribution to the debate that I am concerned with, about how to assess America's moral merits. It was also published in 1991, which is part of the era that I am focusing on, only a few years after the publication of *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Cultural Literacy*. I have not incorporated it as a focal point for my thesis, however, like I have done with these other two. *The Disuniting of*

America is also among my secondary sources because Schlesinger illustrates many of his points by pointing back to history, and some of the historical information that he thereby provides is obviously relevant to my thesis.

On a purely practical note, I should clarify how certain terms will be used in this thesis. The term "liberal" will refer to the social liberalism of the New Left, which promotes active use of the government to fight inequities and provide more people with social and economic opportunities. I will use the term "progressive" in certain contexts, to imply largely the same ideology. The terms "relativism," "moral relativism," and "cultural relativism," will be used somewhat interchangeably, depending on the context.

As previously explained, liberals and conservatives, alternatively the Left and the Right, use a different vocabulary in the debate about how to assess America's merits. The Right tends to portray it as a question of patriotism and anti-Americanism, while the Left tends to portray it as one of chauvinism and self-knowledge. I will primarily use the terms "patriotism" and "anti-Americanism," not to favor the narrative of the Right over that of the Left, but these terms are more relevant to my specific thesis, because I will primarily focus on conservative patriotism as a reaction against perceived anti-Americanism. It should be noted, of course, that liberal emphasis on more problematic aspects of American history is also a reaction against existing narratives, namely patriotic narratives that are perceived by liberals as too one-sided. In other words, this is not a unidirectional phenomenon of left-wing action and right-wing reaction.

In my first internal chapter, I will focus on Bloom and points that he made about relativism, anti-Americanism, and multiculturalism. I am starting with him because his book is the one that most explicitly criticized what he perceived as a tendency among liberals to be unreasonably critical of America. As previously explained, this frustration with anti-Americanism is often euphemistic for a frustration with an unreasonably negative assessment of white America, and I will argue that this is certainly the case in Bloom's book. In my second internal chapter, I focus primarily on Hirsch and his discussion on the role that white American culture should fulfil in the public education system. I will also draw connections between him and Bloom where relevant. In my third and final internal chapter, I will explore the meanings of the term "elite," because both of the books caused their authors to be accused of elitism or exclusionism, primarily by the Left. More specifically, I will explore how the modern American Left and Right use the term in very different ways, and how, when the Right accuses the Left of elitism, it is often closely associated with accusations of anti-Americanism.

Chapter 1
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Patriotism, anti-Americanism, and multiculturalism

Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* was published in 1987, in a highly polarized political landscape. It treated topics of education, culture, philosophy, and politics, in a holistically synthesized approach, and Bloom thereby touched on many issues that resonated broadly in the American culture war. A crucial element to his book, and to its notoriety, was his harsh criticism of the changes that had occurred in American society since the early 1960s. This made him revered to some, and infamous to others, in a nation that found itself torn between different ideas of what it should be.

When discussing the cultural landscape of the Unites States in any particular era, one might easily make the mistake of oversimplifying. For example, in the late 19th and early 20th century, which has been labeled the Progressive Era, plenty of conservative forces were fighting against the tide. As pointed out by the historian Daniel T. Rodgers, a nation as diverse as the United States has never truly had a single national mood, dominated by one ideology.[20] The progressive wave of the 1960s, however, is a good example of an era where a certain ideology changed the country dramatically. It was the era of revolutionary civil rights legislation, an increased awareness of social injustice, and an increased willingness to combat this. In retrospect, the 1960s is, fittingly, the decade that started in black and white, and ended in color. This heightened sense of progress extended into the early 1970s, which is evident in the broad support for progressive legislation. One example would be the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which aimed to fight discrimination on the basis of sex. It gained bipartisan support, including that of many leading conservative figures, such as President Nixon.[21]

The backlash came in the 1970s, when a severe economic downturn caused political fragmentation. Conservative politicians who never approved of the cultural tides of the '60s took advantage of this.[22] The New Right considered things like gay rights and the women's rights movement to be a threat to traditional values centered around the church and the

[20] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 6.
[21] Kevin M. Kruse and Julian E. Zelizer, *Fault Lines: A History of the United States Since 1974* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 69.
[22] William C. Berman, *America's Right Turn: From Nixon to Clinton* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 59.

family.[23] Their concerns were shared by many across the nation, and this helped them recast the women's rights movement as incompatible with family integrity. This doomed the ERA, and the amendment failed to be ratified.[24] The New Right's emphasis on traditional values often correlated with a skepticism towards movements that challenged the idea of America's greatness, primarily the civil rights movement, and the antiwar movement.[25] Negative attitudes to the progressive wave of the 1960s, had been around since the wave first started forming, but the New Right of the succeeding decade managed to tap into these concerns, and thereby created a foothold for their ideology within the Republican Party. They successfully mobilized a new form of populist resentment; not towards the rich, but towards the somewhat more abstract idea of a culturally liberal elite.[26]

The New Right found their hero in Ronald Reagan. A central part of his message to the American people, was that their country was indeed the shining City upon a hill that they had been raised to love and be proud of. As Reagan saw it, the only real problem with America was the very same people who tried to denigrate it through their unpatriotic rhetoric. During his presidency, government programs to fight inequity and systemic injustice saw severe budget cuts,[27] and his four successful Supreme Court nominees helped ensure that the bar was raised for considering something to be evidence of discrimination.[28] Big business enjoyed deregulation, and military spending increased.[29] Despite these tangible policy changes, many conservatives would likely summarize Reagan's presidency in a manner similar to that of Pat Buchanan during the Republican National Convention of 1992: "Most of all, Ronald Reagan made us proud to be Americans again."[30]

Through Reagan's presidency, the New Right secured a foothold in their nation's culture as much as in its politics, but they hardly enjoyed hegemony. If anything, the nation was more divided on social issues than ever, as the New Right's reaction to the progressive

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[23] Bethany E. Moreton, "Make Payroll, Not War: Business Culture as Youth Culture," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 49.
[24] Kruse, Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 72.
[25] Kim Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," *The Journal of American History*, Vol 98, No. 3 (2011): 726, doi: 10.1093/jahist/jar430.
[26] Berman, *America's Right Turn*, 3.
[27] David R. Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 161, 208.
[28] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 135.
[29] Lisa Szefel, "From 'Tall Ideas Dancing' to Trump's Twitter Ranting," in *American Labyrinth: Intellectual History for Complicated Times*, ed. Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 151.
[30] Youtube, "Pat Buchanan 'Cultural War' Speech"

wave of the 1960s sparked further reactions from liberals. When Reagan nominated the highly conservative Robert Bork for the Supreme Court, a coalition of liberal organizations, including the NAACP and the ACLU, joined together in an effort to block his nomination. Through a costly advertisement campaign, they emphasized Bork's record of criticizing landmark decisions that were considered liberal victories, and presented him as a threat to the progress that had been made on behalf of women and ethnic minorities. And the campaign was successful. Reagan and his supporters had to settle for the much more moderate Anthony Kennedy.[31]

The AIDS epidemic also became a symbol of lasting liberal influence. Several prominent conservatives initially tried to dismiss it, or even to frame it as a positive development. Among them was the famous televangelist Jerry Falwell, who described it as "the wrath of God upon homosexuals." But as more and more people died, there was an ever-increasing push for government action to combat the disease, spearheaded by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). And their demands were largely met, despite many conservatives voicing concerns about endorsing what they considered sinful behavior.[32]

The Closing of the American Mind – A surprising best-seller

The first printing of *The Closing of the American Mind* consisted of 5,000 copies.[33] The publisher did not expect high sales numbers, and certainly not the 800,000 copies that the book would sell in its first year.[34] When asked in interviews about his book's success, Bloom shared a similar sentiment, stating that he would never have expected to reach more than 10,000 readers.[35]

After hearing what the book is about, one might reasonably conclude that it was indeed written for a niche market. Bloom's book is a seething polemic against the concept of moral relativism, meaning the idea that one cannot claim that certain sets of values are superior to others, as they are all circumstantial consequences of their cultures. According to Bloom, this way of thinking had become widespread in the US, and the book's title referred to a paradoxical result of this relativism. Because it was no longer considered acceptable to

[31] Kruse, Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 173-174.
[32] Kruse, Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 177-179.
[33] David Rieff, "The Colonel and the Professor," in *Essays on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. Robert L. Stone (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989), 293.
[34] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 230.
[35] Youtube, "Bloom interviewed 2 – 'I said economic OR political!' [1987]," uploaded 15 April, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMBwoGl7Lno

acknowledge that certain ideas were superior to others, people no longer had any ideals to steer their lives towards, and their minds were therefore closed to what they could, and should, be trying to achieve. A professor, Bloom devoted much of his book to moral relativism's detrimental effects on colleges and universities, and by extension, on the current generation of students. The following sentence probably summarizes the book better than any others do in so few words: "Relativism has extinguished the real motive of education, the search for a good life."[36]

Bloom did not believe that the detrimental effects of relativism were confined to the education system, however. As was pointed out by the conservative commentator Norman Podhoretz, "Though Bloom's focus is on the universities, it is the broader liberal culture that is his main target."[37] It is evident when reading his book that Bloom did not treat the perceived decay of the universities as an isolated phenomenon. Instead, he used the topic of moral relativism to criticize contemporary American society more broadly. Crucially, he tied it to the progressive wave of the 1960s, and claimed that activists, in the name of fighting discrimination, insisted on an unquestioning openness to other cultures, and humble attitudes towards their own. He summarized it thus: "[I]ndiscriminateness is a moral imperative because its opposite is discrimination. This folly means that men are not permitted to seek for the natural human good and admire it when found, for such discovery is coeval with the discovery of the bad and contempt for it."[38]

Throughout his book, Bloom lamented how relativism, and the rejection of the good, had caused a lack of ideals for individuals to steer their lives towards. Americans today, he claimed, were living in a fog of confusion and nihilism, without a sense of purpose like they used to have. "It was not necessarily the best of times in America when Catholics and Protestants were suspicious of and hated one another" he acknowledged in his book's introduction, before adding that "at least they were taking their beliefs seriously, and the more or less satisfactory accommodations they worked out were not simply the result of apathy about the state of their souls." Bloom described the aimlessness that modern Americans were experiencing as "spiritual entropy or an evaporation of the soul's boiling blood." Additionally, he claimed that this phenomenon was causally and mutually connected

[36] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 34.
[37] Norman Podhoretz, "Allan Bloom's Portentous Best Seller," *The Tampa Tribune* (5 July, 1987): 37.
[38] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 30.

to a decline in meaningful interpersonal relationships, the divorce rate, and the youth's consumption of increasingly shallow culture.[39]

If Bloom considered moral relativism to be the culprit of these developments, he was just as forthright when naming the culprit of moral relativism. He consistently pointed to liberal activists, and thereby the Left more broadly. This gave his book its political angle. When asked about this in interviews, Bloom repeatedly stated that there was no conservative bias in his book. He claimed that the book was rather center-oriented, and would touch on the concerns of "all rational Americans."[40] While he did acknowledge that some might have been using his book politically, he insisted that this was happening across the political spectrum.[41]

Whether Bloom intended it to be or not, his book was regarded as political, and this goes a long way towards explaining its success. It is not an easy book to read. Complex arguments about moral relativism are buttressed by references to philosophic works of the past, and nothing is simplified for the masses. As was pointed out by several critics, it was unlikely that so many Americans read it because they cared so deeply about the philosophic foundations for the education system. Furthermore, Bloom's claims about his book being impartial, had many critics begging to differ. Benjamin Barber, not being among Bloom's supporters, called the book "a totem for the neo-conservative assault on higher education, affirmative action, equal opportunity, rock music, the Sixties, the young, and sex."[42]

When a book strikes a nerve in a cultural debate, or in a broader culture war, its audience is likely to consist of both supporters and opponents. Hence, it is reasonable to assume, like many reviewers did, that many read *The Closing of the American Mind* not because they were eager to agree with Bloom, but for the very opposite reason. For example, the women's rights movement was one of the many developments of the 1960s and '70s that Bloom criticized in his book. The *Michigan Law Review* suggested that many feminists had read the book for this very reason, wanting to see for themselves what his attacks consisted of.[43] Writing for the *New York Review of Books*, John Searle pointed out that the people who objected to Bloom's observations and proposals, were not particularly interested in any theory of higher education. Instead, they wanted to "make a political point about the nature of

[39] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 35, 51, 68-81, 118-121, 132-137.
[40] Ezra Bowen, "Are Student Heads Full of Emptiness?," *Time Magazine* (17 August, 1987): 57.
[41] Youtube, "Bloom interviewed 2"
[42] Benjamin Barber, "The Philosopher Despot – Allan Bloom's elitist agenda," in *Essays on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. Robert L. Stone (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989), 81.
[43] Maureen P. Taylor, "Reviewed Work(s): The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students by Allan Bloom," *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 86, No. 6 (May, 1988): 1135-1136.

American society."[44] In other words, many readers on either side of the cultural divide likely focused their attention when certain key terms of the culture wars were brought up, and skimmed through the pages where Bloom endlessly referenced philosophers of the ancient era and the Enlightenment.

The Relevance of Moral Relativism

Although Bloom claimed that his book did not favor a conservative point of view, the fact that it received more praise from the Right than the Left was perhaps not entirely unpredictable. Moral relativism had for a long time been a target of scorn for conservatives, and the topic therefore had well-established political undertones. For instance, in the 1950s, leading conservative public figure William F. Buckley Jr. founded the editorial magazine *National Review*. He proclaimed that he would use it as a platform to actively fight against the liberal relativism that permeated American colleges and universities.[45] In placing moral relativism so centrally among his targets, he helped reinforce its connotations to the Left.

Relativism was a central element in a controversy that arose in the 1970s. It concerned the humanities teaching program "Man: A Course of Study" (MACOS), which was aimed at elementary and middle school, and contained an anthropological section that introduced children to an Inuit society. The purpose of the program was to illustrate that some cultures are very different from American ones, and thereby encourage children to think critically about the conventions and assumptions of their own culture, rather than take them for granted.[46] This caused an outrage among many conservatives, because it implied that American culture was not the inevitable result of the eternal word of God, but merely incidental. And if American culture was incidental, then that included their morals and beliefs, a proposal that was downright blasphemous in the eyes of Christian conservatives. John Conlan, a Republican congressman from Arizona, became the leading figure of the study program's opponents. When describing the aims of its developers, he claimed "They were trying to basically break down traditional standards or values of right and wrong, [and] put in a standard of relativism."[47]

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[44] John R. Searle, "The Storm Over the University," *The New York Review of Books* (6 December, 1990).
[45] Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 66.
[46] Campbell F. Scribner, *The Fight for Local Control: Schools, Suburbs, and American Democracy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2016), 163-164.
[47] National Film Board of Canada, "Through These Eyes," uploaded 2004, https://www.nfb.ca/film/through_these_eyes/

Norman Podhoretz suggested that American readers would not have been as welcoming to Bloom's book if it had been published as little as five years earlier. This initially appears to be a comment on the cultural influence of Reagan, and the increased institutional power of the New Right. Indeed, it might be that more people were willing to give Bloom a fair hearing in this political climate, despite events like the MACOS-controversy illustrating that cultural conservatism was hardly dormant in pre-Reagan America either. But Podhoretz drew a more specific conclusion from this, namely that liberals were slowly acknowledging the failures of moral relativism. He believed that liberals vocally blamed the nation's social issues on Reagan's policies, while secretly realizing that their own unwillingness to differentiate between right and wrong was the real cause.[48]

A point that needs to be made is that moral relativism is not such a ubiquitous phenomenon on the Left, as certain conservative commentators would make it out to be. No movement of social activism, like the ones formed by the American Left in the 1960s, could have formed on the basis of moral relativism. They must, almost by definition, be opposed to what they consider an existing injustice, which means that they are indeed willing to differentiate between the just and the unjust. Bloom himself would later acknowledge this point. During the promotional tour of his book, he was interviewed on the fittingly named TV-program "The Open Mind," hosted by Richard Heffner. During the interview, after Bloom defended the impartiality of his book, the topic of William Bennett was brought up. Bennett served as Secretary of Education at the time, and was therefore a public official responsible for the institution that Bloom was primarily concerned with. Heffner pointed out that people who supported Bennett, a conservative Republican, were likely to celebrate Bloom's book for its criticism of moral relativism. In other words, Heffner believed that there was a strong correlation between people's opinions on the two subjects, with support for Bennett being an example of broader conservatism. Bloom agreed, but emphasized that he did not believe all of Bennett's opponents, meaning the Left, were truly in favor of relativism. Instead, he believed, they wanted to replace his non-relativism with their own.[49] This point does support Bloom's claim to impartiality, as it illustrates that relativism is not necessarily a phenomenon of the Left, and criticism of it is not necessarily one of the Right. But it also poses new questions. If the Left does not truly support the concept of moral relativism, why

[48] Podhoretz, "Allan Bloom's Portentous Best Seller," 37.
[49] Youtube, "Bloom interviewed 2"

have they been accused of this more often than the Right, and who were the moral relativists that Bloom was so concerned with?

In his book, Bloom alluded to the non-relativism of the Left, but he did not devote much space to this, and, crucially, he did not treat it as a point of virtue. Instead, he emphasized that they impose relativism in a way that is disingenuous and inconsistent. According to the Left that Bloom was portraying, "The relativity of truth is not a theoretical insight but a moral postulate."[50]

He explored the implicit flaws of this concept by discussing the occasionally conflicting values of human rights and respect for other cultures. Liberals, he suggested, were prone to criticize the United States for imposing the American way of life on other countries, because they did not want to assume that their own culture was inherently superior to others. To illustrate his point, he stated that some American liberals were initially positive to the Ayatollah seizing power in the Iranian Revolution. This was not because the Ayatollah represented any particular ideologies that they agreed with, but "because he represented true Iranian culture," while the previous Iranian government had been the result of Western interference. But of course, under the Ayatollah's rule, Iranian society changed in ways that American liberals would never have welcomed, especially not if they were to occur in the United States. Bloom concluded that those who criticized nations like Iran for violating human rights, but simultaneously saw fit to criticize the United States for cultural insensitivity, wanted to "eat their cake and have it, too."[51]

Bloom's sentiments about liberals finding themselves in a struggle to balance concerns of morals and cultural respect have also been shared by commentators on the Left. A few years after the publication of Bloom's book, the author and political activist Barbara Ehrenreich gave the appropriately titled talk "The Challenge for the Left," where she explored an example similar to the one Bloom presented about the Ayatollah. During the Gulf crisis, she explained, there was a certain unwillingness in liberal intellectual communities to criticize gender relations in Saudi Arabia, because "that's 'their' culture." She added to this, that she was "not comfortable with a political outlook that says I can't criticize what looks to me like gender apartheid."[52] Indeed, such an outlook would not be very progressive.

[50] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 25.
[51] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 191.
[52] Barbara Ehrenreich, "The Challenge for the Left," in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 337.

In his book *Innocents Abroad*, Jonathan Zimmerman, a historian of education, gave several examples of American teachers and missionaries struggling with such concerns when working abroad as volunteers of the Peace Corps. This organization was founded in the early 1960s, and is run by the American government, which is perhaps why some volunteers have found it particularly important to not make themselves guilty of cultural imperialism. Peace Corps officials sometimes refused to act when their female workers were facing danger in sexually discriminatory cultures, going as far as saying that locals should not be blamed for rape, because that was a concept of Western culture. Zimmermann summarized the paradoxical nature of this attitude by stating that the triumph of the egalitarian ideal made teachers "wary of criticizing their [foreign] colleagues and students, even for deviations from egalitarianism."[53] This concept, the idea that any criticism of other cultures is a form of arrogance, is what Bloom described as the "moral postulate" of the Left. When they claimed that cultural differences make it impossible to assess each other's moral merits, he argued, they were merely dressing this postulate up as the theoretical insight of relativism.[54] Regardless, Bloom disagreed with both of these concepts.

Bloom illustrated his point about cultural relativism not only by pointing to other countries, but to cultural differences within the US. In the introduction to his book, he shared a story from his days in college, when he met a young Mississippian student. This man was intelligent and amiable, which made it all the more jarring for Bloom to hear him calmly and sincerely argue that Black people were inferior to whites, and that Jim Crow laws were necessary. Bloom was shocked because this was not what he imagined a person with such ideas to look and sound like. In his retelling of the story, he sarcastically noted that at the time, he himself had been ethnocentric. "I took my Northern beliefs to be universal," he explained. "The 'different strokes for different folks' philosophy had not yet taken hold. Fortunately the homogenization of American culture that has occurred since that enables us to avoid such nasty confrontations."[55] Through this example, Bloom made his point clear: Western liberals happily condemn discriminatory ideas, as long as these ideas are harbored by other Western people.

The very concept of relativism, regardless of its connotations to left and right, was the main target for Bloom's polemic. It may not be a core element of the Left, but Bloom

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[53] Jonathan Zimmerman, *Innocents Abroad: American Teachers in the American Century* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 83-84, 92-94, 101-102, 106.
[54] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 25.
[55] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 35.

accused the Left of imposing it in a way that was disingenuous, inconsistent, and, crucially, denigrating towards America and the West in general. "Cultural relativism," he claimed in his book, "succeeds in destroying the West's universal or intellectually imperialistic claims, leaving it to be just another culture."[56] The New Right was frustrated with what they considered anti-American tendencies on the Left, and they were hungry for someone to formulate these frustrations so eloquently, like Bloom managed to do.

The concept of anti-Americanism

"The radicals in the civil rights movement succeeded in promoting a popular conviction that the Founding was, and the American principles are, racist."[57] This quote from *The Closing of the American Mind* captures the essence of Allan Bloom's comments on how people thought of America in 1987. His assessment fit well with the New Right's concern about a severe lack of patriotism and national self-confidence in the United States, and this concern had always been one of its central features. 14 years earlier, Nixon had made similar observations during his second inaugural address, and he focused specifically on how American history was taught in schools. "Our children have been taught to be ashamed of their country, ashamed of their parents, ashamed of America's record at home and its role in the world," he claimed. "At every turn we have been beset by those who find everything wrong with America and little that is right." Similar concerns were voiced by prominent conservative figures in the years immediately after the publication of Bloom's book. Ronald Reagan claimed in his 1989 farewell address, "For those who create the popular culture, patriotism is no longer in style."[58]

To learn that not all scholars of American education agree with Bloom's assessment, however, is not likely to surprise anyone. In his book *Whose America?,* first published in 2002, Jonathan Zimmerman dealt with different narratives that have been promoted and resisted in textbooks for public schools in different states and different eras. The question of how much praise or criticism America deserves was among the most frequently recurring schisms that he discussed. Many conservatives would consider it a question of patriotism or anti-Americanism, and many liberals would consider it one of chauvinism or critical self-knowledge. Zimmerman's general assessment was that American textbooks have indeed

[56] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 39.
[57] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 56.
[58] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 6, 173.

taken on a somewhat less rose-colored narrative. They have broadened their focus to include formerly neglected demographic groups of Americans, and thereby also stories about discrimination and injustices. However, he emphasized that most textbooks maintain an overall positive tone, and have not gone particularly far in challenging the preexisting tone about America as an exceptional nation. In conclusion, he found it strange that conservatives, and even some liberals, condemn textbooks for denigrating America.[59]

Throughout the 20th century, several political organizations and public interest groups made a point of pushing history textbooks towards more praise and less criticism. Among them was the American Legion, a war veterans' organization founded after World War I. In 1925, they declared that history textbooks should "speak chiefly of success."[60] The American Legion never had any official authority regarding such decisions, but through their lobbying in favor of veterans' benefits and similar issues, they garnered a significant amount of public support, not only from veterans. By extension, their public declarations were likely to have an influence on the nation's people, and thereby the public consensus on the curriculum of public schools.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union provided a direct contrast to the virtues of America. The threat that the USSR posed also caused American conservatives to put even greater emphasis on promoting a historical narrative that was in their nation's favor. It was in this climate that the social studies program "Building America" caused significant controversy in the late 1940s, especially in the state of California. The program's developers were accused, by private citizens and by legislators, of exaggerating the Soviet Union's achievements and of downplaying its monstrosities. In addition, the texts gave a favorable presentation of policies like public housing. This was taken both as a sign of Communist propaganda, and anti-American subversion, because it implied that American society needed improving. Several California legislators proclaimed that "There should be a constructive, positive approach, and emphasis should be placed upon the 'good things' of American life."[61]

Throughout *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom repeatedly referred to, and criticized, the anti-American tendencies of the progressive wave. He believed their relativism, genuine or not, had provided them with an irrational agenda of turning American history into a history of subjugation, exploitation, and moral defeat. Furthermore, he believed

[59] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 7.
[60] Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 190.
[61] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 78.

that their efforts to influence the teaching of history and social sciences, had been largely successful. Describing the changes taking place within these fields in the late 1960s, he summarized it thus: "Historians were being asked to rewrite the history of the world, and of the United States in particular, to show that nations were always conspiratorial systems of domination and exploitation."[62]

In the years after the publication of Bloom's book, other authors also contributed to the debate about how to fairly assess America and the West. Nineteen ninety saw the publication of *Tenured Radicals*, written by the social commentator Roger Kimball. His central thesis was that American universities were now controlled by the radical activists of the 1960s, and they were using this influence to spread their anti-American ideology, rather than provide students with an education.[63] Another book that made many similar points, was political commentator Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*, published in 1991. In this book, he argued that a uniform mission towards the goal of political correctness, had made American universities inhospitable to conservative students, or anyone who did not conform to the liberal consensus.[64] When discussing his book during an interview, he summarized the ideology permeating the campus culture as "primitive romanticism about the Third World, combined with the systematic denunciation of the West."[65]

The term "political correctness," one of D'Souza's primary targets in his book, frequently appeared in debates about anti-Americanism and the culture wars broadly. It was first popularized among leftists for disparaging radicals on their own side of the political aisle, but during Reagan's presidency, it became a common accusation made by the Right against the Left. Broadly speaking, it implies that the accused is being knowingly evasive for the sake of not treading on anyone's toes, or that they are letting this concern decide their conclusion on an issue. It is easy to see how this concept is similar to what Bloom described as the moral postulate of the Left. The term saw an extreme rise in popularity in the post-Reagan years, when Kimball's and D'Souza's books were published. In 1990, it appeared a total of 638 times across a selection of 31 metropolitan newspapers. In 1991, the number had increased to 3,877.[66]

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[62] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 354.
[63] Searle, "The Storm Over the University."
[64] Harold K. Bush Jr, "A Brief History of PC," *American Studies International* Vol. 33, No. 1 (1995): 51.
[65] Dinesh D'Souza and Robert MacNeil, "The Big Chill? Interview with Dinesh D'Souza," in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 31.
[66] Bush Jr, "A Brief History of PC," 42-43.

Similar to *The Closing of the American Mind*, D'Souza's book was met with both praise and dismissal, very much of a political nature. Among his harshest critics, was Michael Berubé, at the time an assistant professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne. In his article "Public Image Limited: Political Correctness and the Media's Big Lie," he stated that D'Souza "expands the *Newsweek* program of reducing all current intellectual disputes to the question of whether or not the West is a Good Thing."[67]

Berubé's mention of the magazine *Newsweek* referred to the article "Thought Police" from the year before. It portrayed an oppressive climate of political correctness in American academia, where none dared to voice dissent from the narrative about the US being fundamentally racist and sexist. Berubé claimed that the article's fundamental flaw was to equate a growing presence of female, gay, and ethnic minority writers and professors with an agenda that compelled students to explore these particular perspectives.[68] Regardless, the concept of oppressive political correctness posing a threat to free speech in American academia, has remained a divisive topic.

In the article where Berubé discussed what he perceived to be an irrational fear of political correctness, he also mentioned Allan Bloom. Berubé claimed that Bloom's book helped the contemporary Right formulate a specific strategy. First, they would accuse academics of moral relativism. When the academics denied these accusations, and explained that they do in fact take issue with many opinions, the accusers would steer the conversation towards issues that the Left considers to be examples of injustice in the United States, and thereby get the academics to criticize the West. This allowed the accusers to change their accusation of moral relativism, into an accusation of political correctness, or the closely related concept of anti-Americanism.[69]

The idea that the Left is inherently anti-American deserves some more elaboration. Many liberal activists of the 1960s did, in fact, make conscious efforts to appeal to the patriotic tendencies of conservatives. James Baldwin explained the idea eloquently in his essay collection *Notes of a Native Son*, stating, "I love America more than any other country in the world and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."[70] However, not everyone on the Left stuck with this principle throughout the 1960s and '70s,

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[67] Michael Berubé, "Public Image Limited: Political Correctness and the Media's Big Lie," in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 139.
[68] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 137-138.
[69] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 130.
[70] James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Dial Press, 1963), 12.

especially as the antiwar protests were gaining momentum. Regardless of the societal injustices that liberals were protesting against, and regardless of how many American soldiers were needlessly killed in Vietnam, many conservatives refused to compromise on their narrative about American exceptionalism. As a result, many on the Left came to equate patriotism with conservatism, and therefore wanted nothing to do with it. This led them to embrace a more pessimistic narrative about their nation.[71] By extension, this pessimism was a central element to what writers like Kimball and D'Souza, and articles like "Thought Police," referred to as political correctness.

"Thought Police" described the concept of political correctness as a "new McCarthyism." Berubé was particularly critical of this idea, pointing out that any mention of real McCarthyism was conveniently omitted.[72] Interestingly, the McCarthy era was a specific topic that Bloom was criticized for treating inaccurately in his book. He claimed that if it had any impact on the universities, it was an inadvertently positive one, because it provided scholars with a common enemy, a group of antiacademic "barbarians at the gates," without posing any real threats to the range of thought and speech that took place within the universities.[73] Daniel Zins, at the time an associate professor at the Atlanta College of Art, objected to this narrative.[74] He simply referred to the very different conclusions that were reached in the elaborately researched *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*, which was written by the historian Ellen W. Schrecker, and published just a year before *The Closing of the American Mind*. In it, Schrecker detailed how American institutes of higher education actually contributed to McCarthyism, through dismissals and blacklists, which by extension provided the entire process with a sense of faux-intellectual respectability.[75]

Another contribution to the debate about how to fairly assess America and the West, came from the historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. He had been involved in politics throughout his life, having served as speechwriter and adviser to many prominent Democratic politicians, including President Kennedy. In the cultural debate on how to assess the merits of the West, however, he took a stance that typically gained more support from conservatives. In his 1991 book *The Disuniting of America*, he gave perhaps one of the most well-articulated

[71] Linenthal, Engelhardt, *History Wars*, 98-99.
[72] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 137.
[73] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 324.
[74] Daniel Zins, "Permanent Questions, New Questions: Opening American Minds to the Nuclear Age," in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 86-87.
[75] Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 340.

explanations of why so many Americans felt attacked by those who emphasized the shortcomings of their nation. He did this by elaborating on a quote by the English historian Edward Gibbon: "The sins of the West are no worse than the sins of Asia or of the Middle East or of Africa." To this, Schlesinger added "There remains, however, a crucial difference between the Western tradition and the others. The crimes of the West have produced their own antidotes." He then pointed out that Western countries were the forerunners in the abolition of slavery, the advancement of women's rights, religious freedom, and freedom of expression. Additionally, he emphasized that Western nations in the late 20th century still provided better foundations for social equality and equity than the rest of the world.[76] Most Americans, including liberals, would likely agree with these observations. What they might disagree on – and this really is at the heart of the cultural schism in question – is how much attention should be devoted to such observations, compared to the darker aspects of Western history and society.

Schlesinger alluded to this disagreement by introducing an interesting pair of terms in his book: "exculpatory history" and "compensatory history." He described the former as history written by the winners, used as a tool to justify existing power structures. Very few words were devoted to explaining this concept, likely because it is fairly easy to understand why this would occur. However, Schlesinger elaborated more on the opposite phenomenon, "compensatory history." The idea is that sympathy for those who have been defeated and oppressed, extends to a narrative that endows them with a certain righteousness, and treats this as an inherent, constant characteristic. Schlesinger connected this concept to what Bertrand Russell called "the superior virtue of the oppressed."[77]

What Schlesinger was describing could be considered the other side of the coin that the New Right calls anti-Americanism. That is, not the tendency to denigrate the West, but to elevate the non-West. Few controversies have better exemplified both sides of this coin, than the Enola Gay controversy of 1994-1995. Marking the 50 year anniversary for the end of World War II, the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum was set to display the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The controversy arose because the exhibition emphasized the difficult nature of the plane: it may have saved several thousand US soldiers from a war that otherwise could have dragged on for months, but at the same time, it killed several thousand innocent civilians. The fact that the

[76] Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), 127.
[77] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 48-49.

Smithsonian did not use the opportunity to provide visitors with an unambiguously heroic telling of what happened, outraged many conservatives. Among them was Robert Dole, Senate Majority Leader, Republican presidential hopeful, and, crucially, World War II veteran. At the 1995 national convention of the American Legion, the organization formed for the benefit of veterans like him, he lashed out at the Smithsonian for presenting the United States as aggressors, and the Japanese as victims, even though the US was dragged into the war when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.[78]

Considering that Allan Bloom directed similar criticism towards what he perceived as the Left's eagerness to attack the West, one might expect to find frequent displays of patriotism in his book. However, as pointed out by the policy analyst David Rieff, Bloom provided very little to counterbalance his pessimistic observations about "spiritual entropy," and the cultural developments that were, according to him, causally related to this phenomenon. Rieff claimed to find nothing but scorn for America throughout the book, and stated that "Bloom hates American mores, decries American families, despises American teenagers, and takes no notice of the beauty of the American landscape." Furthermore, Rieff contrasted these observations with Bloom's claims about loving his country, and concluded that this paradoxical attitude was wholly conventional for the neoconservative Right.[79]

Bloom himself stated, during a Harvard address in 1988, that he was not a conservative of any kind.[80] Such a claim was true in style to his dismissals of similar accusations made against his book. But Rieff arguably had a point when drawing comparisons between Bloom's sentiments and neoconservative tendencies to claim that the US was simultaneously great and in a sad state of decay. During a 1987 conference on multicultural education, the literary professor Milton R. Stern similarly accused Bloom of romanticizing an alternative vision of America, while letting this vision remain vague. He believed that Bloom was "protecting what is, or never was, in the fussiest kind of way."[81] Another literary scholar, Frank Caucci, pointed out that throughout Bloom's book, "there corresponds an underpinning of nostalgia for a much better state in the past."[82] Such nostalgia

[78] Linenthal, Engelhardt, *History Wars*, 3-4, 20-21.
[79] Rieff, "The Colonel and the Professor," 293-294.
[80] S. J. D. Green, "'The Closing of the American Mind,' Revisited," *The Antioch Review* Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter, 1998): 30.
[81] Milton R. Stern, "Culture and Democracy: Strange Bedfellows and their Offspring," in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 54.
[82] Frank Caucci, "Two Wise Men Bearing Strange Gifts: On the Educational Crisis in America," in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 26.

is an integral ingredient of the neoconservative outlook. Once again, even if Bloom did not consider himself a conservative, there were many obvious reasons why his book found such a strong appeal among those who did.

In the introductory parts of his book, Bloom made one of his more specific points of criticism against anti-Americanism. He claimed that "Only in the Western nations, i.e., those influenced by Greek philosophy, is there some willingness to doubt the identification of the good with one's own way."[83] Not only were Western nations overly self-critical, according to Bloom, but this was a uniquely Western phenomenon. This claim was highlighted in the *New York Review of Books*, where the philosopher Martha Nussbaum wrote about *The Closing of the American Mind*. She believed the statement showed "a startling ignorance … of philosophical and non-philosophical self-criticism from many parts of the world." She concluded that Bloom provided an inadvertent argument for more emphasis on non-Western civilizations in the curriculum of American universities.[84]

John Peacock quoted Nussbaum's observations in an article he wrote for the *New Art Examiner*, and added that the mere inaccuracy of Bloom's claim was not the only issue. He argued, "By praising as unique the West's willingness to doubt its own identification with the good, Bloom in fact identifies the West, beyond a shadow of a doubt, with the good that comes from self doubt. A perfect paradox."[85] Criticizing a culture for being overly self-critical is not necessarily paradoxical, as much as it is an encouragement to appreciate the virtues of that culture. But seeing Bloom's statement in the context of his book, more precisely his scorn for America, does provide a certain dissonance of the kind that Rieff considered characteristic of the neoconservative Right.

After claiming that the civil rights movement instilled the idea that America was fundamentally oppressive, Bloom made an additional claim. He argued that "The bad conscience [the civil rights movement] promoted killed off the one continuing bit of popular culture that celebrated the national story - the Western."[86] This statement is noteworthy for being a rare, if not the only, example of Bloom exhibiting a certain approval for a form of popular culture, namely the Western movie genre. One should maybe not read too much into the other implications of the word "Western" in this context, that is, the broader concept of

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[83] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 36.
[84] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Undemocratic Vistas," *The New York Review of Books* (5 November, 1987).
[85] John Peacock, "Mysteries and Jeremiads: Narrative Elements in *The Closing of the American Mind,*" in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 112.
[86] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 56.

Western culture and civilization. But in a sense, it provides this meaning too. Bloom employed the Western movie genre as a metaphor for what is American, and America's love for itself. This is why a nationwide bad conscience led to its decline.

In his book *Why We Can't Wait*, Martin Luther King Jr. also drew parallels between Western movies and America's national confidence. However, King did not see the popularity of Western movies as a wholly positive sign. Not only did these movies fail to condemn the genocide of Native Americans, King argued, but they romanticized the era in which this occurred, and even portrayed Native Americans as villainous savages. He believed that this chapter of American history was the seed of the nation's culture of discrimination. Furthermore, this culture was reinforced by the refusal to deal with such a history of horrors, and consequently still caused millions to suffer under white supremacy.[87]

Accusations of anti-whiteness

Central to the discussion about anti-Americanism is the cultural hegemony of white Americans of European ancestry, because they play the part of the oppressor in the narrative that was criticized by people like Bloom, Kimball, and D'Souza. Hence, accusations of being anti-American are often euphemistic for accusations of being unfairly critical of WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants), or of white America more broadly. Granted, such accusations have also been made by non-white conservatives, D'Souza among them, and can simply be rooted in frustration with liberals inconsistently applying their principles of egalitarianism when assessing the US and non-Western cultures. But the concept of this double standard is closely connected to that of anti-whiteness, because it is the result of dogmatic respect for other cultures, which tend to correlate with non-Western or non-white countries. Additionally, this sub-chapter will provide several examples to demonstrate that the racial element is often a crucial one.

Allan Bloom did not focus much on this phenomenon in *The Closing of the American Mind*, but he alluded to Americans harboring a bad conscience towards historically marginalized groups. It would make little sense for him to imply that the members of such groups were among those with a bad conscience. When discussing the relationship between white and Black university students, he described white students as being "embarrassingly eager to prove their liberal credentials in the one area where Americans are especially

[87] Martin Luther King Jr, *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 120.

sensitive to a history of past injustice."[88] Bloom did not use the term "white guilt," but his thoughts on the nationwide bad conscience that he believed was the cause of these students' embarrassingly explicit egalitarianism, leaves little doubt that he would consider it a real phenomenon.

Through the years, several American textbooks and teaching programs have been accused of fomenting white guilt. One example is the 1966 book *Land of the Free: A History of the United States*, written by the Black historian John Hope Franklin. It included honest accounts of slavery and segregation, but its introduction also emphasized that America was now closer to its stated ideals. Despite such nuances, California state officials received a stream of protests when Franklin's book was submitted for adoption there. One letter stated "We do not believe that you can improve race relations by continued emphasis on injustices of the past. Neither do we believe that a generation of white students should be made to feel guilty." Others went as far as suggesting that the publisher should aim for a more "balanced" narrative, by including mentions of slaves who were content with their circumstances.[89]

In the American South, a textbook would not even need to be accused of anti-white sentiments. Merely including pictures of African Americans could be enough for the book to be banned, leading to all-white "mint julep" editions, made especially for the Southern market.[90] But even these books could be banned if they discussed issues of racial discrimination at the hands of white people, which was an unavoidable topic when discussing historical figures like Frederick Douglass or Harriet Tubman.[91]

In certain cases, books have been accused not only of fomenting white guilt, but anti-white racism. One such example would be the Kanawha textbook battle of West Virginia in 1974. In this controversy, anti-white racism was only one of several accusations made against the textbooks, others including secularism, moral relativism, and sexual vulgarity.[92] The accusations of anti-white racism were directed towards the inclusion of the book *Soul on Ice*, written by the prominent Black Panther Party member Eldridge Cleaver.[93]

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[88] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 92.
[89] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 98-99.
[90] Jonathan Zimmerman, "Where the Customer Is King: The Textbook in American Culture," in *A History of the Book in America: Volume 5: The Enduring Book: Print Culture in Postwar America*, ed. David Paul Nord, et al. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 316.
[91] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 106.
[92] Soundcloud, "The Great Textbook War – Us & Them Podcast," uploaded 2014, https://soundcloud.com/treykay-1/the-great-textbook-war
[93] Andrew Hartman, "A Trojan Horse for Social Engineering: The Curriculum Wars in Recent American History," *The Journal of Policy History* Vol. 25, No. 1 (2013): 121, doi: 10.1017/S0898030612000371.

In certain other cases, claims about anti-white racism were not entirely unfounded. The Black Studies program at the City College of New York was directed by Leonard Jeffries Jr, an Afrocentric extremist. In the early 1990s, he promoted the racialist idea that white people were inherently cold and cruel "Ice People," while Black people were inherently warm and caring "Sun People." He had also claimed that nearly everything that made Europe an advanced civilization was originally stolen from Africa.[94]

It is worth noting that many Western textbooks have downplayed the impact of non-Western science, as pointed out by the historian and sociologist James W. Loewen in his book *Lies My Teacher Told Me*. Loewen argued that the significant scientific contributions of Afro-Phoenicians were often omitted because they did not fit the narrative about "how white Europeans taught the rest of the world how to do things."[95] Indeed, Bloom could be considered guilty of perpetuating this narrative. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, he stated that the entire concept of science "emerged in Greece sometime between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C."[96] Loewen did not try to compensate for such narratives by supporting those that Jeffries Jr. promoted, however, and was much more cautious in the conclusions he drew. Among Eurocentric and Afrocentric textbooks, Loewen considered the former to be a much more pervasive problem in the American education system, but he deduced that "the kind [of curriculum] that has Africans inventing everything good and whites inventing slavery and oppression" was equally undesirable.[97] Jeffries Jr's racialist ideas did not find broad support in other schools, but his claims about Europe stealing all its technological advantages from Africa, though objectively inaccurate, were adopted by some.[98]

Race is one aspect of the WASP demographic, religion is another. The P in WASP refers specifically to Protestants, but Catholicism is the second biggest religious group in the US, and Christianity is the nation's culturally dominant religion. Nevertheless, claims are sometimes made by Christians that their religion is not treated with the same respect and consideration as others, despite, or maybe because of the aforementioned circumstances.

The year 1988 saw two such controversies. One was the release of the film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, which many Christians considered blasphemous. Furthermore, questions were raised about why Hollywood felt that they could freely insult Christianity, but

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[94] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 127.
[95] James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: New Press, 1995), 45.
[96] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, page 257.
[97] Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, 302.
[98] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 127.

would not take the same risk with a movie adaptation of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, which was considered blasphemous by Muslims. The other controversy arose when the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond displayed Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*, a photograph of a crucifix submerged in urine. A letter to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* formulated the frustration that many Christians felt about the double standard: "Would [The Virginia Museum] pay the KKK to do a work defaming blacks? Would they display a Jewish symbol under urine? Has Christianity become fair game in our society for any kind of blasphemy and slander?"[99]

This frustration with a religious double standard is closely related to a racial double standard that has been pointed out by many white Americans. The idea they have in common is that offensive statements or actions towards the culturally dominant group, or towards the group that has historically played the part of the oppressor, are not treated with the same seriousness. This phenomenon is closely related to what Bertrand Russell called "the superior virtue of the oppressed." This is essentially a narrative that endows the oppressed with an inherent and constant righteousness.[100]

An example that connects the racial and the religious aspects, is that of a history textbook series published in California in 1990. Written by Gary B. Nash, the books mentioned that Native Americans were thought to have originally migrated into the American continent by crossing the Bering Strait land bridge. This contradicted what many Native Americans believed about themselves, namely that they were created in America. Certain groups and organizations in favor of multiculturalism criticized the textbooks for promoting the "white" perspective as fact, and requested changes that would treat the theories of other cultures as equally valid.[101] This incident is strikingly similar to those where Christians have demanded equal treatment of evolution and creation in schools. There are two simple reasons why liberals might consider this particular controversy to be more serious than those, and why conservatives might consider it to be less so. First, the perspective that critics considered too dominant was not one of science in general, but the "white" perspective. Second, the perspective that some claimed was marginalized was not one of a white or Christian demographic.

[99] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 189-191.
[100] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 48-49.
[101] Zimmerman, "Where the Customer Is King," 317-318.

The debate about multiculturalism

Conservative concerns about anti-Americanism have been more or less salient in different eras. In the 1970s, they were heightened by a broader crisis of national confidence. The Vietnam War was becoming an ever-bigger problem for the United States, and by the time that it ultimately resulted in the nation's first unambiguous military defeat, Americans had also witnessed the Watergate scandal. The pessimism of the late 1970s would eventually give way to Reagan's reactionary positivism, but there was another reaction before this. Many conservatives, fearing a domestic disintegration of their culture, embraced a more orthodox patriotism less willing to allow diverse ideas of what American culture was. Their ideal common American culture was, as Newt Gingrich would later put it, that of Norman Rockwell's paintings.[102] Current international circumstances required unity, which was yet another reason to see the subversive anti-Americanists as an enemy of the nation.

Multiculturalism was another theme dealt with in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Beyond the question of cultures being equal in merit, Bloom was concerned with whether or not all cultures should be granted equal influence in the US, and why he himself did not believe so. "[C]ulture is what makes possible, on a high level, the rich social life that constitutes a people, … all that binds individuals into a group with roots," he stated, and posed the problem of what this means in the particular case of America, a nation with so many diverse groups of people. Comparing America to a country like France, with a more coherent idea of what their culture consists of, Bloom claimed that a national figurehead like Charles de Gaulle would see America as "a mere aggregate of individuals, a dumping ground for the refuse from other places, devoted to consuming; in short, no culture." In other words, Bloom believed that America having so many cultures effectively meant that it had none. As for the question of whether Americans could share a common culture that would borrow from all the preexisting ones, thereby creating a culture that is in itself multicultural, Bloom was not optimistic. "The various unions of nature with the acquisitions of civilizations are rare and difficult enough," he argued, "that they should tend to the same end is improbable."[103] With these sentences, Bloom essentially concluded that the idea of true multiculturalism within a single society, with no hierarchy of separate cultures, was a utopian dream with little basis in reality.

[102] Linenthal, Engelhardt, *History Wars*, 99.
[103] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 187, 191.

The importance of a culture to bind individuals into groups, as Bloom put it, was not one that he understated. Early in his book, when discussing the "spiritual entropy" that he believed was leading Americans into a nihilistic aimlessness, he referenced a related concern put forth by Nietzsche. Bloom explained that Nietzsche believed "the spirit's bow was being unbent…. Its activity, he believed, comes from culture, and the decay of culture meant not only the decay of man in this culture but the decay of man simply."[104] Not only did Bloom believe that true multiculturalism was an impossibility. He believed the stakes in this debate to be very high indeed.

Bloom faced considerable criticism for his opinion on multiculturalism. In the review of his book by the intellectual historian Richard Wolin, written for the journal *Theory and Society*, Wolin claimed that Bloom was mistaken to be so pessimistic about its consequences. "Exposure to other cultures helps us appreciate the uniqueness and singularity of our own," he believed, thereby arguing that multiculturalism would not undermine Western culture, but reinvigorate it. Despite this, he used the same review to criticize certain aspects of Western culture. More specifically, he suggested that more courses in non-Western civilizations should be taught in American universities, because this would serve "as welcome corrective to the ethnocentrism and parochialism of the Western tradition." He then accused Bloom specifically of perpetuating these attitudes, calling him an "ideologue of Western cultural superiority."[105]

Multiculturalism was a common topic of debate in the years following the publication of Bloom's book. The summer 1990 issue of *The American Scholar* featured a contribution from Diane Ravitch. She was the Assistant United States Secretary of Education, under President George H. W. Bush. Ravitch emphasized the distinction between two concepts of multiculturalism: the pluralistic and the particularistic kind. Pluralistic multiculturalism, she stated, was the kind that America should aim for in its schools, and in its society more broadly. She described it as a wholly benevolent respect for different cultures. Particularistic multiculturalism, however, she treated with more skepticism. She described it as teaching children "that their identity is determined by their 'cultural genes.'"[106] In other words, she considered it to be racialism by any other name, regardless of it being applied with good or bad intentions.

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[104] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 51.
[105] Richard Wolin, "Reviewed Work(s): The Closing of the American Mind by Allan Bloom," *Theory and Society* Vol. 18, No. 2 (March 1989): 277-278.
[106] Diane Ravitch, "Multiculturalism: E Pluribus Plures," in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 277.

Arthur M. Schlesinger partook actively in this debate. The title of his 1991 book *The Disuniting of America*, referred specifically to his concern that too much emphasis on multiculturalism would rob the nation of its social cohesiveness. In this debate, like the one about Western merits, Schlesinger took the side that mostly harbored people who were, in general, much less liberal than him. In the foreword to his book, he illustrated his point by proposing a famous question posed by the 18th century French-American writer J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur: "What then is the American, this new man?" More crucial to Schlesinger, was Crèvecoeur's answer: "He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds."[107] This principle of putting one's ancestral identities aside, and fully embracing life as an American, and only an American, was the very cornerstone of the discourse against multiculturalism.

Another contribution to the debate came from conservative giant Russell Kirk. Nineteen ninety-three, the last full year of his lifespan, saw the publication of his book *America's British Culture*. Not only did Kirk consider it natural that America should have a cohesive national culture, but as the title of his book made clear, he believed the inherited British culture should fulfil this role. He posed the rhetorical question of what would hold the American people together "if we press further down the road to cultural separatism and ethnic fragmentation, … and if we abandon our historic commitments to an American identity."[108] On the topic of multiculturalism, Bloom and Kirk were of similar sentiments.

Barbara Ehrenreich also contributed to this debate, in the same talk where she explored the unwillingness of fellow liberals to criticize other cultures. With regards to multiculturalism within America, she called for a nuanced position, stating that the Left should value diversity, but that they should not ignore the importance of having "some point of moral unity that brings us all together."[109] She thereby acknowledged the value of what was a more frequent talking point in conservative circles, even if she differed in her opinion on how much emphasis it should receive in policymaking.

Language is an aspect of culture that has often received special attention in this long-running debate. If culture is what binds individuals into groups, as Bloom puts it, then language is obviously an essential ingredient in allowing the individuals within a group to

[107] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 12.
[108] Russell Kirk, "The Necessity for a General Culture," in *The Essential Russell Kirk: Selected Essays*, ed. George A. Panichas (Wilmington, Delaware: Isi Books, 2007), 133.
[109] Ehrenreich, "The Challenge for the Left," 338.

interact. A language barrier is, quite simply, the most tangible kind of cultural barrier. As of 2023, the US still does not have an official language. English fulfils this role in all but name, but there are several million Americans whose first language is a different one. The question of language in America, viewed as an integral part of its culture, has had a political dimension for more than a century. In 1905, a commission on the naturalization of immigrants suggested that English language proficiency should be a prerequisite for attaining citizenship. The suggestion was met with approval from both President Theodore Roosevelt and Congress. It was subsequently put into effect the following year.[110]

In 1919, only days before Theodore Roosevelt died, he made a final comment on this topic: "We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language." He justified his position by stating that the nation's people must identify themselves "as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house."[111] Alternatively, stated in the words of Bloom, Roosevelt wanted to ensure that the American people did not become "a mere aggregate of individuals, a dumping ground for the refuse from other places."[112] Roosevelt's words reverberated through policy decisions over the next years. By 1923, it was legally mandated in 34 states that classroom instructions were to be exclusively carried out in English. In some of these states, the laws even applied to private schools.[113]

During the progressive movement of the 1960s, there was a resurgence of policies supporting bilingualism, along with a renewed interest in multiculturalism more broadly. In 1968, the Bilingual Education Act was passed, which provided schools with financial support for facilitating instruction in other languages, wherever students required it. This momentum of legislation favoring bilingualism carried over into the 1970s. In the 1974 case of Lau v. Nichols, the Supreme Court ruled that school districts must address the linguistic needs of students who were not proficient English speakers. However, the Supreme Court's primary concern was not that these students were allowed to retain their native language, but that they should not be educationally disadvantaged. The ruling did not specify whether this should be

[110] Rosemary C. Salomone, *The Rise of English: Global Politics and the Power of Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 268.
[111] Salomone, *The Rise of English*, 268.
[112] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 187.
[113] Salomone, *The Rise of English*, 269.

ensured through bilingual education, or through an increased effort to teach these students English, which would integrate them more firmly into the linguistic anglosphere.[114]

Despite the increased political emphasis on bilingual education, white ethnic groups in America had been linguistically anglified by the 1970s, and proficiency in a second language was rare. In 1979, a Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies concluded that this posed a challenge for the nation. They issued a report stating that the country's "moat mentality" was harming its international affairs, both economically and diplomatically. Furthermore, they emphasized that the nation's minority language speakers were a valuable resource, and suggested that the Department of Education should assign more resources towards the teaching of second languages.[115] However, this did not go unchallenged. The political undertones of the issue, were firmly established in the American culture war. Throughout the 1970s, the debate had been particularly heated in California, where legislators had received thousands of letters from parents in favor of monolingualism. An argument commonly made by these parents was that because bilingual education was a trait of multiculturalism, it would inevitably lead to cultural and moral relativism.[116]

Such relativism may have been presented as the primary concern in *The Closing of the American Mind*, along with the "spiritual entropy" that Bloom believed it caused. But as illustrated, the book alluded to many different battle grounds in the culture war, and it was made use of in yet more of them, as it found an audience the size of which Bloom and his publisher had never imagined. While Bloom focused primarily on the spiritual and philosophical side of the issue, another book was released in the same year that touched on many of the same nerves in the American political climate. This book was E. D. Hirsch Jr's *Cultural Literacy*. It shared many similarities with *The Closing of the American Mind*, but it dealt with the topics of education and multiculturalism from a more grounded, pragmatic perspective.

[114] Jin Sook Lee and Wayne E. Wright, "The Rediscovery of Heritage and Community Language Education in the United States," *Review of Research in Education*, Vol. 38 (2014): 142-143.
[115] Salomone, *The Rise of English*, 271-272.
[116] Natalia Mehlman Petrzela, *Classroom Wars: Language, Sex, and the Making of Modern Political Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 11.

Chapter 2
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Dominant culture and shared culture

E.D. Hirsch Jr's *Cultural Literacy* was frequently discussed in tandem with *The Closing of the American Mind*. Like Bloom, Hirsch was primarily concerned with the current state of American culture. In addition, he believed that the education system had caused the problems he explored, and that it would also be crucial to the process of fixing them. This was another thing that his thesis had in common with that of Bloom, although Bloom was primarily concerned with the universities, and Hirsch with K-12 education. Considering that these books were also published around the same time, in the spring of 1987, it is little wonder that they were broadly treated as two of a pair.

Hirsch did not devote his book to concepts quite as lofty or abstract as those in Bloom's book, like "spiritual entropy" or "the spirit's bow … being unbent."[117] Instead, his concern was that most Americans did not have sufficient knowledge about their own national culture, or of foreign cultural elements that could be considered relevant to Americans in their daily lives. He explained the title of his book by stating that literacy is more than a skill. If a reader can interpret written language, then they can attain new information, but that does not mean they will be able to make sense of it. Hirsch claimed that a broad foundation of knowledge about the world essentially serves as a framework for newly attained information. A reader who possessed such a framework would thereby have a better chance of making sense of what they read, and of retaining it. This broad foundation of knowledge is what Hirsch called "culture." His book included a list stretching across more than 60 pages, where he named things and concepts that he believed any culturally literate American should know in order to communicate efficiently within the society in which they exist. The list included historical figures and events, works of classic arts and literature, basic scientific terms, public figures of recent history and the contemporary era, proverbs, metaphors, and more. As an extension of the language-related metaphor in the book's title, Hirsch referred to the items in this list as the "vocabulary" that a culturally literate person should be familiar with. In his own words, he defined cultural literacy as "the network of information that all competent readers possess."[118]

[117] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 51.
[118] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 2.

The central message to Hirsch's book was that the curriculum of public schools should be tailored towards improving the cultural literacy of their students, as he explained in the very first sentence of its first chapter. To emphasize the issue's urgency, he referred to measurements carried out by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In 1980, they concluded that the ability of American seventeen-year-olds to understand the content of written information had declined since 1970. In addition, preliminary results from an NAEP study from 1985 were bleak. They indicated, for example, that two thirds of American seventeen-year-olds did not know that the Civil War occurred between 1850 and 1900.[119] Perhaps it was not so strange that Hirsch was concerned.

The controversy surrounding *Cultural Literacy*

Although Hirsch's central thesis might seem rather egalitarian and non-political, his book became the topic of a politicized debate. At the core of the issue was his proposal that the curriculum in American schools should provide students with a shared culture. For if students were to be culturally literate, the question then followed: Literate with regards to which culture? It could not be up to each and every one to decide. That would, after all, undermine the purpose of allowing them to communicate more efficiently through a culture they all shared. This was especially true in a nation as multicultural as the US. Crucial to the reception of Hirsch's book, he stated outright that he wanted English culture, otherwise known as WASP culture, to be the center point that the vocabulary of cultural literacy should be built around.[120]

An example of the most common concern about *Cultural Literacy* can be found in the review written for the *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*. In it, Jane G. Lambert accused Hirsch of ignoring the interactive relationship between a text and the background knowledge that an individual brings to their reading of it. Such background knowledge, she argued, is dependent on cultural contexts and understandings, which means that by promoting cultural literacy based on one culture for everyone, Hirsch was discouraging basic individuality among students. Multiculturalism is, after all, a way of ensuring that society allows individuality to flourish. Lambert concluded that Hirsch's ideas would lead to an ethnocentric focus, which "should hardly be the emphasis of our schools given the diverse society in which we live." According to Lambert, and many others, such a curriculum would

[119] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 1, 4-8.
[120] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 106-107.

disadvantage those who were not already part of the dominant culture that Hirsch wanted to promote.[121]

If one was to look for an agenda of cultural uniformity in Hirsch's book, a good place to start would be his comparison of language and culture. "[T]he need for a culture in building a nation," he explained, "is really just another dimension of the need for a language. A nation's language can be regarded as part of its culture, or conversely, its culture can be regarded as the totality of its language." After establishing that a culture ties a nation together in the same way that a language does, he argued in favor of monoliteracy, meaning that America should have one language. "Multilingualism," he claimed, "enormously increases cultural fragmentation, civil antagonism, illiteracy, and economic-technological ineffectualness. It is contrary to the purpose and essence of a national language … that a modern nation should deliberately encourage more than one to flourish within its borders." Considering that Hirsch treated language and culture as analogous concepts, his dismissal of multilingualism more than implied a dismissal of multiculturalism more broadly. On the very next page, he clarified that there was nothing inherently wrong with multilingualism, before adding "But surely the first step in that direction must be for all of us to become literate in our own national language and culture."[122] Here, more explicitly than before, he emphasized that the attainment of one *national* culture should be America's priority, along with that of a national language. The question of multiculturalism, and what role it should play in the shaping of American society, was a heavily politicized one. It was the conservative side of the culture war that primarily emphasized unity, while the liberal side primarily emphasized diversity and pluralism. This cemented the interpretation of Hirsch as a conservative figure.

The publication of *Cultural Literacy* was not Hirsch's first contribution to this debate. The book expanded on the thesis of a similarly titled article that he had written four years earlier, in 1983, for *The American Scholar*. In addition to the central proposal of a shared culture, Hirsch used this article to criticize the curriculum guide for the study of English in the state of California, because it did not recommend any specific books. More crucial than this criticism was Hirsch's theory about why no recommendations were included. To include them, he reckoned, would be considered an official sanction of the cultural and ideological values expressed in those books, and this was not acceptable in an education system primarily dedicated to cultural equity. In other words, he knew that the proposal he made in his article

[121] Jane G. Lambert, "Book Review – Cultural Literacy," *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* Vol. 12, No. 4 (November 1990): 454.
[122] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 83, 92-93.

would be criticized by many champions of multiculturalism. He disapprovingly referred to their principles as "the doctrine of pluralism," a phrase that was unlikely to gain him more support from liberal circles.[123]

Hirsch's original article gained significant attention in its time, and was publicly endorsed by William Bennett, who at the time served as chair for the National Endowment for the Humanities. Bennett was an unambiguously conservative figure. One year after Hirsch published his article, Bennett had published a report titled "To Reclaim a Legacy," where he warned against the dilution of the Western canon within the humanities. This dilution, he believed, was a potential negative consequence of broadening the discipline for the sake of including works by a more diverse array of writers.[124] It is hardly surprising that such a report would be considered political in the cultural landscape of America. In the preface to his book, Hirsch recalled Bennett's endorsement, and noted that it was "not likely to recommend the concept to liberal thinkers."[125] Additionally, when Hirsch's book was published, it received an equally enthusiastic endorsement from Bennett, who then served as the Secretary of Education under Reagan.[126]

William Bennett was not the only conservative figure that Hirsch became associated with. The publication of *Cultural Literacy* coincided with that of *The Closing of the American Mind*, and the similarities of their subjects ensured that they would be frequently compared to each other. Allan Bloom might have claimed no relation to conservatism, but he had to repeat this claim precisely because many readers found it natural to draw the opposite conclusion. In a retrospective assessment of the two books, Donald Lazere, a professor of English, made a point of differentiating between them. He gave his article the very direct title "Thumbs Up on Hirsch, Thumbs Down on Bloom," and stated that "the coincidence of their books' appearance has caused Hirsch to be saddled with Bloom's debts."[127] Indeed, in a contemporary review for the journal *Profession*, literary scholar Helene Moglen stated that Bloom and Hirsch were both "enormously valuable in their unintentional revelation of the ideological underpinnings of the New Right agenda." She explained this claim by emphasizing how incompatible their books were with multiculturalism. When focusing on

[123] E. D. Hirsch Jr, "Cultural Literacy," *The American Scholar* Vol. 52, No. 2 (Spring 1983): 161.
[124] Joan Wallach Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness: What's Really at Stake," *Radical History Review* Vol. 54, No. 52 (1992): 65.
[125] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, preface, xiv.
[126] Patrick Scott, "A Few Words More about E. D. Hirsch and Cultural Literacy," *College English* Vol. 50, No. 3 (March 1988): 333-338.
[127] Donald Lazere, "Thumbs Up on Hirsch, Thumbs Down on Bloom," *Pedagogy* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Fall 2009): 501.

Hirsch in particular, she accused him of wanting to discourage thought among students, and to reduce their education to mechanical skills and memorization from a list.[128]

A specific similarity between the two authors, according to the popular news magazine *Time*, was a romanticized narrative about "what education used to be."[129] Hirsch repeatedly contrasted the lack of cultural literacy among modern students with a better state of things in the past. In the first chapter of his book, while presenting its basic premise, he explained that his father would allude to Shakespeare when writing business letters. This was allegedly an efficient way of conveying complex messages, because "in his day, business people could make such allusions with every expectation of being understood."[130]

Responding to such claims, the collaborative authors of a review for the journal *Curriculum Inquiry* pointed to the results of intelligence tests undertaken during World War I. These tests indicated that approximately 25 percent of draftees for the American Army were not sufficiently literate to understand newspapers, or even write letters back home. They concluded from this that "the golden age of education Hirsch alludes to, like most golden ages of times past, never really existed."[131] There are more statistics that provide reasons to be skeptical of Hirsch's narrative. A survey from 1943 showed that even among first-year college students, only 25 percent knew who was president during the Civil War.[132] The accusations of nostalgia that Hirsch faced were similar to those directed at Bloom,[133] and further cemented his reputation as a conservative figure.

When promoting his book, Hirsch denied accusations of conservatism, and stated that his book was centered around a liberal idea.[134] In the book itself, he claimed that the ultimate purpose of promoting cultural literacy in schools was "to achieve not only great economic prosperity but also greater social justice and more effective democracy."[135] As he saw it, the most disadvantaged in current American society were those who had the most to gain from attaining cultural literacy.

Some were very positive to Hirsch's proposal. Among them was the philosopher Richard Rorty, who mentioned Hirsch for comparison in an essay where he was primarily

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[128] Helene Moglen, "Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch: Educational Reform as Tragedy and Farce," *Profession* (1988): 59.
[129] Bowen, "Are Student Heads Full of Emptiness?," 57.
[130] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 9.
[131] Thomas H. Estes, Carol J. Gutman and Julie J. Estes, "Cultural Literacy: Another View from the University of Virginia," *Curriculum Inquiry* Vol. 19, No. 3 (Autumn 1989), 312.
[132] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 266.
[133] Caucci, "Two Wise Men Bearing Strange Gifts," 26.
[134] Bowen, "Are Student Heads Full of Emptiness?," 57.
[135] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 2.

focusing on Bloom. He claimed that despite all the media attention they had shared, "the two books could hardly be more different." Rorty argued that Hirsch's proposal was fully compatible with the educational philosophy of John Dewey, which Rorty himself adhered to. Dewey believed that education should equip students with the knowledge and understanding they would need in order to make society more democratic and equitable. In his brief discussion of Hirsch, Rorty concluded that "Dewey would have cheered Hirsch on."[136]

Literary critic Wayne C. Booth was more skeptical of Hirsch's proposal, and shared his concerns in an open letter addressed to Hirsch. He pointed out a potential pitfall in Hirsch's proposal, specifically how it could impact the use of the SAT test, which Booth considered a discriminatory practice. According to him, the SAT test was often used by university staff for making easy choices between "the educable and the ineducable," thereby reducing it to a simple binary assortment, and condemning those on the wrong side to remain there. He believed that Hirsch's attempt at defining the fundamental knowledge that all Americans had to attain before they could advance to higher education, would provide "another tempting discriminator."[137] In other words, Booth believed that Hirsch's proposal could end up having the opposite effect of what he intended, because if mastery of a culture was made an official prerequisite for higher education, the consequences of failing to assimilate to this culture would be even more severe.

Hirsch was not equally worried about such a prospect. He argued that America "started out with a powerful commitment to religious tolerance, [and therefore] developed habits of cultural tolerance to go with it." He concluded from this that pluralism and tolerance were parts of the American people's self-portrait. Additionally, he warned against attempting to change the curriculum too drastically, stating, "Changes at its core must occur with glacial slowness."[138] His positive assessment of America, and his embrace of the fundamentally conservative principle that changes should be carried out slowly and carefully, likely won him even more favor among conservatives.

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[136] Richard Rorty, "Straussianism, Democracy, and Allan Bloom I: That Old Time Philosophy," in *Essays on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. Robert L. Stone (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1989), 100.
[137] Wayne C. Booth, "Cultural Literacy and Liberal Learning: An Open Letter to E. D. Hirsch Jr," *Change* Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jul-Aug. 1988): 18.
[138] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 95, 107.

A long-running debate

Hirsch was by no means the originator of the debate on cultural homogeneity and diversity. The late 19th century saw the rise of the Americanization movement. It was a nationwide attempt to help new citizens assimilate to the "American culture" through special education in language and history. A question that inevitably arose from this was who were in a position to define American culture. Already by the first decade of the 20th century, there were concerns about such programs imposing Anglocentric perspectives on minorities within the American population.[139] Likewise, in the 1930s, scholars in the field of American Studies were debating the balance of cultural homogeneity and diversity.[140]

In the first decade of the 20th century, the university course Western Civilization was established. It was an introduction to the humanities, and many universities across the nation made it compulsory for all their students, regardless of the program they were enrolled in. Its purpose was very similar to what Hirsch would later propose in *Cultural Literacy*: to provide all American students with a common foundation of non-specialized knowledge about their culture and history.[141] The main difference was that Hirsch wanted to expand this effort to schoolchildren in K-12 education, so this foundation of knowledge would not remain a privilege of the elites.

Although the name "Western Civilization" implies that there are also civilizations of non-Western origin, the course faced accusations of eurocentrism. In the first years after World War II, Harvard planned to establish their own version of the course, but the idea of making it a compulsory introduction to the humanities was abandoned. Among the reasons given, was that the course would "perpetuate the old myth of civilization as a monopoly of the regions bordering on the Atlantic."[142] Despite the Cold War creating a demand for patriotism, American scholars had a new perspective on the world post-WW2. It was a smaller world, where other civilizations were more visible.

The progressive wave of the 1960s caused an increased skepticism towards compulsory education courses centered on specific civilizations. What Hirsch would disapprovingly call the "doctrine of pluralism" had secured a firmer foothold. Throughout the decade, more and more American universities made the Western Civilization course non-

[139] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 35.
[140] Alice Kessler-Harris, "Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate," *American Quarterly* Vol. 44, No. 3 (September 1992): 304.
[141] Gilbert Allardyce, "The Rise and Fall of the Western Civilization Course," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 87, No. 3 (June 1982): 695.
[142] Allardyce, "The Rise and Fall of the Western Civilization Course," 717.

compulsory, resulting in a steep drop in enrolled students, which further resulted in the course being decommissioned at many institutions. However, a revival occurred in the 1970s, when conservative educators emphasized the need to repair a curriculum that had been, in their eyes, ravaged by careless radicalism. At a 1976 session for the American Historical Association (AHA), Professor William H. McNeill of the University of Chicago stated that historians could only avoid the fate of irrelevance by finding something to teach that "every active citizen ought to be familiar with in order to conduct his life well and perform his public duties effectively."[143] McNeill's statement is a clear amalgamation of the concerns that Bloom and Hirsch would promote in their respective books. Bloom was primarily concerned with the proper conduct of life, and Hirsch with the efficient performance of public duties. But they both related to the importance of a shared culture.

In late 1983, less than a year after the publication of Hirsch's original article *Cultural Literacy*, the National Commission on Excellence in Education issued a report on the state of the American educational system. The report was titled "A Nation at Risk," and its tone was as alarmistic as the title implied. It cited numerous literacy test results that declined over time, and comparisons of American students with foreign ones, where the Americans consistently came out of it unfavorably. In addition to suggesting things like increased financing and better training of teachers, the report also echoed Hirsch's article. It emphasized the need to foster a common culture, claiming that it was essential to a democratic society.[144]

In 1984, Audrey T. Edwards wrote an article for *The English Journal*, in which she cautiously warned against the proposals that Hirsch made in his article. She did not accuse him of having an exclusionary agenda, but she was concerned that his proposals might still have exclusionary outcomes. "A rigid, tradition-based book list may be too elitist, too exclusionary to have a widespread effect in improving our national literacy," she stated, indicating that her concern was primarily about the practicality of the idea, not the philosophical foundation it was based on. However, she made it clear that any practical shortcomings were likely to disadvantage minority students more than others. Focusing on the language aspect in particular, she argued, "The language of Robert Burns or Chaucer

[143] Allardyce, "The Rise and Fall of the Western Civilization Course," 717.
[144] National Commission on Excellence in Education, "A Nation at Risk," *The Elementary School Journal* Vol. 84, No. 2 (November 1983): 114.

would be an insurmountable barrier to students who speak English as a second language or are unfamiliar with formal written English."[145]

Hirsch responded to Edwards' concerns in a later issue of the same journal, and he put the article's message right in its title: "'Cultural Literacy' Doesn't Mean 'Core Curriculum.'" The educational content intended to broaden the cultural literacy of students, he explained, should never make up the core curriculum in their education. Defending the practicality of his proposal, he stated that "[t]he knowledge needed to stay afloat and follow readings and lectures, while extensive, is not very intensive. [Students] don't need to know details of the latest theories about the Civil War, but they do need to know in general what it was." The central message of Hirsch's response was that schools must separate the "background information" that provides students with their cultural literacy, from the core curriculum.[146]

The question of locally and federally developed curriculum

Because Hirsch wanted American schoolchildren to share a common culture, he believed centralized development of their curriculum was a necessity. After all, if everything was left to states, districts, or individual schools, it would undermine the purpose of his proposal. However, he was cautious with regards to how much power this centralized body should have. In his 1983 article "Cultural Literacy," he expressed a wish for a National Board of Education, and explained that its primary purpose would be an influence "based on leadership rather than compulsion." He believed this would allow the nation to put his idea into action, while remaining consistent with federalist and pluralist principles, and would therefore be a good compromise. "In any case," he concluded, "we need leadership at the national level, and we need specific guidance."[147]

In his book, published four years later, Hirsch reiterated that he did not want his proposal to be the end of local control in education. It would, however, require cooperation towards a common goal. "I hope," he explained, "that the schools themselves will act on the implications of the new findings about literacy and independently recognize our need to teach more shared information on a national scale." He emphasized that this would also provide schools with a lot of freedom regarding how cultural literacy should be attained. "Schools

[145] Audrey T. Edwards, "Cultural Literacy: What Are Our Goals?," *The English Journal* Vol. 73, No. 4 (April 1984): 71-72.
[146] E. D. Hirsch Jr, "'Cultural Literacy' Doesn't Mean 'Core Curriculum,'" *The English Journal* Vol. 74, No. 6 (October 1985) 48.
[147] Hirsch Jr, "Cultural Literacy," 167-168.

across our nation should share common goals," he stated, "but their means for achieving those goals should be varied and adaptive."[148] Hirsch wanted a national vocabulary, but did not propose a national curriculum for achieving this.

Elaborating on how such a compromise between local and federal control would actually work, Hirsch argued that it would at the very least require publishers and educators to agree about the content of the national vocabulary. He believed they should also make recommendations for the order in which this content should be covered, but he did not wish to extend centralized power beyond this. "The agreement needn't specify anything about the way the sequenced materials should be presented or the percentage of time to be spent on them," he explained. "But such an agreement would ensure that any child who graduated from an elementary, junior high, or high school would share with others a minimal core of background information."[149]

The question of how much decision-making power should be given to the federal government, and how much should be given to school districts, is another question that has permeated the American culture war. Because independence and self-determination are such integral aspects of the American self-identity, the idea of leaving this responsibility to the federal government has been resisted by many. Those who have held on to this principle, though, have largely found themselves losing ground. In the early 20th century, especially throughout the 1920 and '30s, school administration was increasingly centralized. This was partially because a growing middle-class placed financial demands on the education system that small districts could not meet.[150]

The appeal to local control became increasingly prominent among conservatives as they were faced with curriculum that diverged more and more from their ideology. Preserving local control no longer came down to the mere principle of self-determination, but to a matter of preserving conservative values more broadly. The Harold-Rugg-controversy of the 1930s exemplified this. The primary objection to the books he authored was that they denigrated American history by presenting the Founding Fathers as self-interested businessmen, and that they denigrated modern American society by emphasizing social inequity. Rugg's opponents insisted that parents should get to decide what their children were being taught, which was a

[148] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 95, 127.
[149] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 141.
[150] Scribner, *The Fight for Local Control*, 16, 28.

natural extension of the principle of local control. Rugg and his supporters, on the other hand, believed that curriculum selection must be a centralized effort left to professionals.[151]

Pluralism was another integral element to the debate about local control of curriculum, and it was, interestingly enough, employed by those on the conservative side of the issue. They found themselves losing more and more ground in this debate, especially in the early 1960s, when the Supreme Court ruled that prayer and bible reading had no place in public schools. As a result, conservatives changed their emphasis from the importance of majority rule to that of minority rights, more specifically their own rights to teach a curriculum consistent with their values.[152] Indeed, cultural unity and local control were always somewhat contradictory goals, but the same was true of the cultural pluralism and centralized curriculum that liberals aimed for. Which side people found themselves on in the question of centralized curriculum or local control, was largely decided by the content of the curriculum. For conservatives, the same was true regarding the question of cultural pluralism or cultural unity. This is evident in the reactions against a growing call for bilingual education in the 1960s and '70s, when many conservatives argued that school should be a culturally neutral space, and bilingual education was therefore an undesirable development.[153]

When conservatives started framing things like Christian schooling as a form of pluralism, they were in principle opposed to both of the wishes that Hirsch would later express in his book: cultural unity and a centralized curriculum. But in the 1980s, reinvigorated by Reagan's presidency, many conservatives once again turned to centralized curriculum as a tool for establishing cultural unity on their own premises.[154] This is part of the reason why people like William Bennett were so welcoming to Hirsch's proposal, besides the fact that they approved of the particular culture that Hirsch wanted to promote.

Although Hirsch's proposal never came to fruition, a similar project was attempted in the years after his book was published. In 1989, the first year of George H. W. Bush's presidency, work began on the National History Standards. This project was initiated by Lynne Cheney, who served as chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, a public office previously held by William Bennett. As the name of the project implied, the National History Standards aimed for a nationwide standardization of content for history education. However, when it was finalized in 1994, during Bill Clinton's first term, the project faced

[151] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 58-60.
[152] Scribner, *The Fight for Local Control*, 165-167.
[153] Petrzela, *Classroom Wars*, 6.
[154] Hartman, "A Trojan Horse for Social Engineering," 116.

severe backlash. It was criticized for omitting historic figures who had traditionally been included in such works, like Robert E. Lee, and for including people like Harriet Tubman, who many believed was only included to fulfil a quota of representation. Among the project's harshest critics was Lynne Cheney. As chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, she had been central to the initiation of the project, but the team of assigned historians had not developed the type of traditionalist, patriotic history content that she had in mind. In addition to political correctness, the Standards were also accused of relativism, because it did not sufficiently condemn the Soviet Union. Hence, its critics argued, the Standards implied that the Cold War was not a battle of good and evil, but merely a conflict between two cultures with different ways of seeing the world. The controversy resulted in the Senate condemning the *Standards*, and they were never implemented.[155]

Concerns about condoning a dominant culture

Central to the controversy surrounding *Cultural Literacy* was the concern that Hirsch's proposal would discriminate against the many cultures that coexisted within America, except for that of white Americans. A good explanation of this concept can be found in the book *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* by the historian David Hollinger. When explaining the concept of nationalism, he stated that among its central elements was "the use of state power to establish certain 'identities,' understood as performative, and thus creating social cohesion on certain terms rather than others."[156] Hollinger did not provide this explanation in the context of *Cultural Literacy*, and his own book was published nearly a decade later. Nevertheless, his description is highly relevant, because creating social cohesion on the terms of a certain culture at the expense of others was exactly what Hirsch was accused of trying to do.

Hirsch made no claims of a nationalistic agenda, but he acknowledged the potential connections that could be drawn between nationalism and his proposal for a curriculum to promote a nationwide culture. In what was perhaps not the best way of calming those who would accuse him of a nationalistic agenda, he stated that nationalism "may be regrettable in some of its worldwide political effects, [but] a mastery of national culture is essential to mastery of the standard language in every modern nation." He then paid quick compliments to the virtues of multicultural education, specifically that it inculcates tolerance and provides

[155] Hartman, "A Trojan Horse for Social Engineering," 128-129.
[156] David Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 201.

perspective, before he emphasized that it should not be the primary focus of national education. He justified this by stating that children "enter neither a narrow tribal culture nor a transcendent world culture but a national literate culture."[157] According to Hirsch, cultural education should aim for the national level, not one that is more *or* less specific than this. In other words, it should not primarily emphasize the distinct cultures within a single nation, or those between different nations.

It was pointed out by many that there were clear parallels between *Cultural Literacy* and *The Closing of the American Mind*. Additionally, Allan Bloom made observations in his book that not only concerned multiculturalism, but were directly complementary to the central proposal of Hirsch's book. When discussing the usefulness of a shared culture, Bloom discussed how specific knowledge and experiences allowed people to imply complex information by simply saying, for example, "He is a scrooge."[158] In other words, he demonstrated, like Hirsch, how a shared culture allows people to communicate efficiently through metaphors and proverbs.

Where Bloom differed from Hirsch, however, was in his assessment of what American culture actually consisted of. Because Bloom believed that the plurality of cultures in America effectively meant it had no national culture, he claimed it was possible to become an American in a day. He contrasted this with the impossibility of becoming a Frenchman. Anyone could become a French citizen, to be sure, but Bloom believed that a Frenchman was something that you were born as, or you would never be one. He explained this concept by claiming that the French had a deeper connection to the historical echoes of their nation. The flipside to this dynamic, according to him, was that citizens of France who did not share in the mainstream culture of the nation were inevitably cultural outsiders who must figure out what it is they belong to. In America, by contrast, Bloom claimed that there were no real outsiders.[159] This is an interesting claim, because the sorting of people into insiders and outsiders was exactly what many people feared that Hirsch's proposal would result in.[160]

Those who criticized Hirsch for this reason, however, would likely have taken issue with Bloom's basis for claiming that America had no real outsiders. In the introduction to his book, Bloom referred to Franklin D. Roosevelt's wish for America to be "a society which leaves no one out," and added that "the natural rights inherent in our regime are perfectly

[157] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 18.
[158] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 64.
[159] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 53.
[160] Lambert, "Book Review – Cultural Literacy," 454.

adequate to the solution of this problem, provided these outsiders adhere to them." Essentially, this meant that they would adhere to the principles put down by the Founding Fathers, which constituted the foundations of American culture. He contrasted this with the ideas permeating the modern education system that he so disapproved of, specifically the idea that people should get to have it both ways and not have to choose between giving up their cultural individuality or being "doomed to an existence on the fringe."[161]

"An existence on the fringe" implies a sense of powerlessness, and this is crucial to the discussion. Throughout the 1970s and '80s, the idea of culture as a form of power found traction among more and more historians, primarily on the Left. On the one hand, culture could be a tool of liberation for the oppressed. It provided a common identity and purpose for people to rally around, much like a religion (which is in itself an aspect of culture), but without the need for expressed belief. On the other hand, culture could be wielded as a weapon by the dominant demographic group. "Cultural hegemony" turned this group into a ruling class. It allowed them to define "a certain way of life and thought [as] dominant," and thereby subconsciously influence the majority to accept its domination by the few.[162]

The concept of cultural power can be retrospectively detected in times that predate its articulation by scholars. New Left activists in the 1960s and '70s were resisting cultural hegemony enforced through distinctions of race, sex, and sexuality. Black Panther spokespersons rallied against the oppressive forces of the "white power structure," feminists against the patriarchy, and gay rights activists against culturally enforced heteronormativity.[163] With such dynamics came the question of integration vs. self-determination and separatism. This is not only a political question, but a cultural one, although these cannot always be neatly separated. Spokespersons for the Black Power movement insisted that African Americans should affirm their own history, and their own heroes, rather than adopt those of the WASP-hegemony. Such sentiments were also shared by certain Mexican American activists, like Rodolfo Gonzales and Reies López Tijerina.[164] Other Black activists, like the educator Julius Hobson, argued that they should rather integrate their history into the regular curriculum. An argument in favor of this stance, was that the regular curriculum would otherwise continue to ignore the historical contributions of African Americans.[165]

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[161] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 30-31.
[162] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 94-96.
[163] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 18-19.
[164] Kruse, Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 52.
[165] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 114.

In his book *The Disuniting of America*, Arthur Schlesinger acknowledged the need for African Americans to claim their place own history, despite his broader skepticism towards multicultural education. "Far more than white ethnics," he explained, "they perceive themselves to be in a trap of cultural 'hegemony' in which they are flooded by white values and demeaning self-images." He also quoted Kofi Lomotey of the State University of New York in Buffalo, who claimed that "Physical enslavement has been succeeded by psychological enslavement."[166] In other words, Lomotey believed that the dominant demographic group, i.e., white Americans, were wielding cultural power as a tool of subordination. Schlesinger did not challenge this point.

Despite his concession, Schlesinger was very critical of curricular changes that had been made in the state of New York. In 1987, a new curriculum had been adopted, which significantly reduced the amount of time spent on American history, and divided this time equally across seven global regions. Despite such changes, calls were made for more diversity still, leading to the appointment of the 1989 Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence. Schlesinger noted that none of its 17 members were historians. More importantly, he claimed that the task force viewed history "not as an intellectual discipline but rather as social and psychological therapy whose primary purpose is to raise the self-esteem of children from minority groups."[167] In other words, he believed that a disproportionate emphasis on diversity had resulted in a curriculum that would not serve its intellectual purpose of inculcating knowledge and skills.

With regards to the alleged need for studies tailored to the perspectives and experiences of minority groups, Allan Bloom was even less understanding. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, he mocked the idea that feeling impelled to imitate white culture was the reason why Black students were falling behind in the universities. In the same sarcastic sentence, he stated that the real reason was certainly not because they were academically poor. Although he largely dismissed the potential impact of cultural hegemony in the universities, he implied, through an equally sarcastic comment, that it might in fact benefit African Americans to assimilate. "Integrationism," he quipped, "was just an ideology for whites and Uncle Toms. Who says that what universities teach is the truth rather than just the myths necessary to support the system of domination?"[168]

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[166] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 60-62.
[167] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 65-69.
[168] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 94.

Race was a particularly relevant aspect in the controversy surrounding *Cultural Literacy*. Hirsch was concerned with a common culture for Americans, and believed the white American culture would need to fulfil this role. It bears mentioning that the very term "American" has often been equated with "white" or "of European origin." This is a phenomenon that several liberal scholars have criticized, as it perpetuates the idea of white America as the "normative" America. Ronald Takaki made this point in his book *Strangers from a Different Shore*, when discussing the underrepresentation of Asian Americans in historical works.[169] Michael Berubé recalled that during his time as an English major specializing in American literature, he was assigned only one book by a Black writer, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Berubé described this in a tone that was somewhat positive and somewhat critical of the fact that it was such a rare occurrence, stating that "the English department managed to hire someone who could teach courses in which 'American' was not automatically synonymous with 'white.'"[170] The Black Power spokesperson Stokely Carmichael made a similar point by equating "normal America" to the oppressive "white power structure."[171]

A curriculum centered on white America

The imbalance of power between cultures in America is a common talking point in debates about the education system. Those who push for multiculturalism and a more equitable treatment of cultures tend to argue that because the curriculum is so centered on dead white males, students only learn about a fraction of all human experience, and even this content is presented through a very narrow perspective.[172] The controversy surrounding Hirsch's book was not only about his proposal favoring a certain culture over others. It was also relevant that the favored culture would be that of white Anglo-Saxons, which was already the hegemonic one. Among those who criticized Hirsch on these grounds, was Howard R. Woodhouse of the University of Saskatchewan, who claimed that Hirsch treated the historical contributions of all minorities as "peripheral."[173]

Hirsch acknowledged these concerns in the early parts of his book, likely aware of the accusations that he would face. After mentioning the common objections about traditional

[169] Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 6-7.
[170] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 149.
[171] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 18.
[172] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 215.
[173] Howard R. Woodhouse, "Critical Reflections on Hirsch and Cultural Literacy," *Interchange* Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 1989): 87.

education materials being disproportionately white, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant (every dimension of the WASP-demographic), Hirsch utilized these very concerns as an argument in favor of the shared national culture that he was proposing. He argued that this would be the ideal way of letting a broader array of cultures claim their place on the national stage, stating, "Literate culture is the most democratic culture in our land: it excludes nobody, it cuts across generations and social groups and classes."[174] The concerns that people had about imbalance of cultural power, Hirsch argued, therefore provided another reason to support his proposal rather than maintain the status quo.

By emphasizing that a shared national culture would provide minorities with a better opportunity to influence America, Hirsch acknowledged that an imbalance existed, and he agreed with his critics about who wielded more power than others. "By accident of history," he stated, "American cultural literacy has a bias toward English literate traditions." His next statement was a crucial distinction between him and his critics: "Short of revolutionary upheaval, there is absolutely nothing that can be done about this." In other words, Hirsch wanted different cultures to be shared and appreciated in America, but he did not believe the playing field could, or indeed should, ever be completely leveled. He elaborated further on this point by emphasizing that the English origins of mainstream American culture was not a weakness. On the one hand, he argued, "the English tradition is broad and heterogeneous and grows ever more so." This meant that, while it would remain English at its core, the culture would always have room for influence and traits from other cultures. On the other hand, he claimed that although the disproportionate power of English culture was the result of "accident of history," its continued dominance was a necessity, if only for "purely functional reasons."[175]

A specific controversy that exemplifies the concern about cultural hegemony in education, and gained a lot of attention at its time, was that of the Western Culture program at Stanford University in the late 1980s. Western Culture was Stanford's version of the Western Civilization course, the introduction to the humanities shared by most universities across the US. It had originally been established to provide all American students with a common foundation of non-specialized knowledge, of exactly the kind that Hirsch would have approved of. In 1986, a long debate emerged about whether or not Stanford's Western Culture course was excessively Eurocentric, and thereby discriminatory. Student activists were

[174] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 21.
[175] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 106-107.

involved, showing their support of a more representative curriculum by shouting "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Western's Culture's got to go!"[176] The antagonization of "Western Culture" was a red flag to conservatives. The ambiguity of the phrase means the students might have referred to the course, rather than the very concept. More likely than not, different students had different interpretations of the chant that they partook in. But regardless of intent, the chants provided plenty of evidence for those who wanted to prove that liberals hated the West, and thereby America. Arthur Schlesinger certainly interpreted it this way, stating that the protests were rooted in "animus toward Europe."[177]

In March 1988, Stanford discontinued the course, and replaced it with Cultures, Ideas and Values, or CIV.[178] In the aftermath of this affair, Allan Bloom shared his thoughts in a letter to the *Wall Street Journal*. He referred to the developments as a "total surrender to the present and abandonment of the quest for standards with which to judge it." Referring back to his book *The Closing of the American Mind*, he added "I could not hope for a more stunning confirmation of my thesis."[179]

Raoul V. Mowatt, at the time a senior English major at Stanford, had a very different interpretation of the event. In the *Washington Post*, he explained that the former Western Culture and the newer CIV were both sets of elective courses for students to choose between, and the content was largely unchanged. Some changes had indeed taken place, and the name change was meant to reflect this, even if it was largely symbolic. Not only did the courses still contain plenty of works that were considered essential to the Western canon; the majority of the courses were still dominated by them. Mowatt also noted that many of these were written by white men, perhaps implying that this mattered to those who took issue with the changes that were made.[180]

Hirsch knowingly entered a debate where controversy could be difficult to avoid. He acknowledged as much by pointing out how his book's namesake article had been politicized when it received an endorsement from William Bennett. It was perhaps for preemptive clarification that he included the following statements in his book: "It is cultural chauvinism and provincialism to believe that the content of our vocabulary is something either to recommend or deplore by virtue of its inherent merit." He illustrated his point by mentioning that other great civilizations had done just fine without Shakespeare, and that English culture

[176] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 215-216.
[177] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 123.
[178] Raoul V. Mowatt, "Stanford's Revolution that Wasn't Quite," *The Washington Post* (7 April, 1991)
[179] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 228-229.
[180] Mowatt, "Stanford's Revolution that Wasn't Quite."

had done just fine without the inputs of highly esteemed figures from other cultures. He did not present this as an argument in favor of cultural segregation, but to illustrate that, in his words, "no single national vocabulary is inherently superior or privileged above all others."[181]

Writing for the *New York Review of Books* in 1990, the philosopher John R. Searle voiced sentiments similar to those of Hirsch, about the English origins of American culture not being an inherent problem. He shared these sentiments in an essay called "The Storm Over the University." It dealt with a few different texts that contributed to the multiculturalism debate, including Roger Kimball's book *Tenured Radicals*. In his conclusion, Searle established that he believed history education should recognize subcultures that had been treated unjustly. He then criticized "the ridiculous notion that there is something embarrassing or lamentable about the fact that most of the prominent political and intellectual leaders of our culture over the past two thousand years or so have been white males." In sum, he believed that attempting to suppress the contributions of such thinkers for the sake of a perfect balance between different cultures, regardless of how much impact they have actually had, was both racist and unintelligent.[182]

Correlations of cultural and economic power

In the first chapter of his book, Hirsch discussed how his proposal could help achieve greater social justice. He referred to a talk from Harvard historian and sociologist Orlando Patterson, who had spoken after him at an event years earlier. Patterson had voiced his agreement with Hirsch about the need for an understanding of mainstream culture, and added that disadvantaged demographic groups would have the most to gain from it. "[B]lacks will be condemned in perpetuity to oversimplified, low-level tasks," Patterson had stated, "and will never gain their rightful place in controlling the levers of power unless they also acquire literacy in this wider cultural sense." By including such an observation in his book, Hirsch acknowledged an important point relating to his proposal: the correlation of race and socioeconomic class in American society. It is worth noting that the demographic whose culture he wanted to prioritize in his curricular proposal, i.e., white Americans, tend to be among the more socioeconomically privileged. This adds another dimension to the accusations he received of perpetuating cultural hegemony, thereby giving more power to those who were already powerful. But Hirsch prescribed his proposal as a potential solution

[181] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 107.
[182] Searle, "The Storm Over the University."

to this imbalance of power, claiming that children's reading skills "diverge according to socioeconomic status, chiefly because low-income pupils lack elementary cultural knowledge."[183] He thereby also acknowledged, or rather emphasized, the correlation between class and academic achievement.

When discussing how his proposal related to class, Hirsch referred to historical precedents for the process of standardizing language. "It is true," he stated, "that after national dictionaries were formulated, the standard languages were more likely to be acquired by people who were rich enough to be educated than by poor people." He then contrasted this by arguing that "the distinction is one of schooling, which we have made universal, not of economic or social class."[184] This is a significant sentence regarding Hirsch's thoughts on socioeconomic disparities by demographic. He agreed that the disparities existed, but he believed the public education system would be all it would take to circumvent it, which is a highly contestable point. Even though all American children have a legal right to attend school, there are stark disparities in public school funding between districts, and consequent inequities regarding the quality of K-12 education. In other words, the education system is yet another way in which socioeconomic disparities manifest themselves.[185]

Hirsch did not acknowledge this particular correlation in his book. On the contrary, he lamented the idea that schools could not positively impact the academic achievements of children from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. Explaining the roots of this attitude, he referred to the Coleman report of 1966, which concluded that academic achievement did indeed correlate more strongly with family background than with schools. However, Hirsch believed that educators and sociologists had drawn the wrong inferences from these findings. "[W]e cannot conclude from the present state of affairs," he argued, "that deprived children would be predestined to low achievement under a different school curriculum."[186] Hirsch's proposal was essentially a cultural strategy for fixing socioeconomic disparities, and it bears comparing to more materialistic strategies, collectively referred to as affirmative action.

Throughout the mid to late 20th century, the promotion of openly discriminatory policies gradually became more incompatible with broad political support. The era also saw important legislation intended to fight such discrimination, like the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, the Civil Rights Act did not achieve quite as much as many had hoped for with

[183] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 10-11, 110.
[184] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 106.
[185] Fred M. Shelley, "Local control and financing of education: a perspective from the American state judiciary," *Political Geography* Vol. 13, No. 4 (July 1994): 361-376.
[186] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 113-115.

regards to amending racial inequity, as it turned out that the reasons for these disparities were rooted much deeper. In the eyes of liberals, it would not suffice for the law to merely treat everyone equally, when people were inheriting the advantages or disadvantages of the past, and the advantaged ones were also benefiting from miscellaneous privileges, like unofficially preferential hiring policies by private employers. Consequently, many liberals abandoned their "colorblind" approach, and opted for legislation that would provide minority groups with certain forms of preferential treatment, like quotas for admission to universities.[187]

However, as liberals largely abandoned the colorblind approach, conservatives embraced it. During the 1972 Republican National Convention, Nixon condemned affirmative action, stating that "You do not correct an ancient injustice by committing a new one." This was one of the fundamental ideas that they based their arguments on: that affirmative action was discrimination by another name, and the only difference was who it was aiming to benefit, which also made it a double standard.[188] Another fundamental idea was that affirmative action reduced people to members of groups, instead of treating them as individuals. Such a practice, they argued, was un-American. In addition, many claimed it made white Americans into the new victims of racism.[189] In light of this claim, and previously explored equations of "white" and "American," affirmative action might even be considered anti-American by certain definitions.

The first Supreme Court ruling made on affirmative action was that of the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in 1978, more commonly known as the *Bakke* decision. It was initiated when Allan Bakke, a white man, was rejected from admission to the University of California despite his allegedly higher test scores than a number of African Americans who were admitted. The University of California had reserved a certain number of seats for minority students, which Bakke claimed violated his rights under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Supreme Court settled on a compromise. Quotas of the kind that the University of California had used were deemed unconstitutional, and they therefore had to admit Bakke. However, when assessing applicants, universities would be allowed to take race into consideration along with other factors.[190] The *Bakke* decision thereby created a new question that was up to individual institutions to answer, namely how much sway the factor of race should have in an admission process.

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[187] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 103-104.
[188] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 106.
[189] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 127-128.
[190] Katherine C. Naff, "From *Bakke* to *Grutter* and *Gratz*: The Supreme Court as a Policymaking Institution," *Review of Policy Research* Vol. 21, No. 3 (2004): 408.

In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom shared his thoughts on affirmative action. He primarily focused on it being used for admitting more Black students, and he was far from positive in his overall assessment. "Affirmative action now institutionalizes the worst aspects of separatism," he stated. "The fact is that the average black student's achievements do not equal those of the average white students in the good universities, and everybody knows it." He also presented a common argument against affirmative action that emphasizes its detrimental impacts on African Americans in particular, stating, "It is also a fact that the university degree of a black student is also tainted, and employers look on it with suspicion, or become guilty accomplices in the toleration of incompetence."[191]

The criticism that Bloom received for these statements, primarily focused on him ignoring societal circumstances that hampered African Americans, be they circumstances of a cultural or economic nature. Helene Moglen, in the same article where she claimed that Bloom and Hirsch unintentionally revealed the New Right agenda in their books, tore into Bloom's treatment of affirmative action. "Since Bloom does not credit the significance of social influence on academic achievement, he believes performance expresses innate ability exclusively," she stated, "and he categorically rejects white bias as a factor in the alienation of black students in the academy."[192] She thereby made two accusations against Bloom: He implied that African Americans were simply weaker students, and he used this as an additional justification for dismissing affirmative action.

Writing for the *Radical History Review* in 1992, historian Joan Wallach Scott articulated a central argument in favor of affirmative action. She stated, "The expansion of the university [through affirmative action] has not so much altered admission policies, as added more considerations to them and made them more visible." Her point was that even before affirmative action, there was more than merit that decided who was admitted. As she explained, "[M]erit was one among many factors that included athletic skill, wealth, geographic location, and family connection to alumni, the famous, and the powerful."[193] Her article made no mention of Bloom specifically. He was only one of many who spoke of affirmative action as if it was the only thing keeping the university admission system from being purely based on merit.

In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Bloom also discussed the cultural location of Black students. The central thesis of his book was about the spiritual necessity of culture, and

[191] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 96.
[192] Moglen, "Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch," 61.
[193] Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," 69.

he believed that Black students lacked a genuine connection to the universities. They were, according to him, "not sharing a special positive intellectual or moral experience; they partake fully in the common culture, with the same goals and tastes as everyone else." However, he added a crucial point about their particular circumstances: "[B]ut they are doing it by themselves. They continue to have the inward sentiments of separateness caused by exclusion when it no longer effectively exists." Bloom was essentially saying that Black students did not have the cultural benefit of a unique community, but they were also self-isolating, thereby getting the worst of both worlds. He framed this as yet another negative consequence of affirmative action. "Although preferential treatment of blacks goes against a deep-seated conviction that equal rights belong to individuals and are color-blind," he argued, "white students have been willing by and large to talk themselves into accepting affirmative action as a temporary measure on the way to equality." Bloom believed that this very dissonance of principles made white students uncomfortable, and resulted in the lack of genuine camaraderie across the racial divide. "Thus, just at the moment when everyone else has become a 'person,'" he concluded, "blacks have become blacks."[194]

Many conservatives would likely disagree with Bloom's claim about Black students not having their own culture, but argue that the culture they possessed was detrimental to their place in the nation. A term often used is the "culture of poverty." A document which became a foundational source of arguments for this theory was the 1965 study *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. It is commonly referred to as the "Moynihan Report," after its author Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who served as Assistant Secretary of Labor under President Lyndon B. Johnson.[195] The report took much inspiration from University of Chicago sociologists, who largely explained urban Black poverty as a form of "social disorganization" and cultural lag caused by the migration from the rural South to urban communities in the North.[196] When defining the culture of poverty, the Moynihan Report emphasized phenomena like absent fathers and crumbling families, and the consequently higher rates of crime, incarceration, unemployment, and so on. It received much criticism for its emphasis on cultural traits. In *The Nation*, William Ryan argued that it "seduces the reader into believing that it is not racism and discrimination but the weaknesses and defects of the Negro himself that account for his present status."[197] A similar accusation was made in the

[194] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 92-93.
[195] Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, "Black Families and The White House: The political implications of the Moynihan Report controversy," *Trans-Action* Vol. 3, No. 5 (1966): 6.
[196] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 43-44.
[197] William Ryan, "Savage Discovery: The Moynihan Report," *The Nation* (22 November, 1965).

journal *Christianity and Crisis*, where Benjamin F. Payton claimed that the report provided "ammunition to those who would deny … real equality of opportunity."[198]

The report did not conclude that African Americans had only themselves to blame, that they could not be helped by government support, or anything similarly dismissive. On the contrary, it acknowledged the historical relevance of slavery and Jim Crow, and it concluded with a call for jobs programs to support Black communities, improvement of family housing, and related strategies.[199] However, the observations made about a detrimental culture, regardless of its roots, became stock arguments for those who did not encourage materialistic solutions like jobs programs, but rather cultural solutions.[200] An example of such a cultural solution, would be the proposal that Hirsch made in *Cultural Literacy*.

[198] Benjamin F. Payton, "New Trends in Civil Rights," *Christianity and Crisis* (13 December, 1965)
[199] Rainwater, Yancey, "Black Families and The White House," 9.
[200] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 45.

Chapter 3
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Elitism, censorship, and indoctrination

According to James Davison Hunter's seminal book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, both liberals and conservatives are quick to exaggerate the amount of power that the other side wields. "By inflating the nature, size, and political power of their opposition," Hunter explained, "the identity and mission of each alliance had been forcefully reaffirmed."[201] The tactics that he described closely paralleled another common accusation, namely that the other side constituted society's "elite." As with the concept of democracy, liberals and conservatives have tended to define the concept of an elite very differently, which has allowed both sides to make such accusations. Liberals have typically defined elites by privilege acquired through corporate power and wealth,[202] while conservatives have typically defined elites by power acquired through cultural institutions, like the media and academia.[203] The implication, however, has always been that the elites were the ones with the power to censor, to indoctrinate, and to shape American society through dishonest means. This discourse has constituted yet another aspect of the culture war, and was particularly salient in the years after *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Cultural Literacy* were published.[204] Both of these books related to this discourse, but in different ways.

The alleged elitism of Bloom and Hirsch

Although Hirsch did not escape accusations of elitism, Bloom received more of them. According to Richard Rorty, also a philosopher, Bloom seemingly considered himself a member of an exclusive club of exceptional individuals. "Bloom," he claimed, "says that anyone who doesn't see the world as Plato sees it just doesn't know what's going on."[205] One of the more biting criticisms came from Benjamin Barber, who was less concerned with Bloom's condescending tone than he was with the book's agenda. Writing for *Harper's*

[201] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 157.
[202] Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," 63.
[203] Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 41.
[204] Books.google.com. 2023. *Google Ngram Viewer*. [online] Available at: https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=liberal+elite&year_start=1900&year_end=1995&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=
[205] Bowen, "Are Student Heads Full of Emptiness?," 57.

Magazine, Barber claimed that *The Closing of the American Mind* "would seem to qualify as one of the most profoundly anti-democratic books ever written for a popular audience."[206]

It is not difficult to find statements in Bloom's book that these writers might have had in mind. On the contrary, it can be a challenge to choose from so many alternatives. But the following is a good place to start: "The imperative to promote equality, stamp out racism, sexism and elitism (the peculiar crimes of our democratic society), as well as war, is overriding for a man who can define no other interest worthy of defending."[207] The central premise in *The Closing of the American Mind*, the premise from which Bloom branched out to the universities, anti-Americanism, and all the other secondary premises, was that of spiritual entropy. He believed that Americans were living in perpetual aimlessness and nihilism, because their lives were without purpose. But as the previous quote demonstrated, activism was not a purpose that he considered worthwhile. In the review for *Theory and Society*, Richard Wolin stated that it was sentiments like this one that betrayed Bloom's inconsistencies. He illustrated this by highlighting Bloom's contempt for the student activists of the 1960s, despite these students' display of "the value-commitment, the moral enthusiasm, the public-spiritedness, and the passion for principle that Bloom finds so sorely lacking among present-day youth."[208]

Moreover, Bloom specifically chose to dismiss activism on behalf of equality, making it clear that he did not believe fighting inequality should be among people's priorities. He provided more evidence of the same when he sarcastically referred to racism, sexism, and elitism as "the peculiar crimes of our democratic society." Getting distracted by this sarcastic dismissal, one might easily miss the implications of the word "democratic," namely that the reason why Americans were so preoccupied with these issues was that democracy had regrettably become such a dogmatic aim. Bloom was a skilled wordsmith indeed. This short passage provided layers of elitism.

Responding to Bloom's book in an essay, literary scholar Susan Bourgeois shared her theory about why he might have felt compelled to write it. She believed it was rooted in a grudge against the university "for becoming more inclusive in curriculum and expanding their responsiveness to student populations other than that of white men between the ages of

[206] Barber, "The Philosopher Despot," 82.
[207] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 314.
[208] Wolin, "Reviewed work(s): The Closing of the American Mind by Allan Bloom," 281.

18 and 22."[209] It is interesting that she focused on inclusive curriculum, which would have been even more relevant to Hirsch's book, although Bloom also touched on this topic in his discussions on multiculturalism. But Hirsch could not fairly be described as writing with a grudge, like Bloom certainly could. Additionally, Bourgeois's accusations of elitism did not only concern Bloom's thoughts on the university. She also highlighted how he invoked lofty, philosophical concepts to reject material solutions to real, tangible problems. She exemplified this with his dismissal of welfare programs as "signs of the incapacity to look up toward the heaven of man's possible perfection or self-overcoming."[210] Bourgeois considered Bloom to be an elitist of both the intellectual and the materialistic kind, and decried the lack of sympathy for the least privileged in society.[211]

Bloom himself connected the intellectual and the materialistic in his book. More specifically, he connected these concepts by emphasizing that they should be kept separate, when he claimed that the university should not reach beyond its main purpose by trying to improve society. "The University is only one interest among many," he stated, "and must always keep its eye on that interest for fear of compromising it in the desire to be more useful, more relevant, more popular."[212]

The question of whether or not the university should be utilized for improving society was not a new one. Nineteen sixty-three saw the publication of the book *Uses of the University* by Clark Kerr, then President of the University of California. He believed professors of social sciences and the humanities should study political issues, like demographic developments and environmental degradation, so that they could "add wisdom to truth." Among those who pushed back against Kerr's proposals was Mario Savio of the Free Speech Movement (FSM), a student organization that was active in the mid-1960s. One of the FSM's primary goals was the right for students to speak on political matters, but on the question of politicizing the university any further, Savio and others in the organization were cautious. They believed Kerr's proposal would compromise the university as an institution built on a foundation of political detachment. As they saw it, at least at that time, requesting political commitment from professors was very different from allowing it among students.[213]

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[209] Susan Bourgeois, "A Feminist Reads *The Closing of the American Mind,*" in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 55.
[210] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 198.
[211] Bourgeois, "A Feminist Reads *The Closing of the American Mind,*" 65.
[212] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 254.
[213] Andrew Jewett, "The Politics of Knowledge in 1960s America," *Social Science History* Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 2012): 554-555.

The public school system saw similar disputes throughout the 20th century. In 1916, the United States Bureau of Education published a report calling for an interdisciplinary approach to social studies, and the creation of a 12th grade course with the proposed title "Problems of Democracy." The idea was that students familiar with such problems would be better equipped for the process of improving society. However, the course faced much criticism, as some worried that its integrational approach would be the end of traditionally taught history in schools, and considered it "history controlled by present interests and problems." Despite such objections, the course became very influential, and remained in schools for decades.[214]

The United States Bureau of Education was not alone in suggesting that curriculum should be tailored towards social change. The 1920s, not long after the initial controversies surrounding Problems of Democracy, saw a trend of labor unions pushing for similar goals. More specifically, they wanted history textbooks to make it clear how their content related to contemporary topics like unemployment and collective bargaining. In addition to the objections that many people had towards Problems of Democracy, the curricular agenda of the labor unions was also branded as "socialist." This was a tough obstacle to overcome, because many considered socialism to be incompatible with American principles. Consequently, the curricular ideas that the labor unions pushed for did not achieve any long-term influence of the kind that Problems of Democracy did.[215]

An obvious example of someone who wanted public education to play an active role in changing society would be E. D. Hirsch. Fully aware that his proposal would cause a certain amount of controversy, he devoted many paragraphs in his book to defend it as an idea of liberal merit. He also emphasized that dismissing such programs because they did not conform to what one intuitively thought of as progressivism was "an unprogressive action that helps preserve the political and economic status quo."[216]

While Hirsch was criticized for his particular ideas for improving society, Bloom was criticized for his belief that the university should not be concerned with improving society at all. In fact, this was one of the main reasons why many considered him an elitist, because he believed the university had more noble purposes than improving the lives of the most disadvantaged. In an essay on his book, Margaret C. Jones of the Central State Washington

[214] Ronald W. Evans, "The Social Studies Wars, Now and Then," *Social Education* Vol. 70, No. 5 (September 2006): 318.
[215] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 24.
[216] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 23.

University presented reasons why she believed that academics needed social and political commitment. Perhaps the most interesting among them was her argument that education is inevitably political, evident in the fact that teachers, like journalists, are considered important to control in authoritarian regimes. In her own words, "in a world where university teachers are the targets of police and death squads hired and trained with our tax dollars, the intellectual and the political cannot be neatly separated."[217]

In the same essay where she dealt with Bloom's dismissal of affirmative action, Helene Moglen also criticized him for seeing so little value in the university as a force for change while he inflated the value of philosophy for its own sake. She summarized Bloom's primary interest as what he himself called "participation in essential being," and chided him for treating the eradication of inequity "not merely as irrelevant but as antithetical to his purpose."[218] Benjamin Barber made a similar observation. "We are being asked implicitly," he explained, "to turn the democratic culture that ought to be the university's finest product into the servant of universities that produce something called Truth."[219] Another such observation was made by the philosopher Martha Nussbaum in her essay "Undemocratic Vistas," written for the *New York Review of Books*. She disapprovingly described Bloom's ideal university as one that would simply "perfect and then protect a few contemplative souls, whose main subject matter will, apparently, be the superiority of their own contemplative life to the moral and political life." According to Bloom, she claimed, the teaching of philosophy should have one purpose: to preserve itself. She then presented what she considered a preferable alternative, formulated in the 1945 Harvard publication *General Education in a Free Society*. She praised its authors for emphasizing the diverse needs of different American students, and for displaying "a refined sensitivity to student's actual social situations," which she found sorely missing in Bloom's book.[220]

Nussbaum's comments were later challenged by the much more Bloom-friendly philosopher Charles E. Butterworth. After referring to Nussbaum's praise of *General Education in a Free Society*, and her insistence on the need for "genuinely democratic thought" in the education system, he challenged these claims. Nussbaum, he believed, was closed-minded, while Bloom was more open to alternatives, and simply wanted "to question

[217] Margaret C. Jones, "A Bloom Amid the Reagan-Bushes," in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 74.
[218] Moglen, "Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch," 61.
[219] Barber, "The Philosopher Despot," 87.
[220] Nussbaum, "Undemocratic Vistas."

the merits of democracy as well as of every other system." In the same essay, Butterworth also defended Bloom from criticism uttered by Amherst College president Peter R. Pouncey. According to Butterworth, Pouncey had criticized Bloom from a perspective rooted in moral relativism. "Pouncey would like to say that all ideas are good or, at the very least, deserving of respect," claimed Butterworth. "Bloom is more willing to dismiss ideas he deems nefarious."[221] In other words, Butterworth changed his argument within the same essay. He first criticized Nussbaum for not being open to an idea, specifically the idea of compromising democratic principles, before he praised Bloom for being willing to dismiss ideas he considered to be bad. This more than implies that Butterworth primarily cared about what the ideas entailed, not merely the principle of open-mindedness.

Others who supported Bloom focused more specifically on his belief that the university should avoid social commitment. Among them was Simon Green, who was a research fellow at Oxford University when he wrote a retrospective review of *The Closing of the American Mind*, a decade after the book's publication. In a passage that could have come straight out of Bloom's book, he claimed that the purpose of the university was to "tell the truth to democracy; to perform in the matter of knowledge the same task that lawyers … perform for rights – tempering the tyranny of the majority through the authority of a theoretically driven, tradition-bound cadre."[222]

"The tyranny of the majority" is a particularly interesting phrase, which echoes another theme explored by Bloom. In his book, he highlighted the problematic nature of modern democracies relying on majority consensus, and defended the concept of an aristocratic party which would provide "a place for dissenting opinions to flourish." Although Bloom was mostly positive to the merits of the Founding Fathers, he was ambiguous when discussing their rejection of aristocracy, monarchy, and theocracy: "This was very good for our domestic tranquility, but not very encouraging for theoretical doubts about triumphant equality."[223] In this, Bloom stayed true to the themes that caused him to face so many accusations of elitism. His objections to the principles of the Founding Fathers centered on them prioritizing "triumphant equality," which Bloom claimed was not ideal for theoretical doubts about equality itself. He thereby implied that monarchy and theocracy would have provided better circumstances for intellectual dissent.

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[221] Charles E. Butterworth, "On Misunderstanding Allan Bloom: The Response to *The Closing of the American Mind*," *Academic Questions* Vol. 2, No. 4 (1989): 68-69.
[222] Green, "'The Closing of the American Mind,' Revisited," 33.
[223] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 248.

Bloom's aristocratism can be traced back to a source of influence, namely Leo Strauss, who was Bloom's teacher. In the essay "Straussianism, Democracy, and Allan Bloom," Richard Rorty discussed these titular topics, and how they related to each other. He emphasized Strauss and Bloom's partiality for intellectual aristocracy, and the inevitable tensions between this and modern concepts of democracy. "Straussians make no bones about saying that the allegiance of the 'potential knowers' with the masses is just a prudential strategy," Rorty explained. "On their view, nobody would accept the risks of being subject to the whims of an electorate dumb enough to have voted for Hitler, if there were a better alternative." Such a perspective is perhaps more understandable in light of the fact that Strauss was German, and never moved back to his home country after the Nazis seized power. Rorty himself, on the other hand, was not as cynical about the nature of those who make up "the masses." He adhered to Deweyan principles of philosophy and education, believing that education should work towards an ever more democratic and equitable society. In his essay on Bloom's book, he argued that its subtitle, "How higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students," did not quite fit the book's content, because democracy was not what Bloom was concerned with. A more exact subtitle, Rorty suggested, would have been "How democracy has failed philosophy and made it difficult for students to take Plato seriously."[224]

A particularly interesting parallel between Bloom and another public figure, was presented in the essay "The Colonel and the Professor" by policy analyst David Rieff. He compared the anti-democratic sentiments of Bloom's book, to the anti-democratic implications of the testimony made by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North before the Senate, in the wake of the Iran-Contra scandal, which occurred around the same time that Bloom's book was published. The ideas promoted by North, which Rieff found problematic, was that the government must be allowed to operate on, and sometimes even beyond, the limits of legality, if this is considered necessary to prevail in international affairs. The similarities between North and Bloom came down to an idea, namely that taking an uncompromising stance on equality and equal treatment for all was misguided. As Rieff saw it, North and Bloom promoted the idea that an elite few of society's most qualified knew what was best for the masses and that they should be allowed to enforce it.[225] Rieff was not the only commentator to draw comparisons between Bloom and North. Philosophy Professor John K.

[224] Rorty, "Straussianism, Democracy, and Allan Bloom I," 94, 100.
[225] Rieff, "The Colonel and the Professor," 290-292.

Roth did the same in another essay on *The Closing of the American Mind*. "We need to ask," he cautioned, "is Bloom seeking to open the American mind only to close it all over again, once he and like-minded rationalists have found the certitude for which they yearn?" He noted that Bloom's "aristocratic rationalism" was not entirely without merit, but that it "bears careful watching, nonetheless."[226]

Bloom believed modern Americans lacked the philosophical foundation needed to question democracy and equality, and that they were dogmatic about these principles. This, he explained, further reinforced the spiritual entropy that was his main concern. Because modern Americans insisted that everyone should be equal, and because not everyone achieves great things in their lives, they had developed a "contempt for the heroic." Bloom described this as "a perversion of the democratic principle that denies greatness and wants everyone to feel comfortable in his skin without having to suffer unpleasant comparisons."[227]

Similar observations had been made by other American conservatives decades before Bloom's book. In the 1955 essay "The Dissolution of Liberalism," Russell Kirk claimed that "the twentieth-century liberal has come to care less and less about variety, individuality [and] moral improvement. … Instead, he is willing to settle for an eternal and equalitarian stability."[228] The central idea is largely the same as in Bloom's observation, namely that dogmatic equality leads to mundanity. One of Russell Kirk's final books, *America's British Culture*, was published in 1993. It contained a chapter called "The Necessity for a General Culture," which could have been an alternative title for Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*. Interestingly, this essay provides a clear intersection between Bloom and Hirsch. Kirk claimed that a healthy culture must be "represented at its higher levels by a class or body of persons of remarkable intelligence and taste, leaders in mind and conscience."[229] In other words, a healthy culture requires a cultural aristocracy. An elite few, who know best.

Hirsch differed from Kirk in his opinion on the need for an aristocracy. In his book, he insisted that the national literate culture he proposed was "the least elitist or exclusive culture that exists in any modern nation."[230] However, Kirk's essay can still be seen as an explanation for why many people were skeptical to Hirsch's proposal. Hirsch wanted one culture, among

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[226] John K. Roth, "On Philosophy and History: 'The Truth – the Good, the Bad and the Ugly,'" in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 24-25.
[227] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 66, 248.
[228] Russell Kirk, "The Dissolution of Liberalism," in *The Essential Russell Kirk: Selected Essays*, ed. George A. Panichas (Wilmington, Delaware: Isi Books, 2007), 29.
[229] Kirk, "The Necessity for a General Culture," 126.
[230] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 106.

many, to gain a more central position in public education. This would also be the culture of a demographic group that was already enjoying privileges of both the cultural and the more materialistic kind. Those who criticized Hirsch for imposing his culture on others were not particularly interested in whether or not he chose to call it aristocracy, but more so in the potential outcomes.

In his essay "Cultural Literacy," which predated its namesake book, Hirsch argued that educators should not be responsible for selecting the curricular contents of a national culture. This, he believed, should be a task for the National Board of Education that he wished for. Interestingly, when he explained his reasoning, he did so in a manner reminiscent of Bloom's unapologetic aristocratism: "[E]ducational technicians do not want and should not be awarded the function that Plato reserved for philosopher kings."[231] Hirsch did not elaborate on what exact qualifications he had in mind for someone to fill the shoes of philosopher kings, but in his book, he saw fit to contribute to the national culture with his own list of ideas. Regardless of who Hirsch would have considered qualified to shape the national culture, his statement on the gravity of this task was another similarity between him and Russell Kirk. In "The Necessity for a General Culture," Kirk defended the idea that developing a curriculum could not be left to the masses. "If Chaucer is still taught in some degree in America's public schools," he argued, "that is not because the Common Teacher or the Common Pupil instinctively recognizes Chaucer's merits."[232] By capitalizing "Common Teacher" and "Common Pupil," he treated these concepts as definable phenomena, and he did so in a context where the one trait he attributed to them was their inability to recognize great literature.

Another claim made by Hirsch that could easily be considered elitist was that American children's access to public schooling had no correlation to their economic or social class.[233] This claim related to elitism in a more paradoxical way, in that Hirsch denied the existence of class distinction where they did exist, which is an attitude more common in the upper classes than in the lower. It can easily be compared to a claim made about higher education, by the more explicitly aristocratic Bloom. "[T]he country is largely middle class now," he stated while discussing access to the university, "and scholarship aid is easily available for those unable to pay."[234]

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[231] Hirsch Jr, "Cultural Literacy," 167.
[232] Kirk, "The Necessity for a General Culture," 128.
[233] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 106.
[234] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 90.

Patricia Lorimer Lundberg took issue with this claim, which she considered utopian and naïve. In her responding essay, she made it clear that Bloom's description of the middle-class did not match her first-hand experience. "In my own middle-class family," she stated, "some of my generation are still struggling, well into their adulthood, to get through college." And this, she emphasized, did not even account for all those who were struggling to get *into* the middle class, which included parents trying to get off welfare, the support program that Bloom was so critical of. "To them," she concluded, "a liberal education is indeed a luxury they cannot afford."[235] Lundberg's observations were backed up by statistics. The average income after taxes for Americans declined by 13 percent in the 1970s and '80s, while the after-tax compensation of CEOs increased by nearly 400 percent. This did not only result in a shrinking middle class, but growing inequality.[236]

Martha Nussbaum had yet more bones to pick with Bloom in her essay "Undemocratic Vistas." When discussing Bloom's reverence for his elite cohort of gifted students, she pointed to the apparent criteria for being part of his exclusive club. Early on in his book, Bloom described the sample in his study: "thousands of students of comparatively high intelligence, materially and spiritually free to do pretty much what they want with the few years of college they are privileged to have – in short, the kind of young persons who populate the twenty or thirty best universities." This was an understandable decision on Bloom's part, as the most prestigious universities were his own professional arena. However, Nussbaum took issue with claims he made after this, namely that these students "most need education, inasmuch as the greatest talents are most difficult to perfect, and the more complex the nature the more susceptible it is to perversion."[237] As Nussbaum pointed out, Bloom equated students who were materially well off, and thereby "free to do pretty much what they want," with the students having the greatest talents and more complex natures.[238]

During his appearance on the TV program "The Open Mind," Bloom made a curious statement. Despite his own description of his students as "materially and spiritually free to do pretty much what they want," he claimed to be "speaking on behalf of a disadvantaged group." He elaborated by explaining that his students had "philosophical longings, and [were] being deprived of the atmosphere." When the host Richard Heffner pointed out that Bloom

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[235] Patricia Lorimer Lundberg, "Allan Bloom's *Closing*: On Re-Opening the American Mind to Heteroglossic Discourse," in *Beyond Cheering and Bashing: New Perspectives on The Closing of the American Mind*, ed. James Seaton and William K. Buckley (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992), 120.
[236] Kruse, Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 33.
[237] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 22.
[238] Nussbaum, "Undemocratic Vistas."

was talking about a very small group, Bloom acknowledged as much, but added that it served an important purpose in a society. "Most people aren't philosophic," he said when explaining this purpose. "They're too involved with other things. But it's very important that there be a broader vision *somewhere*."[239] With this, Bloom indirectly acknowledged the privilege of his allegedly disadvantaged students. Most people, he acknowledged, are too involved with other things to devote themselves to the pursuit of what Bloom himself considered the most noble way of life, that of permanent truths and great philosophical insights. His students, however, were not.

In the 20th century, many social historians were highlighting the fact that professional philosophers were often privileged people. They used this as an angle to criticize an earlier generation of intellectual historians. More specifically, they criticized them for ignoring the relevance of social class in determining whose philosophical works were published and distributed. In addition, according to the later social historians, the most widely circulated works, meaning those of the most privileged writers, were treated as representative of the entire national "mind," i.e., the values, perspectives, and culture of the entire nation.[240] This concept can be compared to the criticisms against Hirsch, based on the idea that the perspectives and experiences of some are treated as if they were representative of all, and which specific perspectives and experiences is largely decided by privilege.

Liberal elitism

In his retrospective review of *The Closing of the American Mind*, Simon Green made an observation he considered somewhat paradoxical. Bloom's philosophy, he believed, was indeed elitist, but his criticism of the contemporary era's anti-Americanism bore strong resemblances to similar points made by conservative writers who would follow in the next years, like Roger Kimball and Dinesh D'Souza. These writers continually railed against anti-Americanism and political correctness as the work of "cultural elites," or "liberal elites." In other words, Green did not accuse Bloom of contradicting himself, because Bloom did not intertwine accusations of anti-Americanism with accusations of elitism. On the contrary, Bloom himself was an unapologetic supporter of the aristocracy, and therefore an easy target

[239] Youtube, "Bloom interviewed 3 – 'I am speaking on behalf of a disadvantaged group…' [1987]," uploaded 16 April, 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPBDZMbBW1k

[240] Amy Kittelstrom, "Philosophy vs. Philosophers: A Problem in American Intellectual History," in *American Labyrinth: Intellectual History for Complicated Times*, ed. Raymond Haberski Jr. and Andrew Hartman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 58.

for accusations of elitism. However, he would find himself on the same side in the public debate about anti-Americanism as many people who *did* intertwine their accusations of anti-Americanism and elitism.[241]

Conservatives throwing accusations of elitism towards liberals and leftists was not a new concept in the era of Bloom, Kimball, and D'Souza. Since the middle of the 20th century, this had been a central element of right-wing populism. This form of populism did not cast plutocrats or corporate managers as the primary antagonists of the working class. Nor did they identify the "common man" by class criteria of the economic kind. Instead, their version of the common man was someone who unpretentiously identified with traditional American values. The elites, meanwhile, consisted of those who did not, and they tried to subvert American values through cultural institutions like the media and academia, which they allegedly controlled.[242] Among the most important figures in the emergence of American right-wing populism, and modern American conservatism in general, was William F. Buckley. He made significant contributions to the narrative about the liberal elite, most directly in his 1951 book *God and Man at Yale*, in which he primarily focused on the necessity of religiously founded principles for proper human conduct. He claimed that such principles were under attack by elites, who considered every traditional principle and value to be a hindrance for the kinds of subversive changes that they wanted to achieve.[243]

This plurality of understandings of the term "elite" is central to the paradox that Simon Green pointed out, about the elitist Bloom sharing so many opinions with the self-proclaimed anti-elitists Kimball and D'Souza. Unlike these two, Bloom claimed that he was not a conservative. The fact that he did not resort to accusations of elitism when criticizing cultural institutions was at least one thing that he did not have in common with many American conservatives of his time.

Kimball and D'Souza faced plenty of criticism from writers who defined "elite" differently from them. In her essay "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," historian Joan Wallach Scott claimed that the term actually applied to themselves, because of their enviable professions and economic privilege. "They pretend to represent the 'common man'" she argued, "whom, as elitists, they also loathe. They claim to speak for a democratic public

[241] Green, "'The Closing of the American Mind,' Revisited," 29.
[242] Alice O'Connor, "Financing the Counterrevolution," in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, ed. Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008), 155.
[243] Farber, *The Rise and Fall of Modern American Conservatism*, 41.

that knows truth when it sees it, that is suspicious of elitism."[244] The cornerstones of right-wing populism were eloquently summarized in Scott's essay.

Regardless of criticism, Kimball and D'Souza found a lot of support for their narrative. Part of the reason might have been that this narrative felt sorely needed by many conservatives at the time. Irving Kristol, the journalist who was dubbed "the Godfather of neoconservatism," stated in 1970 that "If there is one thing that neoconservatives are unanimous about, it is their dislike of the 'counterculture' that has played so remarkable a role in American life over these past fifteen years."[245] By the early 1990s, it was arguably very appropriate that Kristol put "counterculture" in quotation marks. There is, almost by definition, a limit to how much influence a counterculture can have before it is no longer a counterculture. The progressive wave of the 1960s, which is what Kristol was referring to, certainly started out as such, being opposed to systemic discrimination of all kinds. But many conservatives would argue strongly, and have indeed done so, that these activists managed to transcend their role as rebels against the institutions, and thereby became the new institutions. One example of someone to make such a claim would be William E. Simon, former Secretary of the Treasury under Richard Nixon. In the late 1970s, he called for funds towards conservative writers and social scientists, to create a "counterintelligentsia." He deemed this to be necessary because conservatives were frozen out from the mainstream media by the "dominant socialist-statist-collectivist orthodoxy."[246]

A closely related concept popularized in the 1970s was the "new class." It did not refer to specific organizations or industries, but to resourceful people on the Left who upheld the broader intellectual culture of subversion and big government. Although the concept of the new class was broader and more abstract than that of the liberal establishment and its institutional power, the two concepts were closely intertwined. Indeed, according to many conservatives, members of the new class were the ones who controlled the establishment. Other neoconservative commentators were much more critical of this concept. Daniel Bell of the journal *The Public Interest* claimed that it confused the broad idea of a mentality or culture, with a materially rooted socioeconomic class. In other words, Bell was among the conservatives who still defined elites according to the definition more commonly used by the Left.[247]

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[244] Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," 63.
[245] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 50.
[246] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 7.
[247] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 83-84.

The narrative about an arrogant left-wing elite has been a recurring theme in many schisms of the American culture war. For example, during the 1974 Kanawha textbook controversy in West Virginia, parents and local teachers did not only voice concern about the specific content of the textbooks, which allegedly promoted secularism, relativism, vulgarity, and anti-white racism. Their perceived sense of being looked down on by the elites was arguably just as important. The local teacher Karl Priest formulated it well, explaining that the school board seemed to believe that those who took issue with the books "are not sincerely offended; or are not capable of knowing when they *are* offended; or are not worthy of being considered." Others expressed additional frustration about the controversy being portrayed in the news as an argument "between a group of red-neck, ignorant, fundamentalist preachers and the well-educated Board members who are trying to modernize the education system."[248] This class resentment would continue to haunt liberal politicians. In Reagan's America, the Democratic Party struggled to cast off this characterization. Their policies of economic support for struggling minority communities did not convince a sufficient number of voters, at least not white voters, that they were a party for the working class.[249]

Statistics indicate that there was at least some truth to conservative concerns about liberals having disproportionate influence over cultural institutions. In his book *Culture Wars*, James Davison Hunter referred to several studies showing similar results, most of them carried out in the 1980s. The media industry strongly favored a liberal perspective, whether the studies focused on traditional news or on social commentary presented through entertainment. Elementary and secondary school textbooks also leaned heavily in this direction. In addition to this, Hunter emphasized the geographic concentration of liberals in the biggest cities. This gave them an advantage, he explained, because they operated in "the regions from which the larger cultural warfare emanates," while more conservatives were attempting to change national public life from "the periphery of social power."[250] It is worth noting that in the 1970s, the Left promoted the idea about culture being a form of power, because it allowed those who wielded it to define certain ways of life and thought as dominant.[251] This concept was used as a way to argue that WASP communities were not only privileged in economic and materialistic ways, but also in more abstract ones. However, when used as a lens to analyze the previously discussed statistics, this concept supports the

[248] Adam Laats, *The Other School Reformers: Conservative Activism in American Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015), 206.
[249] Berman, *America's Right Turn*, 120.
[250] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 227, 301-302.
[251] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 94-96.

narrative more commonly found on the Right, namely that because of their grip on the mainstream culture, the Left became the new elite.

These observations not only support the idea that the liberal counterculture of the 1960s transcended its very status as a counterculture, but that in doing so, it arguably made conservatism into a counterculture of sorts. There are important caveats to this. Throughout the mid to late 20th century, typically conservative principles like private ownership and capitalism remained central to fiscal policies in America. Anticommunism, which constituted an intersection of fiscal and cultural issues, was also a way in which conservatives enjoyed significant impact on a cross-partisan level. In addition, plenty of conservative activism in the late 20th century emerged from resourceful communities right at the cultural and financial heart of the nation. Therefore, it would not be accurate to consider it an entirely reactionary phenomenon.[252]

But even if conservatives were not quite as excluded as many of them believed themselves to be, the mere narrative about exclusion became a rhetorical weapon in the culture war. This was particularly true after 1987, when the Federal Communications Commission dismantled the "fairness doctrine," which had required broadcasters to present news stories in a balanced manner. Many conservatives were frustrated with this solution, because they believed, not entirely without basis, that most networks were in fact leaning more towards liberal narratives. Many liberals might have secretly agreed, because the Democratic Congress tried to prevent the dismantling of the doctrine by introducing new legislation, but Reagan vetoed the bill. This led to a plethora of conservative radio and TV-programs. In this movement, none were more popular than radio host Rush Limbaugh, who at his peak in the '90s reached an audience of approximately 20 million Americans. He knew very well that the idea of him as someone who fought against the establishment was important to his appeal. When Bill Clinton won the presidential election of 1992, Limbaugh admitted that it might be a positive outcome for his show, because Democratic control of the White House would reinforce his image as a defiant voice. And he was seemingly right. In 1993, an issue of the *National Review* devoted its cover to Limbaugh, referring to him as the "Leader of the Opposition."[253]

The concept of left-wing elitism was also significant in the Enola Gay controversy of the 1990s, when conservatives were angered by the Smithsonian Institution's decision to

[252] Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field," 734, 739.
[253] Kruse, Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 151-152, 214-215.

present the use of nuclear weapons against Japan as an ethical problem of opposing concerns, rather than a heroic victory. Republican Majority Leader of the Senate and presidential hopeful Bob Dole lambasted "government and intellectual elites who seem embarrassed by America," while Newt Gingrich explained the controversy as "the reassertion by most Americans that they're sick and tired of being told by some cultural elite that they ought to be ashamed of their own country."[254] It is quite telling how the complaints about anti-Americanism were interwoven with complaints about elitism, presenting these things as a single phenomenon. And as many conservatives saw it, they more or less were. A few years earlier, Reagan stated in his farewell address that "For those who create the popular culture, patriotism is no longer in style."[255] As previously discussed, liberals had by the 1980s secured significant cultural power through the mainstream media. This made it easier for conservatives to intertwine anti-Americanism and everything that liberals were in favor of, or everything that conservatives claimed they were in favor of, with elitism.

Frustration with the perceived liberal agenda was one of the most permeating themes in *The Closing of the American Mind*. Although Bloom did not accuse liberals of elitism, he accused them of nearly everything else that writers like Kimball and D'Souza often did. Another theme in his book, likely an unintentional one, was pointed out in the review for the journal *Washington Monthly*, written by Jacob Weisberg. "Where he does have allies," Weisberg pointed out, "Bloom curiously ignores them." Weisberg illustrated this observation by mentioning that Columbia University, and Bloom's own University of Chicago, retained the traditional approaches of education that Bloom favored. Bloom did not acknowledge this in his book, nor the fact that the University of Chicago's already very strict requirements had recently been made even tougher. "Like many neoconservatives," Weisberg concluded, "he seems to prefer posing as a besieged underdog even when he's winning."[256] This is not entirely unrelated to the fact that Bloom claimed he was speaking on behalf of a disadvantaged group, despite teaching students from the most privileged communities in America.

Considering that both sides in the American culture war accuse each other of elitism, one might apply the concept that Bertrand Russell coined as "the superior virtue of the oppressed."[257] In addition to the sympathy that an underdog invokes, they are also in a better

[254] Linenthal, Engelhardt, *History Wars*, 3-4, 187.
[255] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 173.
[256] Jacob Weisberg, "Review of *The Closing of the American Mind*," *Washington Monthly* Vol. 19 (September 1987).
[257] Schlesinger Jr, *The Disuniting of America*, 48-49.

position to accuse the other side of censorship and indoctrination, and to reject such accusations made against themselves. But there are other examples of flexible logic in the culture war. Conservatives practically denied the existence of class in America, until they introduced the concept of the "new class," a cultural upper class consisting of liberals.[258] On the other side of the divide, there have also been inconsistencies. In the 1960s, liberals wanted to fight discrimination by concretizing the consequences of discriminatory language, and therefore supported the theory that language carries determinative power. In the 1990s, when debates erupted about censorship of explicit content in song lyrics and music videos, they changed their minds. They rejected proposals made by conservatives about censorship, and dismissed the idea that rap lyrics would negatively affect the attitudes of children and teenagers, even if the lyrics in question were arguably perverted or misogynistic. When discussing such paradigm shifts in his book *A War for the Soul of America*, Andrew Hartman made an interesting observation: It demonstrates "that cultural theory often flowed from political positioning, rather than vice versa."[259] This principle likely explains many similar inconsistencies of logic that have been discussed previously: the tendency among many Western liberals to only criticize discrimination when it occurs in the Western world, Conservatives changing their emphasis from majority rule to minority rights when they were losing ground in the culture war, and Charles E. Butterworth criticizing Martha Nussbaum for not being open to the idea of compromising democratic principles, before praising Bloom for being willing to dismiss nefarious ideas.

This concept is not only crucial for understanding the convenient applications of class logic, but it also ties directly into the politicization of Bloom and Hirsch. They both claimed that their books were non-political. This might have been their intention, but their readers' perspectives on topics like the role of culture, social power dynamics, and so on, were likely rooted in their political positioning, rather than cultural theory. As John Searle pointed out in his review of *The Closing of the American Mind*, those who objected to Bloom's observations were not particularly interested in any theory of higher education, but wanted to "make a political point about the nature of American society."[260]

[258] Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, 83.
[259] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 243.
[260] Searle, "The Storm Over the University."

Concerns about political correctness threatening free speech

In the chapter of *The Closing of the American Mind* called "The Sixties," Bloom immediately established his dislike for the radical leftism of the titular decade. He went as far as drawing a direct comparison between the more radical parts of the American student movement of the 1960s, and the takeover of the German universities by the Nazis during the '30s. "In both places the universities gave way under the pressure of mass movements," he argued, "and did so in large measure because they thought those movements possessed a moral truth superior to any the university could provide." He considered this phenomenon detrimental to the true purpose of a university, which was not to get involved in contemporary affairs. "Commitment was understood to be profounder than science," he explained, "passion than reason, history than nature, the young than the old."[261]

Although it may not completely justify a comparison to the university takeovers of Nazi Germany in the 1930s, Bloom did experience the armed takeover of Cornell University in 1969, when he worked there as a professor. It was carried out by African American students who were protesting against what they considered symptoms of institutional racism among its staff and faculty, and in favor of a program concerning African American studies. In his book, Bloom was seemingly more upset by the university unquestioningly giving in to activist demands, than he was by the threat of violence. He recalled, for example, how a group of activists held an economics teacher hostage, and demanded that the university act, because the teacher was racist for using a Western standard to judge market efficiency in Africa. According to Bloom, "The students were praised for calling the problem to the attention of the authorities, the chairman refused to proffer charges against them, and the teacher disappeared miraculously from campus, never to be seen again."[262]

The Cornell takeover illustrates a broader debate about censorship imposed by what the Right considers left-wing authoritarianism and a doctrine of political correctness. As Bloom recalled in his book, the student activists did not only have a radical agenda, but they threatened violence to achieve it, and the university gave in. Bloom did not believe the threat of violence was genuine because, as he stated reassuringly in his book, the civil authorities would have been brought in as soon as a shot went off. But the fact that the guns were only for visual intimidation, meant that Bloom was particularly unforgiving to the university for giving in to the student demands.[263]

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[261] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 313-314.
[262] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 354.
[263] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 318.

Predictably, Bloom looked back on these developments as a tragic turn of events for the university, and explained that it "became almost impossible to question the radical orthodoxy without risking vilification." The vilification that professors risked was that of bigotry labels, and Bloom took more issue with these labels than the guns that were brought along for visual intimidation. He argued that "Racist and sexist were, and are, very ugly labels … which can be pinned on persons promiscuously and which, once attached, are almost impossible to cast off. Nothing could be said with impunity. Such an atmosphere made detached dispassionate study impossible."[264]

Some scholars on the Left were also concerned with censorship imposed by activists in the 1960s, and the threat that it posed to academic freedom. Nathan Glazer, a sociologist who then taught at Berkeley, University of California, became something of a moderate spokesperson on this topic. He saw the student movements evolve, from its beginnings in the 1964 Free Speech Movement (FSM), an origin that some might consider ironic in retrospect, to the more radical marches concerning the antiwar movement and Black Power. [265] In this later stage of the era, it became commonplace to see student crowds shouting down teachers who did not endorse their activism. When the historian Richard Hofstadter gave the 1968 commencement speech at Columbia University, he did not face this kind of wrath, but ended up speaking to many empty chairs. As his speech began, hundreds of student radicals staged a walkout in protest of the university's military ties, and its plans to fund the construction of gymnasiums in impoverished neighborhoods. These students endorsed the idea that the university should commit itself to social issues. When this idea was proposed by University of California Professor Clark Kerr only 5 years before, it was met with objections from the FSM. Things had changed since then. Hofstadter expressed concern about the students' demands that the university should commit itself to one of several political ideologies, fearing it would compromise its true purpose of independent criticism.[266] He also emphasized that freedom of inquiry was under threat from such ideas, and questioned the sense in attempting to change a social order "by assaulting its most accessible centers of thought and study and criticism." This idea, he believed, was "a complete disregard for the intrinsic character of the university but also … a curiously self-destructive strategy for social change."[267]

[264] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 355.
[265] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 55.
[266] Jewett, "The Politics of Knowledge in 1960s America," 560.
[267] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 56.

There are many examples of controversies similar to those at Cornell, although they did not all involve the presence of weapons. Some cases are more complicated, like the Stanford controversy of the late 1980s. Here, changes to the curriculum were not as dramatic as many made it seem, and people had very different interpretations of the events that took place. Some who were supportive of the protesters' goals, like Raoul V. Mowatt, portrayed them as largely peaceful, but acknowledged that the protesting did get loud.[268] Others, like William Bennett, who at the time was Secretary of Education, stated that Stanford's decision to alter its curriculum "was not a product of enlightened debate, but rather an unfortunate capitulation to a campaign of pressure politics and intimidation."[269]

Bloom was certainly not alone in discussing these topics from a perspective that most would consider conservative. Another contribution to this discourse was the *Newsweek* article "Thought Police," which was published in 1990, and gained significant attention. It portrayed American universities as repressive arenas of censorship, where the authoritarian Left would not allow dissent from the doctrine of political correctness.[270] This narrative was also presented in a number of books published around the same time, the most successful of them being Roger Kimball's *Tenured Radicals* and Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education*. While promoting his book on the TV program "The MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour," D'Souza referred to a recent controversy at Georgetown University, where a student was disciplined for presenting arguments against affirmative action.[271] This was exactly the kind of suppression of conservative perspectives that Bloom, Kimball, D'Souza, and others, were concerned had become all too common at American universities.

Left-wing responses, and concerns about conservatism threatening free speech

"It is consummate folly to tolerate every variety of opinion, on every topic, out of devotion to an abstract 'liberty'; for opinion soon finds its expression in action, and the fanatics whom we tolerated will not tolerate us when they have power."[272] This quote, in this particular context, might seem like a left-wing defense of the campus culture that Bloom and others were criticizing. It is actually from an essay by the conservative Russell Kirk, in which he criticized what he considered to be the fallacies of libertarianism. Interestingly, many on the

[268] Mowatt, "Stanford's Revolution that Wasn't Quite."
[269] Hunter, *Culture Wars*, 219.
[270] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 137.
[271] D'Souza, MacNeil, "The Big Chill?," 38.
[272] Russell Kirk, "Libertarians: Chirping Sectaries," in *The Essential Russell Kirk: Selected Essays*, ed. George A. Panichas (Wilmington, Delaware: Isi Books, 2007), 376.

Left *and* the Right would probably agree with the statement. But people who agree that a line must be drawn somewhere will have difficulties agreeing on which statements cross the line. After all, Kirk had little sympathy for the ideology of left-wing student activists. Considering his political positioning, it would have been more in his nature to apply the quote as a warning against allowing these students to protest in the way that they did.

A common response from liberals to accusations of authoritarian political correctness, has been to argue that this is hardly the biggest threat to the campus community. In her talk "The Challenge for the Left," the author and political activist Barbara Ehrenreich referred to the phenomenon as "a form of snobbery that is easily made fun of by the right and even by students who are not on the right." In other words, she did not really defend the concept, and even stated that it was not the best thing for the Left to be associated with, considering how easily the Right could mock it. In addition, she claimed that it occurred "chiefly among relatively elite college students and on relatively elite college campuses." As a leftist, she still acknowledged that elitism was a relevant topic when discussing political correctness, even if she did not agree with those on the Right about what exactly constituted elitism.[273]

However, the main concern in this part of Ehrenreich's talk was that the danger of political correctness had been blown out of proportions, and that university campuses had bigger problems. "P.C. culture, as far as I can tell, is a limited phenomenon," she explained. "The major problems on American campuses are racial and sexual harassment, alcoholism, and the anti-intellectualism of young white Republican males." One side of the coin, she believed, was the overexposure of political correctness. The other side of the coin was the underexposure of these much more serious problems. "Interestingly, there were no cover stories about the wave of racist incidents that occurred on college campuses a couple of years ago," she stated. In this, she made her point clear. Many did not care about unsafe or unwelcoming atmospheres on college campuses unless it would affect themselves, or people who agreed with them.[274]

Historian Alice Kessler-Harris, at the time President of the American Studies Association (ASA), would later voice her agreement with Ehrenreich, during her presidential address at the 1991 ASA meeting. She referred to statements given by the American Council on Education, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, who all agreed that "the problem of coercion from the politically

[273] Ehrenreich, "The Challenge for the Left," 335.
[274] Ehrenreich, "The Challenge for the Left," 335.

correct is far less prevalent than the rising numbers of incidents of racial intolerance, homophobia, and sexism." Kessler-Harris theorized further, much more explicitly than Ehrenreich did, about why many media outlets devoted so much attention to this phenomenon, while ignoring the types of incidents that she listed. "At the heart of the attack on multiculturalism," she believed, "lies a concern not for right but for community." This leads right back to the controversies of white Western hegemony and multiculturalism. Kessler-Harris argued that to the opponents of multiculturalism, "the idea of what constitutes America seems to be at stake." She elaborated on this by discussing the previous year's donation of 20 million dollars by businessman Lee M. Bass to Yale University, for a new course in Western civilization. After donating, he had stated (in *Newsweek*, publisher of the famous "Thought Police" article) that the curriculum wars were "related battles in a single war, a war of aggression against the Western political tradition and the ideas that animate it."[275]

Joan Wallach Scott made a similar observation to that of Kessler-Harris, but one that was yet more specific. She believed that the opponents of multiculturalism and political correctness, two topics that were inseparable by association, were not only defending the traditional idea of what America was. The very term "tradition" was, to them, a substitute for "the white male privilege they so deeply desire and want to protect." She elaborated on this point by explaining that all traditions a society lives by have originated in something, and they are not permanent fixtures of nature. Therefore, she argued, presenting traditions of one's own culture as permanent is a dishonest attempt at claiming cultural dominance.[276] In light of Scott's claim, it is worth noting that many conservative commentators who criticized political correctness did so on the basis that it was anti-American, which was often a euphemism for anti-white. Scott did not exactly promote political correctness in her essay, as much as she criticized the overreactions of the Right, but she did frame these overreactions as white anxiety about a declining grip on the national culture.

The Right has often accused the Left of threatening free speech, but the Left has directed similar concerns towards the Right. For example, Yale freshmen of 1981 were given a cautionary speech by the university's current president, A. Bartlett Giamatti. He warned about the societal threat posed by conservative organizations like the Moral Majority, who were attempting to censor what they deemed inappropriate or blasphemous. Using similar

[275] Kessler-Harris, "Cultural Locations," 301-302.
[276] Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," 62.

arguments as Kessler-Harris and Scott would later do, Giamatti described these groups as "Angry at change, rigid in the application of chauvinistic slogans, absolutistic in morality." He also accused them of using political pressure and public denunciation to threaten anyone who disagreed with their authoritarian positions. This particular accusation bears striking similarities to those made by the Right against left-wing promoters of political correctness and conformity. Others on the Left echoed Giamatti's concerns. A spokesperson for People for the American Way, a liberal advocacy group, argued that if successful, the work of the Moral Majority and similar organizations would have disastrous results for the curriculum. "Students," they argued, "would no longer be exposed to materials which accept ambiguity, encourage independent thinking, and question the dogma of religious fundamentalism or ultraconservatism."[277]

Another organization that has been accused of threatening academic freedom is Accuracy in Academia (AIA). The organization was founded in 1985, with the purpose of documenting liberal and left-wing biases in American classrooms. Rumors eventually began circulating that they were sending "spies" into lecture halls, carrying tape recorders to document subversive lecturers. There were dramatic reactions to such practices. The American Sociological Association called AIA "a serious threat to academic freedom," to which AIA responded that "Academic freedom permits professors to research whatever they please but it does not give them the license to give biased lectures in the classroom. Academic freedom does not extend to political indoctrination."[278]

Education and indoctrination

In *Cultural Literacy*, E. D. Hirsch described school as "the traditional place for acculturating children into our national life."[279] For people who agree with AIA that a hard line must be drawn between education and indoctrination, such a description might seem somewhat controversial, and this is especially relevant regarding Hirsch. He was not accused of wanting to *politically* indoctrinate children, which is what AIA were concerned with, but he received a lot of criticism for wanting to impose one culture on all schoolchildren in America. This could be regarded as a form of *cultural* indoctrination, and likewise, "acculturating children into our national life" could be regarded as a euphemism for this exact process. However,

[277] Hunter, *Culture* Wars, 148, 206.
[278] Hunter, *Culture* Wars, 214.
[279] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 110.

what Hirsch was getting at with this observation, was the inevitable fact that educating children is not only a process of teaching facts and skills, but of shaping people. Virtually everyone would agree that there are certain values children should be taught. Agreeing on where to draw the line is a different matter. People will be quicker to condemn teaching material as indoctrination when it promotes values that they themselves do not agree with. After all, Pat Buchanan described the cultural divide of America as "a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the cold war itself," thereby making it clear that he considered the stakes to be very high.[280] In such a conflict, those involved would naturally want their influence to last, which is why the schools were so relevant. James Dobson, founder of the Christian conservative lobbying organization Focus on the Family, made this a central point in his book *Children at Risk*, in which he claimed, "Children are the prize to the winners of the second great civil war. Those who control what young people are taught and what they experience – what they see, hear, think, and believe – will determine the future course for the nation."[281]

Accusations of indoctrination in American schools were far from a new phenomenon. An example that predated Hirsch by half a century was the Harold-Rugg-controversy of the 1930s. The grounds for these accusations were that Rugg's textbooks presented America as a nation of stark class disparity, and portrayed the Founding Fathers as materialistically minded, self-interested businessmen. It is no wonder that textbooks with such a perspective drew the ire of wealthy corporations, whose executives were not in favor of raising a generation to be skeptical of big business. Among Rugg's harshest critics was Alfred Falk, president of the Advertising Federation of America, who took particular issue with Rugg's depiction of advertising as a form of corporate propaganda directed at citizens. In response to this depiction, Falk accused Rugg of partaking in a large-scale effort at leftist indoctrination.[282]

The controversy concerning the social studies program "Building America" in California in the late 1940s was another example. The primary accusation made was that the textbooks promoted Communism by exaggerating the Soviet Union's achievements, and by giving favorable presentations of left-wing policies like public housing. The program was ultimately rejected after persistent complaints, but before this, attorneys representing

[280] Youtube, "Pat Buchanan 'Cultural War' Speech."
[281] James Dobson, *Children at Risk: The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Our Kids* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 35.
[282] Laats, *The Other School Reformers*, 74.

California's board of education analyzed the accusation that the program illegally indoctrinated schoolchildren. They dismissed this concern, and based their ruling on a statute which specified that schools should instill children with a sense of "morality, truth, justice, and patriotism." For this reason, they could only conclude that "there is nothing inherently wrong with indoctrination. The problem is [the] selection of principles to be indoctrinated."[283]

Accusations of indoctrination did not always involve claims about textbooks containing lies or inaccuracies. The problem was usually about what content the textbooks emphasized. In a textbook on American history, it would be impossible to include everything that could justifiably be considered relevant. Editing such a book has always necessitated that some content is included while some is left out, and, crucially, these selections have always been influenced by the bias of those making the decisions. This concept, the idea that historians cannot reasonably claim neutrality, was championed by left-wing social historians who became increasingly influential during the 1970s and '80s. They were not working primarily in textbooks for schools, but they influenced such books as well. This group of historians, which included people like Howard Zinn and Gary Nash, wished to tell the stories of America's average people, even the most downtrodden and oppressed. Crucially, they did not only emphasize these people's suffering, but also their social agency, and their overlooked influence in the shaping of the nation. The agenda of these historians, which they were very honest about, was to encourage social change by giving a voice to the voiceless of history. Because they were so honest about their agenda, they became easy targets for historians of the traditionalist fold, who accused them of using history as a tool to impact the present, rather than exploring the past from a detached and unbiased point of view. Responding to such accusations, the social historians argued that perpetuating a history that only focused on powerful white men was anything but unbiased. In fact, they argued, because the traditionalist historians failed to recognize their own bias, it was even more compromising to their craft. Despite resistance from traditionalists, social historians had a lasting impact. It became more broadly accepted that there was no such thing as true objectivity in the field of history, in social science, or in the humanities in general.[284] This essentially means that whenever a textbook was accused of bias, the option would be a different book with a different bias, even if some books might have been more overtly biased than others.

[283] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 92.
[284] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 254-256.

In *Cultural Literacy*, E. D. Hirsch acknowledged that a certain amount of bias in the curriculum was inevitable. Having stated explicitly that "acculturating children into our national life" was among the purposes of the schools, he briefly explored the question of where the line should be drawn. Schools, he argued, had "a duty to teach widely accepted cultural values." However, he did not specify which widely accepted cultural values he had in mind. Considering the emphasis on social justice in his book, it was clear that Hirsch would consider a statement like "Slavery was very bad" to be acceptable for a textbook. But because it has been repeatedly demonstrated that some considered even this to be too one-sided, like the accusations against John Hope Franklin that his honest depictions of slavery were fomenting white guilt, Hirsch would not have wasted his energy by being more specific. Adding to his statement about widely accepted cultural values, he argued that schools "have a duty *not* to take political stands on matters that are subjects of continuing debate. Only a descriptive list accords with these fundamental goals of universal education." He thereby used impartiality as another argument in favor of a list like the one he included in his book. However, he added a crucial detail: "Of course, even a descriptive list cannot be entirely neutral with respect to cultural politics; it must necessarily emphasize traditional materials, because widely shared information is not likely to be new."[285] With this, he acknowledged that the approach he recommended would be traditionalist in its very nature. This was yet another reason why his proposal received more support from conservatives than from liberals.

Whether or not to prioritize traditional materials was only one question in this debate. Another was how to teach them, and this was particularly relevant in literary courses in the universities. Roger Kimball, author of *Tenured Radicals*, accused left-wing literary professors of injecting classic texts with their own ideologically driven interpretations, and forcing these interpretations onto their students. He claimed, in short, that such professors "view the teaching of literature primarily as a species of ideological activism."[286] This was a common concern among conservative intellectuals concerned with higher education. In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom argued that the correct way to approach classic texts was "letting them dictate what the questions are and the method of approaching them – not forcing them into categories we make up, not treating them as historical products, but

[285] Hirsch Jr, *Cultural Literacy*, 137. On Franklin, see Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 98-99.
[286] Roger Kimball, "The Periphery v. the Center: The MLA in Chicago," in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 63.

trying to read them as their authors wished them to be read."[287] In other words, he essentially rejected the entire concept of texts being a product of the time, place, and culture in which they were written, and instead viewed classic texts as vessels of permanent philosophical truths, which were therefore not bound to any particular time.

Michael Berubé of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne took issue with this view of literature. He believed that in the reading of a text, it should not be entirely separated from the era in which it was written, and it *could* not be entirely separated from the era in which it was being read. "[I]f literary works were truly timeless," he argued, "and truly 'above' all ideology, they would be utterly meaningless. Let me not be misunderstood here: If meaning is produced by human agency then it is 'ideological.'"[288] Berubé thereby rejected Bloom's claim that one could somehow know how the authors of classic texts "wished them to be read" without filling in some gaps. Henry Louis Gates Jr, professor of the humanities at Harvard, made a similar observation. "That people can maintain a straight face while they protest the irruption of politics into something that has always been political," he mused, "well, it says something about how remarkably successful official literary histories have been in presenting themselves as natural objects, untainted by worldly interests."[289] These differing perspectives on whether or not non-ideological readings of classic texts were even possible, bore strong resemblances to the differing perspectives on unbiased readings of history. In both cases, the divide was in itself very much of an ideological nature.

Bloom was not in favor of professors forcing their own interpretations of texts onto students. This was not because he wanted students to come to their own conclusions, but because he believed there was an objectively correct way of reading the texts. To say otherwise would have been too relativistic for his liking. For this very reason, Bloom was very much in favor of imposing certain values and beliefs on students. He argued, "It is childishness to say, as some do, that everyone must be allowed to develop freely, that it is authoritarian to impose a point of view on the student. In that case, why have a university?" Throughout his book, Bloom took issue with a modern culture and education system that he thought permeated by relativistic apathy and anti-American sentiments. But he would not commit the hypocrisy of crying "indoctrination" as soon as he witnessed the teaching of values that he did not approve of. He took issue with specific values, not the fact that values

[287] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 344.
[288] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 148.
[289] Henry Louis Gates Jr, "Whose Canon Is It, Anyway?," in *Debating PC: The Controversy over Political Correctness on College Campuses*, ed. Paul Berman (New York: Dell Publishing, 1992), 195.

were being taught. He was consistent with this principle when discussing the hypocrisy of liberals who criticized the United States, sometimes for failing to promote human rights, and sometimes for imposing American culture on the outside world. “To the extent that it does the latter,” he argued, “the United States does so in the name of all self-evident truths that apply to the good of all men.”[290]

The imposition of American culture on the outside world was a central theme in Jonathan Zimmerman’s book *Innocents Abroad*. In it, he explored records of American teachers and missionaries working abroad as volunteers of the Peace Corps, and detailed the concerns of cultural imperialism that they occasionally struggled with. To illustrate the connection between education and culture, Zimmerman shared an anecdote of a historian comforting a former missionary who regretted their work. “Don’t apologize,” the historian said. “All Americans are missionaries.” In other words, the historian believed that Americans should not apologize for sharing their culture, because it is a culture worth sharing. Zimmerman added to this observation, “All *teachers* are missionaries too, inasmuch as they try to get students to behave or believe in new ways.”[291] Judging by the ideas shared in *The Closing of the American Mind* and *Cultural Literacy*, Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch would likely have agreed with both of these sentiments.

[290] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 191, 337.
[291] Zimmerman, *Innocents Abroad*, 112.

Conclusion

Through their books on education, Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch Jr. got involved in a debate that had been going on for many decades, and is still highly relevant today, about how to fairly assess the historical merits of America. Central to this debate is the concern about anti-Americanism. This concern is usually voiced by conservatives, and broadly implies that many people, primarily liberals, criticize America excessively. My central argument for this thesis has been that accusations of anti-Americanism are often euphemistic for accusations of anti-whiteness, and that integral to this phenomenon is a frustration with liberal elites being more critical of America than they are of non-Western or non-white countries. I have approached these concepts from the perspective of intellectual history, by centering my thesis on Bloom's and Hirsch's books as primary sources. From there I have explored the ensuing discourse surrounding their books, and the historical context for observations made in the books and in the surrounding discourse.

When someone is accused by conservatives of being anti-American, this is usually because they focus excessively on discrimination in American society or history. There is therefore an inherent implication that anti-Americanism tends to mean anti-whiteness, because when people are confronted with an emphasis on discrimination, they are unlikely to interpret it as criticism of those who are discriminated against. Focusing specifically on the education system, one can point to several instances of curriculum that has been challenged by conservatives for putting too much emphasis on discrimination at the hands of white Americans, such as John Hope Franklin's 1966 textbook *Land of the Free: A History of the United States*. In the American South, textbooks were likely to be banned for mentioning racial discrimination at all.[292] In some cases, the curriculum was criticized for fomenting white guilt. In others, such as the 1974 Kanawha textbook controversy in West Virginia, there were accusations of anti-white racism.[293]

These trends can also be seen in the current era. In response to the 1619 Report, which emphasized the role of slavery in American history, Donald Trump appointed a committee to develop a guide for patriotic education. The ensuing 1776 Report condemned anti-whiteness without explicitly mentioning any specific demographic groups in this context. "The more a group is considered oppressed," the report stated when explaining the concept of identity

[292] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 98-99, 106.
[293] Hartman, "A Trojan Horse for Social Engineering," 121.

politics, "the more its members have a moral claim upon the rest of society. As for their supposed oppressors, they must atone and even be punished in perpetuity for their sins and those of their ancestors."[294] Concerns about the fomentation of white guilt are also central to Florida's "Stop W.O.K.E" Act of 2022. The bill was promoted as a necessary stance against the essentialization of racial groups as oppressors and victims, but it was formulated vaguely enough to make teachers liable for lawsuits if they discuss racial discrimination, and therefore effectively shuts down classroom discussions about many related topics.[295] Lawyers representing Governor Ron DeSantis, the foremost promoter of the bill, defined the term "woke" as "the belief there are systemic injustices in American society and the need to address them."[296] This means the bill was intended to prevent the fomentation of white guilt, while its title referred to a term that its promoters equated with anti-Americanism. One can see similar tendencies in the conservative battle against Critical Race Theory. The concerns in this controversy are largely the same as those addressed in the "Stop W.O.K.E" Act, namely preventing the essentialization of demographics as oppressors and victims. But while the term actually refers to a specific lens for looking at how institutional racism might cause demographic inequity, it has been applied to any sort of curriculum that deals with race or racism. Strong negative connotations to this term have now been cemented among conservatives, and it is used for indicating that a curriculum is essentially anti-white.[297]

Another topic related to my central argument is the accusation made against liberals that they are more willing, and maybe even eager, to criticize America than other countries, particularly non-Western or non-white ones. Bloom strongly emphasized this point. In one part of his book, he shared a story of meeting a racist southerner, and sarcastically criticized himself for not having respected this man's perspective at the time. In another chapter, he lambasted the inconsistency of American liberals who initially supported the Iranian Ayatollah despite standing for completely different values.[298] Some liberals have also observed that when one is overly cautious not to criticize customs or norms of other cultures, it can lead to inconsistencies and well-meaning double standards. Jonathan Zimmerman summarized this as a paradoxical result of the egalitarian ideal, which made Americans wary of criticizing people from other cultures, even for deviations from egalitarianism.[299]

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[294] The 1776 Report, 29.
[295] Pfeifer, "Combatting Misinformation," 907.
[296] Bump, "What does 'woke' mean?"
[297] Zimmerman, *Whose America?*, 245-246.
[298] Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 35, 191.
[299] Zimmerman, *Innocents Abroad*, 84.

The final element integral to my central argument is the interweaving of two frequent conservative talking points, namely anti-Americanism and the liberal elite. Since at least the middle of the 20th century, American conservatives aiming for populist appeal have defined the elites as liberals who use their control of cultural institutions to enforce their ideology.[300] According to many conservatives, anti-Americanism is an integral part of this ideology. This was exemplified by Reagan's farewell address, in which he claimed that "For those who create the popular culture, patriotism is no longer in style."[301] Another example would be Newt Gingrich's explanation of the Enola Gay controversy, which he summarized as "the reassertion by most Americans that they're sick and tired of being told by some cultural elite that they ought to be ashamed of their own country."[302] Political correctness has also been blamed on the influence of liberal institutions.[303] Hence, this concept is also interwoven with liberal elitism. While it is still around in the culture war discourse of the current era, political correctness could reasonably be considered the precursor to wokeness, as their slightly vague meanings imply many of the same things. I have previously argued that Florida's recent "Stop W.O.K.E" Act is intended to prevent anti-whiteness in schools. Joan Wallach Scott has made similar observations about political correctness, claiming that those who consider it the primary threat to American society do so because it subverts the primacy of white culture in America.[304] And so we have come full circle.

Regarding the limitations of my thesis, I have been primarily examining the discourse on one side of a divisive issue. This was a choice I made to allow for a more in-depth approach to this particular area, but this was inevitably at the expense of breadth. Although I have provided examples of arguments against Bloom and Hirsch, these perspectives have not been equally elaborated upon, which means there is much more to be said about this. Another thesis could for example explore the theoretical foundations for the arguments made by those who criticized Bloom and Hirsch. By extension, it could also explore in greater detail the cultural assumptions of the liberal side to this debate. As for other questions that remain, there are sure to be more of them not long after I have finished this thesis, considering how rapidly the ongoing culture war develops. My thesis might be a contribution, but more will be needed to examine further developments that I cannot predict.

[300] O'Connor, "Financing the Counterrevolution," 155.
[301] Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America*, 173.
[302] Linenthal, Engelhardt, *History Wars*, 3-4, 187.
[303] Berubé, "Public Image Limited," 137.
[304] Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," 62.

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