

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR CITIZENSHIP: THE PEDAGOGICAL VISION OF
YALE'S NOAH PORTER, HARVARD'S CHARLES ELIOT AND
PRINCETON'S WOODROW WILSON

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The dissertation examines the historic role of elite higher education in preparing students for active participation in political life. It does this by examining the pedagogical visions and curricular commitments of Noah Porter (president of Yale from 1871 to 1886), Charles Eliot (president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909) and Woodrow Wilson (president of Princeton from 1902 to 1910). Educational historians have usually cast Eliot as the progressive force in American higher education while painting Porter and Wilson in diminished or even contrary roles. While this dissertation does not take issue with the basic thrust of this history, it focuses on deficiencies in all three of these educators' approaches that served to compromise their commitment to strong civic education. These educators compromised, or threatened to compromise, civic education because they ascribed to ideals and practices which are often at odds with the development of citizenship.

The determination of these educators' civic commitments is circumscribed by the dissertation's exclusive focus on a republican definition of citizenship. Republicans equate citizenship with participation in political life and are consequently threatened by rhetorical and economic practices which appear to discourage political participation. The dissertation assesses how dedicated Porter, Eliot, and Wilson were to the ideals of republican citizenship by examining their commitment to forms of communication that foster political discussion, and by examining their attachment to economic practices that republican theorists have found inimical to citizenship. The rhetorical and economic proclivities of Porter, Eliot, and Wilson constitute the main approaches for gauging their civic commitments. However, these two approaches are

framed and clarified by describing their sympathy for elite and exclusionary forms of higher education and by delineating their overt exhortations to service and their attempts to integrate their schools into a larger public sphere.

All of their civic visions were ultimately compromised but they were compromised in different ways. Eliot's civic commitments were compromised by rhetorical and economic proclivities that were closely tied to his strong sympathies for professionalization . Porter's were threatened by an attraction to cloistered living and by archaic pedagogies. Of the three, Wilson displayed the most abiding civic commitments. But even Wilson's civic commitments were ultimately compromised by his attraction to elite forms of education.