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Modern Secondary Economics Textbooks and Ideological Bias

The Great Depression: A Textbook Case of Problems with American History Textbooks

Measuring Economic Attitudes in High School

Elementary Teachers' Views on Economic Issues

Battleground: The Autobiography of Margaret A. Haley
Theory and Research in Social Education

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Introduction

The textbook inhabits a central role as the determiner of curricula in classrooms across the nation. It does so because many teachers follow it faithfully, some slavishly. This fact was borne out as a major finding of three National Science Foundation studies which concluded, in part:

the dominant instructional tool continues to be the conventional textbook . . . the dominant modes of instruction continue to be large group, teacher-controlled recitation and lecture, based primarily on the textbook, and the 'knowing' expected of students is largely information oriented. For students to demonstrate learning acceptably in discussions and on tests, they often have to reproduce not only the content but the language of the text. ¹

With the textbook being so central in the determination of what is taught in schools, it becomes very important to know what the textbooks contain. This circumstance is especially pronounced in the case of high school economics texts, owing not only to the importance of the discipline itself, but to the increased percentage of secondary students now taking economics courses. ²

Economic education is likely, therefore, to occupy an increasingly impor-
tant role within social studies curricula. It remains, curiously, one of the social science disciplines in which classroom teachers have relatively little academic training. As a result, it is probable that teachers of economics who lack substantial economic education themselves will rely heavily on selected texts for determination of syllabi.

This study originates from the question, 'what is economics education?' While differences exist regarding specific aspects of the answer to the question, a consensus would indicate that economics education is not the same thing as indoctrination.

In the Soviet Union students adopt particular beliefs and ideas about economics. It is no accident that this occurs. Their education imposes such an outlook because it is assumed that Marxist ideology holds the ultimate truth on many important economic issues. Few would argue, however, that the students have been provided with an economic literacy that equips them with the skills of critical analysis. Their education has insured that any inquiry will result in certain acceptable conclusions.

In the United States, it is assumed that the students are engaged in a process of learning which is distinguished from that in closed societies by its openness and its commitment to pluralism. To impose on the young a set of beliefs and economic teachings without full opportunity to investigate and understand alternatives is to ape the pedagogical practices of those who are accused of indoctrination.

Providing the young with an education in 'free enterprise economics', complete with all acceptable conclusions students are to reach, is to deprive them of the balanced experience they need to acquire economic literacy and the knowledge needed to participate in a democracy.

Textbooks that parade "free enterprise" in the titles on their jackets are not books designed to promote economic literacy but are intended to foster beliefs in and appreciation of that system. My task in examining these textbooks has been far less difficult than other efforts to uncover hidden curricula in schools. In truth, my examination, though descriptive in the main, reveals what is and what is not in modern high school economics texts.

A Theory of Education

If American education is not to be the task of mere indoctrination, then there must be a theoretical base which has as its goal the antithesis of raw imposition. It is clear that the content of the social studies is central in the political socialization of students. Studies by Popkewitz and Anyon have shown that what passes as "objective" knowledge in textbooks is often ideologically biased.

It has also been suggested that the lack of critical interpretation of descriptions and explanations in social studies texts supports the status quo, serving to keep things as they are. As such, the ideological outlook serves the existing social order and power arrangements, which is to say the prevailing ideology is conservative.
Ideology, then, is central when one seeks to examine the nature of the knowledge students confront. According to Michael W. Apple,

The study of educational knowledge is a study in ideology, the investigation of what is considered legitimate knowledge by specific social groups and classes, in specific institutions, at specific historical moments. It is, further, a critically oriented form of investigation, in that it chooses to focus on how this knowledge, as distributed in schools, may contribute to a cognitive and dispositional development that strengthens or reinforces existing (and often problematic) institutional arrangements in society.5

In order to prevent ideas from being crystallized and reified, those ideas must be subjected to careful critical analysis and argumentation. This process produces a cross fertilization of ideas, in contrast to the approach in positivist thinking where knowledge is generated solely by the collection of data.6

Positivist economics does not address the difference between society as it is and society as it could be. Instead, in the view of Henry A. Giroux, it focuses mainly on the "methodological task of collecting and classifying that which is, the world of facts. In this schema, knowledge relates solely to what is and to its recurrence."7 And Cleo Cherryholmes has argued that positivist epistemological assumptions that characterize much of what constitutes social education lead to an objectification of social phenomena. The result is a passive acceptance of social reproduction in the United States.8

By employing tenets of critical theory, it can be expected that social relationships that have taken on the status of things or objects would be exposed. For example, by examining money, consumption, distribution, and production it becomes clear that they don't represent objective 'facts' or things but "historically contingent contexts mediated by relationships of domination and subordination."9 And terms such as scarcity, labor, profit and efficiency depend very much upon ideological perspectives.10

Moreover, through critical thinking students can penetrate the contradictions in society and develop skills of analysis that they can employ far beyond their lives in classrooms. As full-fledged members of the adult community, the hope is that they will be able to see things both as they are and as they could be. Critical theory seeks to enable the world to be changed, not merely described. It presents the potential for understanding which can place theory into practice.

Thomas Kuhn has pointed out that science itself is not an unemotional and non-political activity.11 Since economics is not a precise science to date, its assumptions and structures should be held to constant analysis and critique. From a theoretical standpoint, the application of critical analysis in economic education will call into question the positivist assumptions of modern capitalist thought.

From the students' perspective, the process provides new ways of exam-
ining economics knowledge in relationship to other factors of the social order. In this way, economics knowledge will not be a body of information which stands alone, needing only to be adopted by the young students. Rather, students will begin to make connections between economic ideas and the political, social and psychological texture of their culture.

**Methodology of the Study**

The study is an analysis of modern high school economics textbooks, seeking to determine if ideological bias is present. The texts were selected based on their copyright dates, with only one having a copyright earlier than 1978. Most major publishers and several smaller ones were contacted for their texts. The list used for the study reflects the texts which were acquired either from the publishers or through some type of borrowing. (See Appendix A for text list.)

Four categories were selected for analysis after a larger list was pared because many texts excluded coverage of several categories completely. Based on their appearance in the texts and on their quality of rather easy diagnosis for bias, the categories chosen were a) other economic systems b) labor c) role of government d) environment.

The investigator has indicated bias when the texts present only one perspective and the topic can be approached from other legitimate outlooks. Bias would be present as well if the excluded viewpoint was given to the exclusion of the one the authors actually used. Not every imaginable possibility has to be included for a text to be exempt from the accusation of bias. But as Jonathan Kozol has made clear, "The point is not that school materials need to represent a full array of every possible point along the spectrum of political beliefs, but they must represent a significant array—or else we might as well give up the effort all together."12

While the investigator is not free of certain value choices when setting up and conducting an analysis of texts, such a subjective process provides opportunities to examine, probe and analyze in a way purely quantitative and experimental methods cannot.

Frances FitzGerald's extensive assessment of history texts, *America Revised: History Schoolbooks in the Twentieth Century*, and Jean Anyon's "Ideology and United States History Textbooks" both demonstrate the valuable contributions such an analysis can produce. This study differs substantially from the others because it examines economics texts and because it uses specific issues in economics which can clearly be gauged to reflect one or another political-economic position.

**The Nature of Economics**

"Economics, far from being pure truth, involves ideologies, some of which are contradictory and competing."13 If contradictory and competing ideologies are not sufficient cause for economics to consider various views,
both generally and in relation to specific issues, then the fact that economists worldwide have found little ground upon which to build a solid consensus should be. As Norman Lee has indicated, "The much quoted failure of economists to reach a consensus view on so many major economic issues, and the liveliness of the related debates in the journals, suggest that some degree of diversity in both value systems and methodological approaches continues to prevail in current economic research."14 Or, as an editorial in Business Week asserted, "Economics is not an exact science . . ."15

For an economic theory to be objective, it would have to be a theory which was not influenced by social and political ideology or by the social structure prevailing in the society where the economic theory was formulated. It would have to be as pertinent to any other system as to the one in which it was used.16 Therefore, a good text "should distinguish as far as it is possible to do between positive economics and explicit value judgements."17

Finally, neglecting to provide students with varied views would not only short circuit their ability to see the economic landscape in a critical way, it would prevent them from developing a full understanding of the perspective which is present in a biased text. This phenomenon is best described by John Stuart Mill who averred: "He who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that. His reasons may have been good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side . . . he has no ground for preferring either opinion."18

Use of Terms

Consensus does not exist concerning the nature of what economic education ought to be. M. L. Frankel, past president of the Joint Council on Economic Education, wrote that it should include the study of the concepts and principles of economics, economic institutions, economic activities, and economic problems.19 William Rader of Ohio University agrees but adds that in addition to the 'what', economics education "should provide the student with an objective, non-political set of analytical tools which can be applied to current economic issues both at a personal and a societal level."20

Bias is used herein to mean "where economics education predisposes pupils to accept one set of values or doctrines in preference to another set."21

Ideologies, according to Angela Webster, "are not disguised descriptions of the world, but rather real descriptions of the world from a a specific viewpoint." The viewpoint, while real, does not necessarily represent reality but rather is "a" reality or one among many.22 Jean Anyon suggests that ideological bias in texts "can take the form of omitting a fact or of subtle distinctions and emphases." If an ideological perspective governs textbooks, "it can acquire the status of truth, and the information will be less likely to be subjected to scrutiny in classrooms or compared with other points of view."23
Category I: Treatment of Economic Systems

One way to assess bias is to examine what one can term the fairness doctrine. Not unlike the concept employed in the media whereby opposing views or doctrines on controversial issues are given time or space in the name of fairness, so too in education should differing perspectives be awarded similar coverage.

Some texts in the study brandish the fact that they are designed to promote free enterprise or the American system. While this is a debatable premise from which to launch the economic education of the young, it lacks validity when considered in the broader context of the world economy. Whatever the virtues of a market system may be, knowledge of them alone does not comprise economic literacy. Bonnie Meszaros of the Center for Economic Education at the University of Delaware stated that "the United States is both the world's largest importer and exporter. To understand the American economy, a basic knowledge of international economics is required."

In other words, any attempts at teaching the American economy must, by virtue of the world markets it touches, teach about international economics as well. That means other systems, their underlying assumptions, values, goals, etc., need to be introduced. Especially since they, and we, through tariffs, embargoes, cartels, plus other market distortions resulting from internal policy—i.e. government owned or supported industries which then compete on world markets—prohibit a free market from existing internationally.

Suzanne Helburn has explained that the term 'free enterprise' is not a scientific term but an ideological one. Though she believes there is an attempt at objectivity among economists, in the U.S. the performance of an economic system is evaluated based on efficiency. From that perspective socialist countries are seen as inefficient and wasteful. Ironically, "from a socialist viewpoint, the market economy wastes resources on advertising, product differentiation, and consumerism." Helburn then proclaims what is most germane to this study: "But I have never seen that argument in a high school text."

Accepting for the moment, however, the rationale that America's students need to learn about and understand the American economic system, it seems only sound to make the examination of the system a critical one, one that portrays vividly both merits and shortcomings. States William Rader, Free enterprise education is not the essence of economic education... Economic education calls for critical analysis and not passive acceptance of the assets of the economic system while disregarding the liabilities. A program of uncritical indoctrination in the 'virtues of free enterprise' is not what is meant when economic educators speak of developing economic literacy. Free enterprise education conceals and distorts the true nature of economic education.
Teaching about free enterprise, as with any aspect of the curriculum, carries with it the obligation to do it objectively.

The very use of the term free enterprise becomes problematic in many texts because those who use the term invariably assert that free enterprise, capitalism, private enterprise and/or American enterprise are interchangeable. They allege that America has a free enterprise system but then they confess that all systems are mixed, which is to say that the system has characteristics of both a market and a planned economy. It would be more accurate, then, to call it America's regulated free enterprise system or America's mixed economy since by free enterprise they actually mean mixed.

Most texts allude to the changes in economic conditions which have visited the United States over the past centuries. Still, they use free enterprise as the descriptor, and this is misleading at best. Text #3, for instance, explains the change from old to new by claiming that injustices under the older laissez faire system caused people to adopt modern free enterprise (p. 14). Not only is this misleading, it is confusing for it sounds as though the people exchanged free enterprise (another term for laissez faire, in essence) for free enterprise.

The misleading dimension is that the system has not only changed, but more important is that economic forces have changed even more. Until the 1930's, classical economics, or neoclassical as it came to be called, assumed that markets were served by many firms with each producing a small share of the total product. Then it came to be understood that in many markets, a small number of large firms were in control. The firms were oligopolies and now many are multi-national. Add big unions, large agri-business and big government and one has conditions which stand traditional free market thought on its head.

It seems apparent in the texts that an effort is made to isolate, to the extent possible, what a largely planned economy entails. Planned economies, it is asserted, are those where freedom for individuals has been lost. In #2,3,6,8,9 and 10 the Soviet Union is the primary example offered of a planned or command economy. The texts point out that each person under planned systems has little influence on economic decisions. Government planners allocate resources and decide how much of what items are to be produced. Yet, one can find a similar, albeit to a lesser degree, circumstance in the United States. Government planners from the Pentagon, legislative branch, and so on, determine how much of the nation's wealth, collected through taxes, is to be allocated for weapons and defense manufacture. The more taken from individuals and given to military ends, the less available for consumption, and under such an example the individual has a smaller economic voice.

In text #3, a command economy is described and the brief passage concludes with some criticisms from a pro-laissez faire perspective (p. 15). This is certainly an acceptable approach, for in the interest of sound pedagogy it offers a critique from a different perspective for the students to consider.
When the market economy is described in the same book, however, criticisms of the system are conspicuously absent (p. 17). Since a criticism of the command systems is that they cannot produce the abundance of goods that Americans have enjoyed under market control, the authors might have considered Lester C. Thurow's point in *The Zero Sum Society* in which he indicates that "No one inherited more wealth than we. We are not the little poor boy who worked his way to the top, but the little rich boy who inherited a vast fortune."  

In some cases students are given unclear messages, often due to the brevity of the authors on various points. This is in evidence in reference to command economies again as revealed by #10: "In a communist country (such as Russia [sic], Red China, or North Korea) the command economy is at its severest. The central government owns almost all the capital goods and natural resources, controls all the industries, and does most of the economic planning. In a socialist country (such as Great Britain and some other European countries) the command economy is much in evidence, since the government owns and controls many of the capital goods and natural resources and does much of the economic planning" (p. 22).

Text #10 has nothing more to say about socialism or planned economies beyond a brief confession on the same page that all economies are mixed. On this point, it seems two injustices are inflicted.

First, while many texts do mention certain elements which may be construed to be inconsistencies between classical theory and the U.S. version of a market system, it can be expected that only those who have a trained eye or who are well steeped in basic economic understanding will clearly grasp the significance of this point. That it has been handled in this manner suggests careful planning. In the words of economist Robert Lekachman, "Skillful propaganda displays a certain sensitivity to opposing views, an ingratiating readiness to concede a minor dereliction here and there, and an intimation of awareness that the world is a complicated planet."  

The second unfairness results from the use of inequitable examples to make a point. In #10 the example offered of U.S. economic planning was a wartime circumstance, a situation when most economic principles are set aside for the achievement of national goals. Nonetheless, it is used as an example which indicates that planning is inefficient. Yet the same authors, in discussing wage and price controls, cited Nixon's wage-price freeze for its lack of success while ignoring the more successful wage-price controls used during World War II. In other words certain circumstances, e.g., a wartime economy, are used as evidence when they fit the perspective of the authors. When those exact same conditions refute a related point, the authors turn to more agreeable turf.

Among the guiding principles of free-enterprise are the concepts of private property and freedom for individuals to make choices and to affect the system through their choices. These are offered in texts #2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10.
Theoretically speaking, however, it is not entirely clear that private property (if used in its narrower but more common meaning of housing and land) is at all essential to the workings of a free enterprise system. Henry George, a free market proponent and American economist, in proposing his 'single tax' plan, called for the abolition of the private ownership of land while keeping intact most other market concepts. Though his ideas have been employed on only a small scale, they represent a cogent challenge to the doctrine of private land as a mainstay of a free economy.

The same texts enshrine the concept of individual choice and how this enables workers to choose their occupation and to direct or control economic means via their economic choices. While this has more than a kernel of truth in some instances, it is not a complete verity.

If I choose to work as a dustman, it does not follow that I like this work above all other kinds of work. It may well be that I happen to have no qualification for other jobs that I like better; that I do not have the financial resources necessary to train myself for a more pleasant occupation; that if I do not accept this job I shall have to go on unemployment relief, choose a yet more undesirable job, or starve.\(^{30}\)

In general, one might say that a person makes choices only among the alternatives available to him or her. This represents something a bit altered from the intimations in the texts that all are able to make choices freely and that those choices govern the economy.

By placing the emphasis on a distinction between a market and a command economy, and by offering a worst case scenario of the command system, the texts depict socialism as a monolithic ideology, or as a system where individual freedom has been abrogated. In truth, socialism can take, and has taken, many forms. When it was first advocated in a modern sense, more than a century and a half ago,

it meant public ownership of the means of production, that is, land and capital. But in the western world the movement did not take that direction. Instead of socializing the means of production, most countries adopted regulations that in effect socialized the product. Land and factories were left in private hands; a considerable part of their product was acquired through taxation and redistributed. This method was more acceptable to the people and very likely has been more efficient. However, the process of socialization has gone further than would appear if judged by the original criterion, public ownership of the means of production.\(^{31}\)

Some of the textbooks blur the distinctions between mixed systems and command systems, or they make no fair appraisal of the middle ground between market and command economies. Mixed systems contain elements of both, "mixed" together. "Democratic socialism is such a mixture," according
to Leonard Silk, "with emphasis on public goods and social control of Business." Moreover, socialized economies tend to be concerned with who will benefit from production. For whose ends and for what purposes do the factories operate?

It may be helpful to students if these ideologies were presented differently than they are in most texts. Since most decisions a society makes regarding its economy are political and not economic, texts could easily establish a base of general economic principles and then in cases where problems are handled differently by diverse economic systems, the values and beliefs of a system along with the real and potential outcomes could be shown. It is here that the basic assumptions of varied ideologies deserve careful scrutiny because the assumptions tend to be based more upon beliefs and value systems than evidence determined scientifically.

Capitalism holds that private property is important and necessary and the system places faith in competition and market forces (invisible hand). Socialism assumes public ownership of some resources and some industries while seeking to employ human thinking capacity to control market forces. Stated another way, a command economy is one where society dictates to the market and a market economy is one in which the market dictates resource allocation to society.

In discussing command systems most texts cite the centralized authority over the economy. This is seen as repressive and, naturally, if the political system is not democratic, it is a situation marked by the loss of freedom. The texts could point out, however, that socialism can be a decentralized system as in the case of France today. They could indicate that free enterprise can result in gigantic corporations, often monopolistic in structure, where there is a centralized body making large economic decisions over which most members of society, while being directly or indirectly affected, have no say or control.

Again, socialized systems can take varied forms, as a look at similar parts of different socialized economies can reveal. Recently, worker and community voices in corporate decisions have become popular in the United States. Douglas Fraser, President of the United Auto Workers Union, now sits as a member of the board of Chrysler Corporation. This parallels the practice in many European countries where workers and elected citizens of the community sit on corporate boards. The voice by non-owners is a form of socializing the means of production without placing ownership in the hands of the central government and without making industries public in structure.

Another development, especially in the United States, is the ownership of industries by the workers themselves. Currently, approximately 5,000 companies have some form of employee stock ownership plan. The most successful of these give employees not only stock control but authority in management decisions. This arrangement has taken several forms but it
represents another example of worker ownership, often in conjunction with community owners, of the means of production. Decisions related to hiring, lay-offs, pollution policies, plant closings, and so on, reside in the local community and are made with local interests at heart.

Clearly, these varied forms of socialized systems should be presented to students, especially since, in the main, they often do not distort market arrangements typically found in the somewhat free systems in the world. They too should be given a critical appraisal, but to ignore their consideration completely is to deprive young Americans of the sound and intellectually honest economic education they deserve. Anything less than a balanced approach renders future citizens incapable of making sound, informed judgments that a free democratic society demands.

Category II: Labor

Labor, in America, typically means organized labor or unions. In this section labor is meant to be the unionized workers who constitute the labor movement.

The interests of workers and the interests of company owners are not always the same. The way in which one or the other is depicted in texts can lend a certain degree of legitimacy to a favored outlook.

For the labor category three aspects were assessed for bias: coverage of union history, the concept of “right to work” laws, and the portrayal of labor as a factor of production. The history of the union movement in the United States has many dimensions and important characters. Though it cannot be expected that a complete history appear in an economics text, once the commitment to include union history is made, the obligation falls on the authors to be as thorough and fair as possible.

On this question the texts fall into two broad categories. Texts #2, 3, 9 and 10 refer only to the AFL-CIO and totally ignore other and often more radical unions. Text #9 mentions no specific unions at all, unless the American Medical Association qualifies as a union, in which case it is not AFL-CIO. These texts ignore exploitation of labor and related events which many historians conclude were the cause of unionization. Text #2 states: “The labor movement was born when workers began to understand the effectiveness of unified action” (p. 63). The discussion which follows explains that there is a union representative for collective bargaining. Nothing is mentioned of worker perceptions of unfair wages, treatment and working conditions as the causes for their desire to organize. Given other omissions from the story of unionization, students could easily conclude that satisfied workers simply joined together to develop more clout with employers.

Text #10, in mentioning the AFL-CIO, states: “This federation of trade unions accepted the idea of a free enterprise economy and did not question the ethical foundations of free enterprise” (p. 87). But the text offers no examples of unions that did or do challenge the ethical foundations of free
enterprise. Moreover, there are unions within the AFL-CIO that do in fact seriously question both the premises and ethics of free enterprise.

"Right to work" laws are a source of serious concern to the trade union movement in the U.S. While there are legitimate reasons for covering this topic, several texts did not feel ‘right to work’ was worth the space. Texts #2,3,7,9 and 10, however, felt the topic was something high school economics students should be apprised of—and several used a pro and con format. Yet, curiously, none of these texts saw any value in including ‘yellow dog contracts’, an issue that could be considered by unions to be the antithesis of ‘right to work’.

Text #8 was the only one to include ‘yellow dog contracts’ but they were cited in an unrelated part of the book. Text #10 proclaimed that “Employers (and many employees) support “right to work” laws; unions oppose them” (p. 98). This represents an egregious unfairness. If balance was a consideration here, the statement could have as its second part: “unions (and many nonunion employees) oppose right-to-work laws.” Bias is most effective when it is subtle.

Finally, the way labor is generally depicted often has hidden messages. Text #3 suggests, as do many economic books, that labor is done by either people or machines, whichever is less expensive (p. 25). Therefore, the intimation is that the only factor which distinguishes people from machines, economically speaking, is their cost or supply. In economics, however, a student should learn that making choices among available alternatives is something based on what one values. Consequently, cost is not, in fact, the only possible consideration in making a choice. Some would prefer fuller employment despite its increased production costs instead of higher unemployment which carries painful human costs. Beyond that, increased unemployment decreases the demand for goods and brings a further economic slowdown. The situation becomes self-aggravating because unemployment heavily increases the national budget deficit.

Text #3 also claims that “when business is good, workers may sometimes receive raises, bonuses, or both; when business is bad, however, they rarely take a cut in pay. The work force does not share the risks of private enterprise” (p. 167). Though the first portion of this value laden statement is often true, the second part is often false. Particularly when inflation is accounted for, real wages do often drop during bad business times in spite of pay increases. That is to say, salary increases often do not even keep pace with inflation which translates into less purchasing power for wage earners. But a more common solution to slow business periods is to lay off a portion of the work force—those human beings whose labor is not needed temporarily. One could argue that these workers not only share but actually absorb the risks of free enterprise and do so without any voice in the decision.

In addition, it could be demonstrated that when business does profit
heavily during good times, the wage increases workers receive do not equal, in percentage terms, the level of profit increases. Beyond that, other forms of ownership discussed in the last section of this study reveal that when workers can share fully in the profits that result from their labor, they are willing to carry fully the risks of free enterprise.

Inflation has been problematic at best both domestically and in foreign economies. One can hear leading economists claim a variety of causes of inflation—a variety too long to list even partially here. But text #3 places the responsibility for inflation at the door of the workers (p. 168). Some analysts do point to wage rates, in some sectors of the economy, as contributors to inflation while others minimize the impact wages make on American inflation. The point is that leading experts disagree on the causes and solutions for inflation, and students reading a high school text are entitled to know that. More important, to claim that labor is responsible for inflation, either through low productivity or wage demands, is to make a charge that is difficult to substantiate and which does not present a balanced and reasoned discussion of the issue.

Examples of the kind discussed in this section are numerous in several of the texts, but the ones cited serve to make the point. As suggested in the introduction, one way to be fair when discussing controversial issues is to let the group at issue, in this case labor, present its own case and provide its own evidence. Students, then, should be expected to consider the case in a most critical way and should base their critical analysis on disinterested as well as other sources.

Category III: Role of Government

The function of government in a free market economy can be controversial when one considers ideological differences. Business interests generally oppose government regulation because they believe it interferes unduly in market behavior. Other groups, such as consumer activists and some labor organizations, favor government regulation as a source of protection for consumers and workers. The text authors who refer to the 'free enterprise' system also feel obliged to warn about government regulation and the concern of 'many' that the role of government has become too obtrusive.

In any case, the texts could take a more balanced if not critical approach to the role of business in government spending. That is, government behavior has not only been in the form of interference with business in the economy, increasingly it has been the provider of some business successes. It has done this by assuming the risks for the private sector in many instances.

Sidney Lens illustrates this through the following examples. Several years ago Trans World Airlines ran into financial difficulty due, it alleged, to
higher fuel prices. It then petitioned the Civil Aeronautics Board for a $184.1 million subsidy and apparently saw nothing subversive in a free enterprise corporation appearing before government with a tin cup. Such incidents, Lens comments, are commonplace and the corporations are such giants as Lockheed, Penn Central, Pan American, Chrysler, and many others.45  

What makes the U.S. free enterprise system superior to socialism, the theory goes, is that the private entrepreneur who takes the risk of losing his or her capital has the incentive to be efficient; if the entrepreneur is efficient the reward is profits and if inefficiency prevails the punishment is financial loss. The calamity can be avoided, it seems, if the entrepreneur can persuade the government to furnish pecuniary support.  

A few years ago, for instance, a New York U.S. Senator, himself a prophet of free enterprise, announced that he had persuaded the Federal government to guarantee a $40 million loan for Seatrain Shipbuilding to complete two large oil tankers. “The government, it should be noted, was not making the loan directly, but, like a co-signer, it guaranteed that should Seatrain default, Washington would pick up the tab.” The Senator and the administration in Washington had to “work out this arrangement because the private banks shunned Seatrain as a poor risk; they felt that in today’s market tankers could not be sold.” The result of this scheme was that the banks took no risk whatever, yet they pocketed 3 to 4 million dollars a year in interest, and the company was relieved of the threat of loss since it was gambling with the public’s, not its own, money.36  

What happens in these cases, of which this example is merely the tip of the iceberg, is that the risks of private enterprise are socialized while the profits remain private.  

Another way government frequently interferes in free enterprise on behalf of private corporations occurs in Research and Development. The government provides billions of dollars annually which turn a profit for private concerns in one of two ways. One is to make a direct profit through the financial terms of a contract and the other way is that the company often takes title to any patents and is generally permitted to apply the technology to civilian products at no charge or at a negligible fee.37 It can be seen in dozens of instances ranging from technology now used in nuclear power plants to communication satellites. More recently it has been announced that the space shuttle Atlantis, the capstone of the space shuttle project, will be sold to private concerns in the U.S. It will be used for the development of space economic ventures for private gain, with all profits going to private interests. This, after the taxpayers funded all the technological development through NASA.  

The textbooks, when addressing the role of government in a specific way, are of several minds. Texts #2 and 7 basically assess government’s role based on taxes and tax policy, although #7 does indicate how government functions to help clean the environment.
Texts #4, 5 and 6 provide a rationale for government functions and growth, and they intimate or aver that governmental activities have usually grown in response to demands of the people. Or, as in #4 and 6, government is credited with providing the infrastructure and institutional framework without which a free market economy could not exist. Text #4 goes so far to say that ideological leanings should be set aside when assessing government’s growth and influence. Instead, the text instructs, one should ask “Has our private sector reluctantly retreated before a predatory government, or has government expanded into a vacuum left by private enterprise failures?” (p. 246).

Texts #3, 8 and 10, on the other hand, wade into the issue of whether government interference hurts economic freedom. They allude to some economists and others who have expressed concern over increased government regulation.

#3 states: “No amount of government action can do for individuals what they can do for themselves” (p. 154). One must question if that means that individuals should fight industrial pollution on their own, divorced from any governmental efforts. And what about those things that individuals can do better collectively than individually; are they proper domains of government action?

Text #10 asserts that “Once a government service is provided at public expense, all consumers help pay for it through taxes” (a point repeated several times elsewhere), “and sometimes through higher prices even though many of them may not need or want the service” (p. 109). The authors do not indicate that the last part of their sentence is true of all public services.

A more important consideration, it seems, is that while it is difficult to directly refute the assertion regarding government services, the issue is not presented in a format that provides intellectual fairness. The authors feel no compunction about attacking the ethic of government services, which incidentally are available in most cases to everyone on equal footing regardless of one’s personal situation. The same cannot be said of government bailouts of giant corporations. Those tax giveaways could be described as follows: “corporate bailouts use public funds, paid for by consumers through taxes, and often through higher prices even though most citizens do not need or desire the bailout,”—and the description would be as fair as the authors’ on government services.

I do not favor cynical explanations in texts. My example is given only to demonstrate how unfairly certain ideas are presented in some of the texts.

Finally, it is a onesided approach to paint government as primarily a meddling and regulating force in our lives. That it is often these things is indisputable, but that tells only part of the story. If authors feel so completely about their ideas that no other viewpoints are given credence in their text, then possibly a warning label should accompany the book. Moreover, once government is criticized for its interference, the criticism should reveal that the interference is sometimes beneficial to business and the public alike.
Category IV: The Environment

One of the issues confronting the modern world which encroaches heavily on free enterprise theory is the environment. The final section of this study examines the apparent clash between the assumption of growth under free enterprise, on one hand, and the realities of finite amounts of resources and the knowledge that a growth economy is a faster polluter, on the other.

The dilemma is the inability to determine acceptable levels of environmental quality and the accompanying problem posed by the use of cost-benefit analysis. That is, environmental quality is troublesome to fix quantitatively and since producers rely upon cost-benefit data when making production decisions, certain important environmental considerations rarely enter the equations.

For instance, it is extremely difficult to measure the potential benefits to all who inhabit the planet—including the non-human animal kingdom—that may result from cleaner air or a richer and more pure landscape.

Most texts cite economic growth as a postulate of free enterprise which promises better products in ever increasing quantities. In this way, it is claimed, a rising standard of living is provided for all. The environmental question poses two seemingly related problems in this connection: one is that the planet's eco-system suffers severe, possibly irreparable damage as a result of industrial and other kinds of pollution and by-products; and that unchecked exploitation of existing resources threatens to mortgage the future to present economic desires.

Although there are a few optimists who vow that new technologies and greater efficiency will resolve the crisis in resource depletion, one must caution that technology has often been the cause of pollution in addition to providing the means by which resources can be consumed at ever increasing rates. Jeremy Rifkin has cogently warned of the impending disaster if physics's second law continues to be ignored. The second law holds that the "transformation of energy is always from an available to a dissipated form, or from an ordered to a disordered state." The breakdown is termed entropy and modern reliance on technology has lulled us into a myopic optimism about our condition. In Rifkin's words,

...we continue to live under the delusion that our technology is freeing us from dependence upon our environment, when nothing could be further from the truth... Human beings, like all other living things, can only survive by exchanging with the environment. Without a constant flow-through of energy from the environment we would all perish within days. Technology makes us more dependent upon nature, even as it physically moves us further away from it; we have become more dependent as we have required increasing doses of nature's energy to sustain our cultural pattern and our personal life-styles.
It is interesting that the texts are of two schools on this matter. Texts #1,2,3,5,8 and 10 practically evade the contradiction between growth and environmental preservation. Text #10 assumes it is not a topic germane to the study of economics. Texts #1,2 and 3 withhold any examination until the very last pages of the books. Text #3 is so brief as to be almost negligible, but as #7 uses the issue of air as an example of a limited resource that has been damaged because no one accepts responsibility for it, #3 opines that “Air, therefore, is not considered scarce" (p. 23). An alert student, it seems, would wonder about the need for the Clean Air Act.

Text #1, which is more a history of American economic development, reserves any mention of environmental consideration until the last two pages. Though #5 offers a more reasonable treatment of the issue, it is brief nonetheless (2 pp.) and avoids the contradiction discussed above.

Texts #4,6,7 and 9, on the other hand, devote more space and are more comprehensive. Text #7 does a thorough job by beginning the book with items related to the environment along with their relevance to the study of economics. The approach is objective yet seeks to raise the consciousness of the reader. The environment is integrated with the entire curriculum in the text and no attempt is made to skim over inconsistencies between economic theory and real world environmental problems.

Texts #4 and 9 provide fair coverage but the issue is divorced from what can be considered the more important dimensions of economics. #9, for instance, tackles the subject in an impartial way, but one must read to the very end of the book to discover the importance of environmentalism. This second group of texts is to be credited with including the environment, though they did so in varying degrees.

One is moved to question how it is possible that many modern economics texts designed for a broad range of high school students could have overlooked such a significant topic. The ideological implications are interesting if one looks at how some industries balk at environmental standards. U.S. auto makers have been reluctant to meet government emission requirements, despite the ability of foreign imports to meet the same U.S. established standards. Other efforts by corporations to relax clean air standards, postpone deadlines for stricter emission standards, along with efforts to roll back levels already achieved, demonstrate the counter interests between production and a protected environment in many cases.

The present generation is very aware of the interdependence among all aspects of the environment. Recent opinion polls make this abundantly clear. A full two-thirds majority firmly desires the maintenance of present environmental legislation, according to a recent New York Times/CBS Poll. Almost half favored continued environmental improvements regardless of cost, and a recent Harris Poll revealed that “80% oppose any relaxation of the Clean Air Act.”

There is no way to raise the environmental issue in texts without alerting
students to some theoretical problems with free enterprise. If a text is biased, then silence is a safer route than exposing such an emotional and popular issue.

**Conclusion**

It was Thomas Carlyle who dubbed economics the "dismal science." The preceding examination of modern high school economics texts demonstrates that while dismal may describe economics as a science, lack of consensus best describes the high school texts.

There is practically no agreement on what the subject matter of economics ought to be among the texts, save a basic core presentation of classical economic thought. Beyond that, topics for chapters, subjects of emphasis and general ideological complexion vary widely.

It is safe to assert, however, that the textbooks present an explanation of economic constructs that is harmonious with the existing economic order in America. In a broad sense the texts display a bias in favor of neo-classical macro-economics. Such widely used approaches as the Keynesian are relegated to a position of non-status.

The bias is accented by the format of many texts which offers a 'this is the way it is' approach. Students are expected to accept the postulates advanced in the text and are rarely encouraged to answer, for themselves, why; explanations are typically provided, therefore higher level cognition and inquiry are eschewed. The point of many texts seems to be 'give them the truth and have them learn it'.

The ideological bias in the texts exists in two basic forms. First, they present free enterprise principles to the exclusion of other ideas. As indicated in this study, this is done under the guise of teaching students about the economy in the United States. The harm in this assumption is that economic literacy for the 21st century is traded for the adoption of values and beliefs suited to the perpetuation of the current economic order. But even if the necessity for learning the economy of the United States is accepted, the presentation of the domestic economy should be objective and probing. On the whole, many of the texts are neither.

If the texts claimed to be presenting the classical theory—as theory—that would be one thing. Yet they do not. Instead they proffer an essentially classical model and imply that this is the American model. The changes which they include (changes from Adam Smith's original blueprint) are not discussed as deviations from the theory. As a consequence, students are left to believe that the American economic system is free enterprise and that the variations from classical thought are part of standard free enterprise economics.

The study has demonstrated how ideological bias seeps into the way certain issues are presented in the texts. Not all the texts are guilty of broad-based bias and the study credits texts which are fair and exempts them from the charge of bias.
Nonetheless, it would be a dereliction not to outline the kinds of topics and/or concepts which, if included in the texts, would provide a more balanced overall economic education for high school students. As Sheila Harty has noted, economic literacy would include,

the reasons for government intervention—job creation, reduction of pollution, health care services, housing, transportation, and welfare . . . How today's market differs from the classical system should be presented—such as economic concentration, oligopolies, market entry barriers, unions, and large scale entities like multinational corporations. Defects and failings in today's market system also warrant discussion—such as occupational disease and industry collusion and price fixing, extensive non-informative or deceptive advertising, and excessive non-essential product differentiation. Corporate demands of government subsidies or regulations which shield them from market competition need airing as well.40

Norman Lee has suggested shifting the syllabi or changing the emphasis of the content in economics education so that more attention could be given to the following:

1. Examination of the ends of economic systems and the development of pupils' facility in evaluating those ends for themselves.
2. Greater attention to the examination of alternative, real world, economic systems and comparisons between systems.
3. Development of pupils' facility in the detection of value judgments in economic arguments and in distinguishing between normative and positive statements.
4. A more balanced allocation of teaching time between topics related to the different ends of economic systems. In particular, greater allocation of time to topics connected with income distribution and economic justice objectives (e.g., problems of poverty, conservation, housing, education, etc.).
5. Economic analysis of social and environmental problems.
6. Greater use of the contributions of other behavioral sciences in studying consumer behavior and greater attention to more realistic market forms and their possible welfare implications.41

The question of alternative economic systems or arrangements within a system is worthy of special note, for here the silence of the texts is deafening. Without considering viable alternative structures, students are deprived of having their capacity for evaluation and critical examination cultivated. If alternatives exist, how can they ever become popular if they are kept in the closet? And if they have inherent strength as ideas, what is the reason for preventing students from being exposed to them? If free enterprise theory is overpowering in reason, students will be convinced on that basis. Alternative forms of economic organization—including cooperatives,
federal chartering, and worker ownership—should also be included. The teaching about economic democracy, as an alternative to neo-classical ideology, might, according to William H. Boyer, result in the following:

a. Instead of accepting the belief that the 'market' and supply and demand are laws which determine economics and the future, a whole range of political-economic choices could be considered, involving human rights and common quality of life.

b. The use of economic 'trends' in planning would therefore give way to the design of social goals, and planning would be given a more central role in controlling the uses of the economic system.

c. Distribution ratios for national wealth and income could then be changed and new tax laws and employment opportunities would serve the new distribution goals. Non-renewable resources would be treated as human capital which should also serve future generations. The consumption of such resources to produce profit to whomever has the money to buy thereby becomes obsolete.

d. Students would learn the ways in which monopoly in labor, corporations, and resource ownership can and currently does become highly influential in determining production and distribution. They would learn how democratic economics could shift power into the public domain.

e. Instead of treating GNP as the ultimate standard of progress*, the overall quality of life would become primary, and environmental planning could be used to produce a high common quality of life on a sustainable basis.

f. The right to socially useful employment at a living wage then becomes a major educational consideration. Rights to a livable and healthful environment are given more emphasis as economic goals.43

With increased attention to understanding and learning about economics in our schools, educators must guard against efforts to serve any particular class, segment, or special interest in the education of the young. Since the textbook occupies such a central role in the curriculum of the schools, and since economics instruction is being increased, it is imperative that the content of the texts be free of ideological bias. Based on the examples provided in this study, there is cause for concern, particularly about several of the most recent high school textbooks published.

It is not argued in this study that the examples provided as alternative concepts should replace the texts' examples or ideologies; only rather that they be included along with them. The intent of the study is not to replace

*As stated in the Nov/Dec 1981 issue of The Humanist, "Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell" (p. 5).
one ideological bias with another. Instead, the assertion is that both or, where appropriate, several ideologies should appear side by side.

True economic literacy demands that the free market place of ideas should allow all perspectives to prevail or fail on the basis of the evidence and persuasiveness of the inherent qualities of the ideas themselves. Any education which fails to be presented with absolute intellectual integrity, presenting all options and theories as valid until known otherwise, is not education at all. It is better described as indoctrination; an educational tool more suitable to repressive political tyrannies than to a free, democratic republic.

References


2. See National Survey of Economic Education 1981, conducted by Yankelovich, Skelly and White, Inc.


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34. For a complete discussion of why the AFL-CIO is more palatable to a business ideology, see Jean Anyon’s “Ideology and United States History Textbooks,” *Harvard Educational Review* 49 (August 1979). Dr. Anyon explores the myth of how unpopular the Knights of Labor or the Wobblies were. She also contends that a major reason that the AFL-CIO gets more favorable coverage in texts is because its conservative stance and non-socialist position during the years of great labor unrest, committed it to an acceptance of a business dominated economic order.


37. Ibid., p. 16.


42. Sheila Harty, *Hucksters in the Classroom*, p. 77.


**Appendix A**


The Great Depression: A Textbook Case of Problems with American History Textbooks

Steven L. Miller and Stephen A. Rose
Central Ohio Center for Economic Education
Ohio State University
Columbus, OH 43210

"Soon the stock market decline would become a collapse . . . wipe out the speculators, stop the economy, and lead to the greatest depression in United States history."—An American History Text (Boorstin and Kelley, 1981, p. 490)

"The Depression was produced or, at the very least, made far worse by perverse monetary policies followed by the United States authorities."—Milton Friedman (1979)

Introduction

Periodically for the past nineteen years, economists have criticized junior and senior high school American history textbooks for failing to use economic analysis to explain economic events (American Economic Association 1963; Alexander, 1969; O'Neill, 1973; Saft, 1977). For example, in a 1977 review Saft reached conclusions similar to those of previous evaluators: "... [A]ll of the tests contained the same methodological difficulties which ultimately resulted in misguided discussion and served to create erroneous impressions of the causes and consequences of the events" (p. 43). He was particularly critical of the texts' treatment of the Great Depression. What impact has this criticism had on content of American history texts? In this article the authors argue that, at least in the case of the Great Depression, textbooks continue to present seriously inadequate economic analysis.

Unlike previous studies that examined a few texts in their entirety, this review is based upon scrutiny of one event in sixteen texts.¹ There are two reasons for focusing on the Great Depression. First, this episode provides a particularly good test case to determine whether previous criticism of texts and scholarly work by the economics profession are finding their way into
the books used to teach students. This is, after all, an event that has been rigorously investigated by economists. It also receives more attention in texts than any other single economic phenomenon. Second, the role of government in managing the economy is under reexamination since the election of Ronald Reagan. Many authorities trace the historical rationale for government macroeconomic policies back to the Great Depression. Indeed, the current debates over the balanced budget amendment and whether to return to the gold standard have historical roots in the Great Depression. Thus, understandings and impressions of the causes of the Depression might be related to current arguments about the role of government in managing the economy.

The sections that follow examine some of the substantial differences between the explanations of what caused the Great Depression found in the history texts reviewed and those developed by economists. Later, some possible reasons for the discrepancies and implications for social studies educators will be suggested.

Economists and American History Textbooks: Different Versions

The Great Depression is generally regarded to be the worst depression in American history. It has had far reaching impact on people's attitudes and government responsibility for managing the economy and providing economic security. Thus, nearly all textbooks examined devoted substantial space to the Depression, its consequences, and the New Deal that it spawned. Most authors felt compelled to answer how and why the Depression happened.

The typical textbook explanation resembled the description of an enormous forest fire: acres of tinder-dry forest (an economy beset with hidden problems such as too much production, inequality of income, and the like) set ablaze by careless campers (overspeculating investors) resulting in a huge conflagration (the Depression) that the smoke jumpers (government) could not put out. The textbooks generally proceeded from descriptions of the market crash and economic problems directly to accounts of human misery and statistics on unemployment in 1932 as a prelude to the election of FDR. Thus, the textbooks mistakenly gave the impression that the Depression was a single event cut of whole cloth when, in reality, it took nearly four years to reach bottom with a lot happening in the interval. The texts erred by not recognizing that explaining the depth and length of the Depression requires more than a dry forest and an uncontrollable fire. An accurate analysis must examine how the fire spread and, in particular, what the smoke jumpers did.

The forest fire model and pell-mell plunge to the Depression presented in the texts bear little resemblance to the explanations of the Depression developed by economists. Among the textbooks' failures in economic analysis, two are presented here. First, the books failed to explain the role
of discretionary macroeconomic government policies in producing the Depression. Second, they often cited causes that either have been rejected by economists or did not operate in the manner suggested by the texts.

The Smoke Jumpers

To provide a theoretical framework to examine the role of government macroeconomic policy during the Depression, it is useful to summarize briefly some of the general areas of agreement and disagreement among economists and economic historians concerning the causes and course of the Depression. The downturn began in the summer of 1929, prior to the stock market crash, for reasons about which there is much disagreement (Dornbusch and Fischer, 1981, p. 316). Economists also disagree about what produced the market crash and the extent to which it enhanced the decline. However, there is wide agreement that none of the varying explanations concerning the initial recession and the effects of the crash can account for the unprecedented length and severity of the Great Depression. Why was there no recovery in 1931 or 1932 as previous experience would have predicted?

In trying to answer this question, economists and economic historians have used modern macroeconomic theory to analyze the policy actions undertaken by government. The consensus conclusion seems to be that fiscal and especially monetary policies prevented an earlier recovery and, indeed, were major contributing causes of the Depression (Gordon, 1974, p. 72; Dornbusch and Fischer, 1981, p. 319). Thus, any explanation of the Depression that omits macroeconomic policy misses perhaps the most significant reason why this Depression became "Great".

However, the textbooks examined largely ignored the impact of government policies. For example, while the texts discussed (and disagreed about) Hoover's economic philosophy and efforts at jawboning business leaders, they failed to note the impact of fiscal policies. Modern macroeconomic theory calls for increased government spending or tax decreases or both in order to increase aggregate demand to combat a recession. During the Depression, federal fiscal policy was modestly expansionary until mid 1932, when it became sharply contractionary through 1934 (Brownlee, 1979, pp. 418–19). A small tax cut for 1930 and the $1 billion veterans' bonus were the only fiscal stimuli undertaken. The tax cut was eliminated a year later and in June 1932 the largest peacetime tax increase in history became effective (Gordon, 1974, p. 55). These policies were clearly the wrong prescription and intensified the economic decline (Dornbusch and Fischer, 1981, pp. 313–14).

Far worse is the complete absence in the history texts of any analysis of the monetary policy conducted by the Federal Reserve System (the Fed), for it is monetary policy which has been a central focus of economic research and has been judged by a broad consensus of economists to have been a
greater factor in the Depression. The extent of the Fed's culpability has been presented by monetarist economists, most notably in 1963 by Friedman and Schwartz in *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867-1960*. Even opponents of the monetarist view of the Depression admit to its dominance in the economic profession. Charles Kindelberger notes, "The monetarists' view of the Depression has held sway in the United States ever since the appearance of the Friedman and Schwartz book." Peter Temin observes that this "... scholarly, detailed, insightful, and fascinating... [book]... has had enormous influence on our views of the Depression. It has become something like the standard history of the Depression for students in economics" (1976, p. 14).

Because the monetarist thesis has become a standard feature of economists' explanations of the Great Depression but appears to be entirely unknown to the authors of American history texts, let us briefly examine it. Economists note that the Federal Reserve System permitted the quantity of money (M2) to decline by a third between the end of 1930 and early 1933, the most precipitous drop in American history (Friedman and Schwartz, 1965, pp. 2-3). It is a firmly established principle in modern macroeconomics that "tight money" can kill a recovery or produce a recession. Economic theory predicts that, without offsetting increases in the speed with which money turns over in transactions (velocity) or decreases in prices, the smaller quantity of money must result in less spending and, perforce, less output and employment. During the Depression the velocity of money decreased throughout most of the period, thereby reinforcing the effects of the drop in the quantity of money. The falling price level could not accommodate a smooth transition to an economy with such a sharply reduced money stock. Thus, this monetary collapse is regularly cited by economists as a major factor in explaining the depth of the Great Depression.

The process of monetary collapse is a result of a fractional reserve banking system in which transactions between banks create money. Brownlee explains:

... bankers need keep only a small fraction of the value of demand deposits [checking accounts] as reserves to protect against withdrawals. Upon receipt of new deposits, they will loan out a large fraction of those deposits. The loans, in turn, will appear in the money supply as demand deposits and these deposits will themselves engender further loan activity. The ultimate result will be [at maximum] an increase in the money supply determined by the product of the initial deposit and a factor set by the prevailing reserve-ratio. However, the process can operate in reverse: if deposits are withdrawn from the banking system, the result will be a reduction of the money supply determined by the product of the value of the withdrawal and a reserve-ratio factor (emphasis added). (1974, p. 309, n. 4)
Because of bank panics during the Depression, the process was operating in reverse. A bank panic occurs when depositors, fearful of a bank failure, rush to withdraw deposits. Because each dollar of cash is actually backing several dollars of deposits, a liquidity problem can quickly develop since the bank cannot as rapidly convert other assets (e.g., loans) into cash. Furthermore, a widespread panic can substantially reduce the money supply as withdrawals outstrip deposits in the total banking system. Before the existence of the Federal Reserve System, banks had devised methods for dealing with panics, such as suspending specie payments and even issuing substitute currency. With the establishment of the Fed, such practices were forbidden. It was thought that the central bank would act as a “lender of last resort” to the banking system, forestall waves of bank panics, and maintain a steady money supply (Mayer, 1978, pp. 137-8). The Fed's failure to do so is the prime suspect in the ensuing monetary collapse.

Specific examples of the Fed's failure can be seen in 1931, a pivotal year. In early 1931, the economy showed signs of revival despite its previous problems. The Fed failed to respond to the second wave of bank panics which smashed any recovery at that time (Schwartz, 1981, p. 6 and p. 15). In October 1931, Britain's departure from the gold standard set off yet another wave of panics. At this point, the Fed made a serious policy error by restricting open market purchases and raising the discount rate, actions which tightened the money supply at the very time the panic was further liquidiating money. Because of these and other practices of the Fed, economists have concluded that “...certainly money policy was not the only cause of the severity and persistence of depressed conditions between 1929 and 1933, but just as certainly, it was a sufficient cause” (Brownlee, 1979, p. 415).

Unfortunately, the impact of the Fed policy goes unmentioned in the American history textbooks reviewed for this study, except for one sentence in one book: “Each withdrawal of deposits decreased the money supply” (Davidson and Lytle, 1981, p. 550). Even this text, which had previously devoted a column to the Federal Reserve Act and a brief (but inadequate) explanation of the Fed's money regulating power, did not mention the Fed's failure. It neatly reversed causality by stating, “Despite (emphasis added) the Federal Reserve System ... many individual banks were unable to survive the economic slowdown” (Davidson and Lytle, 1981, p. 550). Nor did it explain the impact of the decline in the money supply on employment and output. No explanation was offered in this or any other text of the process by which money was being destroyed (Why did each withdrawal decrease the money supply?). This is unfortunate not only because it is a key piece in the Great Depression puzzle, but also because its reverse, the money creation process, is important in understanding inflation. Indeed, clear presentations of the money creation and destruction processes would have considerably enhanced the explanations of the many panics and inflations referred to in these texts.
While authors of recent textbooks have not recognized the importance of fiscal and particularly monetary policies, they have attempted to present other reasons why the Great Depression happened. However, many of the factors cited in the texts have been rejected by economists or did not operate in the way the textbooks recount.

Chief among these factors is the stock market crash. While a few texts recognized that the crash and the Depression are not synonymous, some continued to leave the impression that the crash was the pivotal event, explicitly or by virtue of the amount and placement of copy devoted to the crash. Others carefully stated that the crash was only one factor. A few noted that the market collapse intensified a recession that already had begun.

However, most textbooks erred in their explanations of the impact of the market crash. For example, the texts typically tied the failure of banks to unsound stock investments. According to one text, "Many banks had invested large amounts in the stock market. And when the market failed, they had to close down. Some 9,000 banks closed between 1929 and 1933" (Eibling, et al., 1981, p. 474). However, economists note that the first serious banking crisis did not originate with the crash, but, rather, began a year later in October of 1930; and not in the financial centers, but in agricultural areas, only later spreading to the Bank of United States of New York. The first crisis passed, to be followed by other waves of bank failures. In each instance, inaction or perverse policies by the Federal Reserve have been cited as key factors (Dornbusch and Fischer, 1981, pp. 316-18).

The effects of the market collapse on demand is also overemphasized in the texts. As mentioned earlier, the extent of the additional depressing effect added by the crash is unresolved. However, the role of the crash has been limited by economists' recognition that the real value of stocks had declined by only about 20% by April 1930 and that other market declines (e.g., the one in the mid 1970's which was "a multiple of the decline in 1929-30") have not produced large reductions in total demand.

The textbooks typically presented a list of "other causes" or "hidden problems" (the acres of dry forest) immediately before or after the description of the market crash. One general problem with the texts' presentation of these "other causes" is found in the very use of the forest fire style of explanation. It engendered ad hoc theorizing and post hoc reasoning. As economist Robert Main has noted, "It seems that the authors of the texts cast about for all the disagreeable things that were going on during the period and concluded that since they were present, they must have caused the Depression" (1979, p. 9).

Moreover, the presentation of these "other causes" had several, more specific flaws. First, the textbooks' authors often confused factors suspected of
precipitating the initial recession with the causes of the Depression. On what precipitated the 1929 recession, the jury is still out. Some authorities cite restrictive Fed policies in 1928–9 (Schwartz, 1981, p. 26). Others trace those Fed actions to the decline in business investment (Gunderson, 1976, p. 475; Baird, 1977, pp. 62–4; and Chandler, 1970, pp. 16–7). Gordon (1974, p. 70) stresses an autonomous decline in business investment, i.e., not related to Fed policies. Gordon and Wilcox (1981, pp. 77–9) argue that a fall in spending on housing construction was the key factor. Temin rejects all of the above (and low farm income as well) in favor of an autonomous and “unexplained” decline in consumer spending (1976, p. 83). In summary, it is unclear what spark or sparks ignited the fire.

What is clear is that these disputes are about the causes of the early phase of the Great Depression as distinct from explanations of why the Depression, once underway, became so severe and prolonged. The textbooks typically plucked out a few of these factors and presented them without reservation as “flaws” or “weaknesses” in the economy. This is utterly misleading given the unresolved questions and in the absence of any analysis of macroeconomic policies which were “so inept that they contributed significantly to making the recession into the worst depression for which we have data” (Dornbusch and Fischer, 1981, p. 319).

Second, some of the “other causes” either did not operate in the manner suggested by the texts or have been rejected by economic research. The most important example is the textbooks’ presentation of “overproduction” or “underconsumption” as an important “flaw” imbedded in the structure of the economy. According to the texts, purchasing power had not kept pace with productive capacity because income or wealth (the textbooks’ authors do not seem to understand the distinction) was unequally distributed due to weak labor unions and business monopoly power. Variations on this theme appear in nearly every textbook. For example, one text states: “There were many causes. But most historians and economists believe that the uneven distribution of wealth and overproduction were two of the major causes” (Eibling et.al., 1981, p. 474).

But most economists do not believe this. First, the minority of economists who support the view that a fall in consumer spending started the downturn also argue that the decline was autonomous, not structural (Dornbusch and Fischer, 1981, p. 316). Second, comparisons across time of income distribution and business monopoly power do not demonstrate this period to be unusual (Brownlee, 1979, p. 411; Gunderson, 1976, pp. 478–9; Cox, 1981, p. 181). The textbooks thus cannot satisfy questions about why periods of greater inequality and market power did not produce severe depressions. Third, the recovery period saw no dramatic shift in income distribution (Brownlee, 1979, pp. 439–40). And monopoly power of business may have been enhanced by some New Deal programs and regulations (Cox, 1981, p. 175 and p. 189). Fourth, Temin points out that underconsumption is a
discarded concept in modern macroeconomics, that the data of the period
do not support it anyway, and that it only "occasionally reappears" in the
literature in connection with an "unfavorable distribution of income." He
might be surprised to learn that it appears regularly in American history
textbooks.

Space limitations preclude a full discussion of all of the other trees in the
dry forest. Suffice it to say that the textbook explanations of each are inade-
quate and often simply wrong. The weakness of unions as a factor is tied to
the inequality of income and discarded structural underconsumption
package. Citing the presence of "sick industries" before the Depression
seems to be a case of post hoc reasoning. Because any economy, even a
healthy one, is likely to have sectors in decline, it takes much more than a
list of ailing industries to make a case for their importance.

Problems in banking and the international sector are widely regarded as
relevant by economists. Unfortunately, the explanations in the texts usually
emphasized the wrong aspects of these problems. The primary weakness in
the banking structure was a Federal Reserve System that simultaneously for-
bade banks to resort to the methods used to survive panics prior to the ad-
vent of the Fed and failed to provide enough money to the banking system
to forestall monetary collapse. A key feature of the international problems
was their impact on macroeconomic policy. The 1932 tax increase and the
previously mentioned action of the Fed in 1931 were, to a large degree,
undertaken because it was hoped that these would ultimately help to lessen
the outflow of gold (Gordon, 1974, pp. 55-6).

These causes and the way in which they are presented in junior and senior
high school texts can lead students to terribly erroneous conclusions. For
example, the texts can leave the impression that unionization, equality of in-
come and subsidization of ailing industries are necessary to eliminate
depressions. Furthermore, questions posed at the end of the chapters and at
various points in the teacher's editions compound the damage. One book
suggests that the teacher "Explain the difference between the 'trickle-down'
theory with the opposing theory of spreading the wealth around. Ask:
which theory did Hoover seem to hold?" (Bartlett, et.al., 1979, p. 518). Of
considerably more importance are questions that were not asked: how
macroeconomic policy is made and conducted and whether following policy
rules or permitting discretion gives the greater chance of stability.

There most certainly remain a number of questions about the economics
of the Great Depression, some of which might never be resolved. Nonethe-
less, a great deal is known. America's greatest depression did not
happen in the way the U.S. history texts say it did. Government policies
were a significant factor; many of the causes cited in the texts were not.
Economic analysis demonstrates that the Depression was an avoidable
catastrophe composed of a complex series of events occurring over a period
of several years. The textbooks teach students that it was the bursting of an
overly inflated balloon, the inevitable price of the too rapid and too uneven prosperity that preceded it.

The Impact of Misinformation

Incorrect economic analysis in history textbooks is a particularly alarming problem in view of recent studies demonstrating the importance of the textbook in social studies classes. In 1979, *Social Education* published "The Status of Social Studies Education: Impressions from Three N.S.F. Studies" (Shaver, et.al. pp. 151-2). This article and the supporting N.S.F. studies presented the following conclusions:

1. The dominant instructional tool is still the textbook.
2. Many teachers believe that the textbook is the source of knowledge.
3. The primary way teachers transmit information is through teacher controlled recitations and lectures based primarily upon the textbook.
4. Teachers continue to rely predominantly on a single source.11

Thus, the preceding analysis of textbook explanations of the Great Depression and the N.S.F. findings make it probable that considerable misinformation is being transmitted to students about one of the most important economic events in our history.

The authors of this article believe that one of the central aims of schooling should be to teach students to make rational and warranted decisions. This process is severely compromised when textbooks contain errors of commission and omission. What economic lessons will students learn from present text treatment of the Depression? What effect will these lessons have on future generations of students' decisions about the role of government in managing the economy? Frances FitzGerald recently made a statement that may give us some insight into these questions. "... [W]hat sticks to the memory from textbooks is not particular series of facts but an atmosphere, an impression, a tone. And this impression may be all the more influential just because one cannot remember the facts and the arguments that created it" (1979, p. 4). The dominant impression of the Great Depression left by the texts reviewed is of a forest fire raging out of control.

Why Does the Problem Continue?

Why do secondary United States history texts persist in presenting inadequate economic analysis of the Great Depression after the stinging reviews over the last nineteen years? A number of explanations emerge from previous analyses of the social studies curriculum and textbook industry. These explanations range from schooling being inextricably linked with political and social processes to the dynamics of the developing and marketing of textbooks and the resulting impact on the quality of scholarship exhibited in the textbooks. For example, in a review of current United States history textbooks, Anyon argues that, despite the claims of objectivity by publishers, "... textbooks not only express the dominant groups' ideologies, but
also help to form attitudes in support of their social positions" (1979, p. 382). Anyon's explanation for these distortions concerns the political and social context of schooling where the social studies curriculum functions to serve the interests of elites.

While Anyon's provocative critique may be correct with respect to some aspects of United States history textbooks, it does not account for the faulty analyses and omission of facts concerning the Great Depression. The errors that have been identified do not appear to offer direct or even tacit support for elites. In fact, just the opposite appears to be the case. Many of the textbooks criticize President Hoover's efforts to end the Depression, indict Wall Street, and question the motives of corporations. Moreover, it is not clear whether a correct interpretation of the causes of the Depression would support or conflict with the interests of elites.

A better explanation in this case might be found in the dynamics of the textbook development and marketing process. Today's publishers face tremendous competition in the marketplace. Some estimates suggest that only one percent of most schools' budgets goes to purchase textbooks (FitzGerald, 1979, p. 11). The competition is strengthened by the fact that twenty-three states have formal adoption procedures (English, 1980, p. 275). Though the number of textbooks chosen for adoption in a particular subject varies by state, many states use statewide adoption committees to identify acceptable texts. While the members of these committees often are neither educators nor subject matter specialists, they may represent interest groups from a variety of political perspectives (English, 1980, p. 275). Schools generally may use state funds to purchase only the texts selected by the committees. Therefore, from the publishers' viewpoint, the failure of a book to make the adoption lists may mean millions of dollars in lost sales.

Furthermore, not all adoption states have the same impact on publishers. Generally, the amount of state funds allocated for texts is a measure of a state's influence. Both Texas and California are considered leaders in this regard (English, 1980, p. 276). Thus, when a new textbook is being planned, the criteria set by these two states are of prime importance.

Under these conditions, it is understandable why publishers might not give textbook authors absolute autonomy over the textbooks' content and accompanying interpretations. Often, authors and consultants are required to follow an outline that reflects prior editorial decisions concerning the content, style and format of the future textbook. These decisions have been made after consideration of marketing surveys, large state adoption criteria, and rigorous content analysis of their competitors' textbooks. The most popular features of these textbooks are frequently imitated. In some cases the imitation goes as far as duplicating by line counts the amount of space devoted to particular features in competitive texts (FitzGerald, 1979, p. 5).

Clearly, while the outline that authors and consultants are to follow poses limitations on content explanation and interpretation, the constraints often
do not stop there. For example, there are requirements that textbooks be written according to standard readability formulas. Because authors are rarely able to write within these constraints, the original manuscript is often altered, perhaps dramatically, to conform to readability at grade level (FitzGerald, 1979, p. 5). In the editing process, content may be so distilled that it no longer has explanatory power, or may even be altered from fact to error. While no publisher intends to do this, it must be remembered that most editors are not subject matter specialists.

One result of the textbook development/marketing process is that many textbooks tend to resemble one another in content, style, and format (English, 1980, p. 278). The process may also tend to retard the introduction of textbooks that have fresh content and interpretation. The process can result in textbooks that interpret history on the basis of what interest groups say history is rather than on current scholarly interpretations. Last and most tragic, misinformation and faulty analyses of events and issues are perpetuated.

The problems of marketing and development are compounded by faulty scholarship. Unlike a book that is written for a narrow audience and whose success depends upon scholarship, secondary texts are written to appeal to a wide audience. The typical U.S. history textbook is charged with explaining the important social, political, cultural, and economic events from the 1400's to the present. Because many of these are specialty areas within the discipline of history, it may be that some authors are not aware of current interpretations within these areas or of new developments in theory. In the absence of sound theoretical underpinnings, as in the case of the Great Depression, explanations are sometimes nothing more than a collection of ad hoc reasons with no distinction among their relative merits or significance as explanatory factors.

**Suggestions for Social Studies Educators**

Several possible remedies for textbook bias and inaccuracy have been suggested. Recently, for example, Kelly and Gross (1981) have proposed that publishers be asked to follow a “code” that mandates the inclusion of a balanced treatment of significant controversial issues. Possibly this could be extended to include accuracy of treatment.

There is, however, another possible solution found in the impact social studies educators can have in the marketplace. As our analysis shows, the sales of different texts lead competitors to analyze why Text A is selling better than Text B and respond accordingly. If adequate treatment of economics is an important feature of textbooks, publishers will learn this when the leading sellers are texts that reflect that concern. Presumably, publishers will scramble to include more and better economic analysis as long as the leading sellers continue to contain identifiably better treatment of economics. As with most markets the key is the demands of the buyers.

This solution emphasizes influencing people who select textbooks rather
than exhortation directed at authors and publishers of textbooks. Crucial to this solution are the ability of those selecting textbooks, either for adoption lists or district adoption, to discern stronger economic analysis and the willingness to establish economic content as a priority. There are a number of possible strategies to promote these outcomes.

For example, the National Council for the Social Studies can play a significant role in helping to restore choice in the textbook market by increasing its attention to economic theory, contemporary economic issues, and historical events. In the past, *Social Education* has devoted considerable space to a variety of themes, e.g., teaching for citizenship in the social sciences and history courses. In the light of our findings, a theme for future publication could be facts and myths surrounding the Great Depression or other economic events. NCSS could also devote increased attention to teaching about economics at its annual convention in sessions that provide information for teachers who want to examine the accuracy of their textbooks and inform teachers about sources that could aid in combatting misinformation about economic events.

Timely and extensive reviews of history textbooks would also provide information to those making textbook decisions. FitzGerald (1979, p. 10) has noted the lack of textbook review on a systematic basis and others have recently renewed the call for published reviews in social studies journals.12 We agree with those who have called for such reviews in *Social Education* and other journals, but we see little evidence that this advice is being followed. One possible way to fill this void is through greater collaboration between the Joint Council on Economic Education, economists, and economic historians to establish an ongoing assessment of economic interpretation in textbooks. These assessments could be disseminated to teachers through the Joint Council's network of centers for economic education. Teachers would then be better prepared to select new textbooks that have more accurate information of economic events.

The combined efforts of the National Council for the Social Studies and the Joint Council on Economic Education could help increase teachers' knowledge of economic events and issues. Presumably this information would be used to select the best available textbooks and eventually to correct the existing interpretations of economic events such as the Depression. How rapidly these suggestions, if implemented, will affect the content of textbooks in the future is presently an open question. However, if no action is taken the persistent problem of faulty economic analysis in United States history textbooks will remain.

Endnotes

1The authors reviewed 16 secondary American history textbooks with copyrights from 1977 through 1982. A complete list is available from the authors.
See Gunderson (1976, p. 476) and Gordon and Wilcox (1981, pp. 79–80) for contrasting views.

Some monetarist economists discount the efficacy of debt-financed fiscal policy and, hence, the role of fiscal policy in the Great Depression. For example, see Stein, J. L. in J. L. Stein, ed. Monetarism (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1976). But mainstream macroeconomic theory recognizes fiscal policy as important, albeit less expansionary than when deficits are fully monetized. See Dornbusch and Fischer, (1981, Ch. 4, esp. pp. 127–8) for a standard treatment.

Kindelberger (1978, p. 70) attributes this assessment to Thomas Mayer in a footnote. Kindelberger emphasizes the role of international financial problems in his explanation of the Depression. To make room for his theory, he uses Temin (1976) to dispose of the accepted monetarist version. But Temin’s dissent is actually quite narrowly focused. See footnote 7.

There is a disagreement among economists about the way changes in the quantity of money have these effects. Keynesian analysis traces the impact of a money stock decline to increased interest rates and, thus, to reduced consumption and investment. Monetarist analysis argues that a decline in the quantity of money can cause a direct impact on consumption as people spend less to restore balance in their demand for and the supply of money. In either case, less consumption and output result. For a succinct, readable treatment of the different analyses, see Kennedy, Peter. Macroeconomics (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1975), pp. 88–91.

For data on money stock, prices, velocity, and other variables, see Friedman and Schwartz (1965, p. 2). Temin (1976, pp. 141–3) argues that in the early phases of the Depression, falling prices kept the real quantity of money from dropping as the nominal money stock fell. His argument does not apply after late 1931. For an analysis of why falling prices were ineffective, see Mayer (1978, pp. 138–9).

Temin (1976), in the major challenge to the dominant monetarist view, argues that the bank failures in late 1930 were a result of the recession already underway. Unlike Friedman and Schwartz (1965), he does not believe that this first wave of failures exerted a significant, independent, depressing effect. However, as Mayer (1978, p. 129) points out, Temin’s dissent does little damage to the accepted monetarist emphasis on the monetary collapse because Temin’s focus is on events in 1929–1930 while the precipitous monetary decline had only begun in late 1930, accelerating in 1931 and 1932. Temin agrees that monetary factors in 1931 and after were important (1981, p. 108) and seems prepared to concede that better monetary policy in 1930 could have moderated the decline (1981, p. 117). In any case, Temin’s view has been widely challenged and apparently has not been accepted (Meltzer, 1981, p. 149).

Friedman and Schwartz (1965, pp. 12–3). Along with arguments about the causes of the initial downturn in the summer of 1929, it is the causes and results of this bank panic which has been most hotly debated among economists. Monetarists argue that problems with bank investments coupled with a 2.6% decline in the money stock from the peak of 1929 to October 1930 produced the panic which had a major depressing effect on the economy. Temin (1976, 1981) contends that this bank panic was a result of an autonomous fall in consumption and was not a contributing, independent, depressing factor. Wicker (1978) has countered that the demise of Caldwell and Company triggered the panic and that it was a major independent factor. Numerous authorities have countered Temin by arguing that whatever the cause of the 1930 panic, it must have exerted additional downward pressure (Schwartz, 1981; Gordon and Wilcox, 1981; Mayer, 1978).


Temin (1976, p. 32). How occasionally the inequality of income argument appears is indicated by his characterization of a 1964 citation as “recent.”

Among the NSF studies, the survey data reported in Weiss (1978, p. 89) are of particular interest.

See Downey, Matthew T. “Speaking of Textbooks: Putting Pressure on the Publishers,” The History Teachers, Vol. 14, November, 1980, for an example of one such proposal.
References


Measuring Economic Attitudes in High School

William B. Walstad and John C. Soper
Center for Economic Education
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68588

Recent research in social education has focused on the measurement of student attitudes. For example, studies have been reported on law-related attitudes among junior high school students (Frazer and Smith, 1980), senior high school students' attitudes towards world studies (Grant and Napier, 1981), and adolescent attitudes towards the police (Mackey and Ahlgren, 1980). This increased interest in attitude assessment is laudable since the development of positive attitudes is often an objective of social education (Ehman, Mehlinger, and Patrick, 1974; p. 102), and the use of new instruments for measuring attitudes may provide teachers and researchers with valuable information on the impact of classroom instruction.

The evaluation of economics learning at the high school level typically has involved the assessment of student outcomes in the cognitive domain using a test of economic knowledge. Unfortunately, most studies have failed to measure attitude outcomes (Dawson, 1977). There are several reasons for this neglect of attitude measurement. Often the necessary attitude instruments were not available or the existing attitude measures were poorly developed and no information was provided on instrument reliability or validity. Economic attitudes also have been perceived by researchers as too complex to define or measure and were not considered worthy of the same status as cognitive abilities (Soper, 1977). Whatever the reasons, the topic has not been subject to careful investigation in past studies.
As appears to be the case with current research in other areas of social education, more study has been devoted to economic attitudes in recent years (Dawson, 1980). Researchers have become more interested in examining the relationship between achievement and attitude since attitude may be an important factor in learning about a subject (Walstad, 1980). The business community has also worried about student attitudes towards economic issues and the economic system during the economic and political turmoil of the past decade (Bach, 1981). More resources have been spent on national economic education projects (e.g., “Trade-offs”), and more states, school districts, and teachers have added economics instruction to the curriculum (Yankelovich, Skelley, and White, 1981).

With this increased national, state, and local interest in economics learning, a need exists for more reliable and valid economic attitude measures which can be used with a cognitive test to fully document the effects of instruction. Certainly economic attitudes are difficult to define and measure, and this fact may explain why so many of the previous and current instruments appear to be ad hoc, locally developed, and report no published information on technical characteristics. Progress, however, has been made in attitude measurement research and there are procedures which can be followed to develop a credible instrument. While the results may be subject to alternative interpretations and any instrument may have its limitations, improved procedures and a refined attitude assessment tool should provide more useful data for teachers and researchers.

This study details the development and national norming of the two-part Survey on Economic Attitudes (SEA). The first part of the SEA measures high school students' attitudes towards economics (ATE) as a subject, while the second part of the SEA assesses high school students' attitudes towards economic issues, or economic attitude sophistication (EAS). The instrument design and the results from a national validity and reliability study are reported in the first two sections. The final section discusses the uses and limitations of the new attitude measure.

Instrument Development

The initial development of both parts of the SEA was conducted by a national committee on economic attitude measurement which included six economists and a marketing researcher. The purpose of the committee was to develop an instrument to measure student attitudes towards economics and economic issues which would be suitable for use with a cognitive economics test (Soper, 1979), as part of a national evaluation of high school economic education programs. An outline of the extensive instrument development process is contained in Table 1 and a copy of the instrument is provided in Appendix 1.

Attitudes Towards Economics: SEA Part I. A review of existing ATE instruments was conducted by the committee to determine their suitability for
Table 1: SEA Development Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
<th>ATE Result</th>
<th>EAS Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Review Previous instruments</td>
<td>Judgment by national committee</td>
<td>Selected H-M instrument .78 split half reliability. Passed review</td>
<td>None found suitable for use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Select topics and write items</td>
<td>Judgment by national committee</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>200 items developed and 30 items selected for further study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pretest reliability</td>
<td>Internal consistency</td>
<td>.86 alpha with high school (N = 231)</td>
<td>14 of 30 items selected for use. .53 alpha with high school sample (N = 480)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pretest validity</td>
<td>Construct and content validity. Judgment by national committee and outside economists</td>
<td>Instrument accepted as valid measure</td>
<td>Significant differences in expected direction across all samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. National validity check with groups</td>
<td>Construct validity. t-test of sample means between high school (N = 1747), college (N = 77 and N = 46) and professor (N = 28) samples.</td>
<td>Significant differences in expected direction across most samples</td>
<td>Significant differences in expected direction across all samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. National validity</td>
<td>Construct validity Rating by experts</td>
<td>Not necessary</td>
<td>Mean consensus of 85% for scale. Item consensus ranged from 70% to 99% (N = 149). Similar results for subset of Ph.D. economists (N = 71).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. National Reliability study</td>
<td>Internal consistency</td>
<td>.88 alpha with high school. .89 to .86 with college and professor samples.</td>
<td>.66 alpha with high school. .61 to .78 with college and professor samples.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
use with high school students. The best instrument identified was previously developed by Hodgin and Manahan (1979) for use with college students. The committee decided that this instrument, with slight language modification, could also be used at the high school level since the reading level was easy and the instrument could be administered in a short period. The developers reported a split half reliability of .78 and a content and construct validity review by other economists. A committee pretesting of the instrument with 231 high school students in the midwest showed an improved reliability estimate of .86 (Cronbach alpha) and a standard error of measurement of 3.00. After reviewing the instrument and preliminary results, the committee considered the slightly modified instrument suitable for national use.

Economic Attitude Sophistication on Issues: SEA Part II. A review of existing attitude instruments on economic issues uncovered no usable possibilities. Some instruments were simply too difficult to read for high school students. Other instruments had questionable measurement characteristics. For example, instruments for measuring student liberalism or conservatism on economic issues appeared to be of questionable validity given the problems of judging whether a response to an attitude statement represented a liberal or conservative view. Also, simply reporting percentage responses to individual attitude items can be criticized since it is similar to selecting one multiple choice item out of a cognitive test and reporting the percentage responses to each alternative. What is of most interest is the overall cognitive or affective score, not a single item response, as a single item provides little valid or reliable information. The problems, therefore, of interpreting the polar ends of an attitude statement and the diversity of economic issues made the creation of an index measure of attitude towards economic issues a difficult task.

To solve the scale interpretation problems, the committee adopted the Mann and Fusfeld (1970) attitude sophistication approach:

Attitude sophistication means that opinions are consistent with the current state of knowledge. Although economists may differ about economic goals and the means of attaining them, there is a body of economic knowledge with which most members of the discipline agree. Applying that knowledge to a specific problem often leads to similar conclusions or opinions in spite of differing ideologies. Such opinions reflect a high degree of knowledge and rational analysis of the problem, and can correctly be termed sophisticated. (p. 112)

The committee interpreted "the current state of knowledge" to be the consensus view of the economics profession on an issue. Research by Kearl, et al. (1979) indicated that economists hold consensus views on a number of economic issues, especially on microeconomic topics. The committee work, then, specifically focused on developing an instrument which measured the
extent to which high school student views are in agreement with the consensus views of the economics profession.

To insure that the instrument possessed content validity, it had to include a variety of economic issues. Nine board topics were chosen for issue statements: government regulation, taxation, welfare, inflation, unemployment, incentives, power-concentration, foreign trade, and economic growth. Over 200 preliminary statements were written for the major topics. A subcommittee then selected the best 30 issue statements for a pretest EAS instrument (about three for each topic). The selection criteria for the 30 issue statements were:

1) The "economics profession" should have a consensus position of agreement or disagreement with the statement;
2) The statement should focus on a "live" economic issue in the above areas which is controversial and unresolved in the public mind;
3) The statement should have low cognitive content, limited economics jargon, and have a reading level suitable for use with juniors and seniors in high school; and,
4) Statements should meet school district approval for use with students.

To meet the first criterion and to establish initial construct validity, the 30-item measure was rated by a group of six economists plus the whole committee. In addition, the 30-item measure was administered to about 480 eleventh and twelfth grade students in three midwestern high schools to obtain information for reliability assessment.

The selection of the final 14 items for the attitude measure involved a combined use of pretest validity and reliability information. First, to improve the construct validity of the measure only those items with a seventy percent agreement or disagreement rating from among the outside economists and the national committee were considered for the final measure. Second, the content validity was maintained by insuring that most topics previously identified were represented by at least one or two statements and that the statements met criteria two through four. Third, the statements were judged for their individual contribution to the overall reliability of the index by examining the item-to-scale correlations. The pretest data indicated the internal consistency reliability of the final 14-item instrument was .53 (Cronbach alpha), a reasonable estimate given the difficulty of assessing attitudes towards economic issues and the limited number of items in the instrument. The final instrument appeared to have sufficient content validity, construct validity, and reliability for national use.

**National Validity and Reliability Studies**

The initial instrument development produced two measures of potential value, but more information was needed on the validity and reliability of the ATE and EAS measures, especially for the EAS. Consequently, both measures were administered to a national sample of high school students...
and to regional samples of college students and professors to further document the construct validity and reliability of the measures. Also, a national validity survey was conducted with the EAS measure to check the plus (+) or minus (−) weighting for instrument items.

**National Validity Study with Selected Groups.** The SEA was nationally normed in May, 1979, using a sample of 1,747 juniors and seniors in high schools. The Purdue University Measurement Research Center selected the sample and collected the data. The sample contained a diverse group that included students from all geographic regions, different population areas (urban, rural, suburban), and various sized schools. While a range of student differences in economic knowledge, attitudes, intelligence, and background are found in the sample, no claim is made that the sample is exactly representative of the student population enrolled in public high schools. There is, however, a high probability that this sample is fairly representative of the diverse high school population.

To determine whether the ATE or EAS scales could distinguish between known groups with different attitude structures, external validity tests were conducted using the national sample and selected groups. The SEA was administered to a group of 28 professors of social studies, business education, or home economics who taught consumer education courses at 26 colleges and universities in the midwest. This group had expressed an interest in economics by participating in a two-week program in economics and consumer education. Most of the group had prior college course work in economics and in their classrooms they helped students analyze economic issues. It was expected, therefore, that this group of college educators would show a significantly more positive ATE and higher degree of EAS than the national high school sample.

The ATE and EAS measures were also administered on a pre- and posttest basis to a sample of college students taking a course in principles of microeconomics at one midwestern university and on a posttest basis to a sample of juniors at another university taking courses in money and banking or intermediate macroeconomics. The mean differences in ATE and EAS between the high school sample and the college samples were expected to be significant and in favor of the college groups. Less certainty could be expressed about the significance of the differences between the professor and college student samples, but it was highly probable, given the extent of exposure to economics, that the professor sample would exhibit the highest degree of EAS and most positive ATE, followed by the advanced undergraduate sample, and then the principles sample.

The means and standard deviations of the groups and the t-value comparisons are provided in Table 2. The mean rankings are in the expected directions and the t-test comparisons between each group on either the ATE or EAS are statistically significant. The only exception was the insignificant
contrast between high school students and pre-economics college students on the ATE, but this result was not completely unexpected given the close similarity between the two groups. Although the sample sizes for the college students and professor samples are relatively small, the mean ranking and the significant t-values provide good construct validity evidence for the ability of the ATE and EAS measures to distinguish among groups.

**National Validity Survey.** The initial validity assessment for the weighting of the EAS items was completed by a select but small group of economists (N = 13), and thus could be considered a weak part of the development process. To further check the construct validity of the EAS instrument, a national survey was conducted of directors of councils and centers for economic education which are affiliated with the Joint Council on Economic Education. This sample was selected for validation purposes since most directors hold advanced degrees in economics, teach undergraduate or graduate courses in economics in over 200 colleges and universities across the nation, and would probably respond to the survey. A complete sample of 231 directors was mailed a twenty-statement questionnaire. The respondents were asked to check the survey forms for whether they agreed with the statement, disagreed with the statement, or rated the statement as unacceptable for a response. The questionnaire, with some additional information, was to be returned unsigned in a reply envelope.

The questionnaire contained a random mix of the 14 pretested items and six distractor items which were originally rejected by the national committee and a group of economists. The expected result was that the respondents would show a clear consensus (greater than two-thirds agreement or dis-

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### Table 2: Group Differences in ATE and EAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>ATE</th>
<th>EAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>S.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. High School (1747)</td>
<td>46.41</td>
<td>9.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. College-Pre (76)</td>
<td>45.68</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. College-Post (76)</td>
<td>49.59</td>
<td>8.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. College-Advanced (46)</td>
<td>52.76</td>
<td>7.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. College Profs. (28)</td>
<td>55.28</td>
<td>7.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>t-values for Group Contrasts</th>
<th>AB</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>AD</th>
<th>AE</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>BD</th>
<th>BE</th>
<th>CD</th>
<th>CE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATE</td>
<td>-.94</td>
<td>3.26**</td>
<td>5.11**</td>
<td>6.08**</td>
<td>3.23**</td>
<td>5.34**</td>
<td>5.91**</td>
<td>2.19*</td>
<td>3.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAS</td>
<td>2.44*</td>
<td>4.50**</td>
<td>7.12**</td>
<td>7.76**</td>
<td>2.34*</td>
<td>4.31**</td>
<td>5.85**</td>
<td>2.09*</td>
<td>4.12**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant at .05 level.
**Significant at .01 level.
1Sample size in parentheses
agreement) on the 14 best statements and no clear consensus on the six distractor items. This validity test would:

1) Reconfirm the item selection judgments of the national committee and outside economists;
2) check the discrimination ability of the respondents, or accuracy of the survey; and,
3) provide additional national evidence for a consensus view on selected economic issues.

Over 64 percent, or 149 respondents, returned forms, providing a credible sample for construct validity analysis. As shown in Table 3, a clear consensus was expressed on the 14 items with a mean agreement or disagreement of 85 percent and a range from 70 to 99 percent. The mean percent agree or disagree for the six distractor items was 44 percent and ranged from 25 to 68 percent.

A further analysis was conducted with the subset of responses from only council or center directors who reported holding a Ph.D. degree in economics (N = 71). The subset results were almost identical to the total results, showing a scale mean of 85 percent consensus and an item range from 68 to 100 percent. The mean agree or disagree for the distractor items was 43 percent with a range from 17 to 67 percent. The survey results provide support for EAS scale construct and the plus (+) or minus (−) weighting for the 14 items.

Reliability. Reporting data on the reliability of a measure is a necessary part of any attitude measurement process. Estimates for the internal consistency, or interrelationship among items on either the ATE or EAS measures, are provided by the Cronbach alphas (α) in Table 2. The ATE measure showed good reliability with an alpha of .88 for the high school sample. Similar results were produced when the instrument was administered to the college samples and the professor sample. The fourteen-item survey appears to provide a consistent measure of attitudes towards economics as a subject across many groups.

The reliability estimate for the EAS measure with the high school sample improved markedly over the initial development assessment, from .53 to .66. This result is still lower than most cognitive tests, but the short length of the measure and the difficulty of assessing opinions on diverse economic issues may explain the lower internal consistency of the measure. Also, the reliability estimate is good in relation to many affective measures developed in education (Johnson, 1976).

With other groups, the EAS results show some variation in reliability. For beginning undergraduates, advanced undergraduates, and the college professors, the alphas were .71, .61, and .78, respectively. The specific reasons for the reliability differences are difficult to identify and may be due to the characteristic of the EAS measure or the samples selected. The composite picture, however, indicates an acceptable range of measurement consistency for the EAS survey.
Table 3: National Validity Survey (N = 149)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. *U.S. labor unions are too strong.</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Government should control the price of gasoline.</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inflation is caused by greedy business and union leaders</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Business makes too much profit.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. *Government should guarantee an income for all people.</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>67.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. People should not have to pay taxes.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>95.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Free medical care should be provided for all Americans.</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Banks should not charge interest on loans to customers.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>99.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. *We should save our natural resources for future use.</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Most people who don’t have jobs are too lazy to work.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. When a business gets big, it should be controlled by government.</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. New factories are not needed.</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>96.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. *Everyone who wants to work should be provided with a job.</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. People should not be told how to spend their money.</td>
<td>85.9</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. If everybody had more money, we’d all be better off.</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Profits should not be regulated by government.</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. *A clean environment is not more important than economic growth.</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>56.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Most unemployed people are lazy.</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. When a strike occurs, government should step in and settle the dispute.</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. *Government should not provide food stamps for the poor.</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Distractor items

Uses and Limitations of the SEA

The SEA instrument can be administered conveniently in whole or in part within a ten to fifteen minute time frame, making the SEA suitable for use with a cognitive measure during a limited classroom evaluation period. The
SEA can be hand scored by reverse coding eight items on the ATE index and two items on the EAS index, and item scores for each part can then be summed to obtain index scores. The item statements can be read easily by high school students and the general “Survey on Economic Attitudes” title for either the ATE or EAS measure does not appear to cause a response bias among students.

The results from the national reliability and validity studies indicate the ability of the SEA instrument to detect either “attitudes towards economics as a subject,” or “economic attitude sophistication” among juniors and seniors in high schools with some degree of certainty. This information on the development and technical properties of the measures also indicates a distinct improvement over many ad hoc economic attitude measures.

Caution must be exercised in the use and interpretation of any attitude instrument and this qualification certainly applies to the SEA. For example, a more positive ATE may be an intended outcome from a course in economics, but a class with a low score on the ATE should not be viewed as “bad” or “wrong.” The ATE simply provides an index of class sentiment about the subject of economics. This information may be useful to teachers who wish to assess how their students view the subject before and after an economics unit. The ATE may also be useful to researchers who are examining joint outcomes in the affective and cognitive domain resulting from the instructional process. As with any standardized measure (cognitive or affective), the appropriate use of the instrument will depend on the specific objectives of the investigation.

Similarly, the EAS measure is not a list of “right” opinions nor is it designed to force students to adopt the consensus views of economists on economic issues. There are economists of many persuasions (e.g., Marxists, socialists, monetarists, Keynesians, or supply-siders) whose views may not be reflected in the norms; the instrument represents the views of the economics profession “on average” and the more extreme views of economists are “washed out” in the norming process. Thus, the EAS measure simply assesses the degree or tendency (an attitude) of a student to hold a set of opinions on economic issues consistent with the generally accepted state of economic knowledge. A high degree of EAS may not and probably should not be an expressed outcome from a course or program, but whether intended or not, instruction in economics will usually have an impact on how students view their economic world. The EAS offers another means for examining that dimension of the educational process.

The interpretation of the results may prove to be a more difficult task. This instrument has been labelled a measure of economic attitude “sophistication” since it is based on the earlier definition and work of Mann and Fusfeld (1970). On the other hand, some researchers may view the instrument as a measure of “conformity” with mainstream views in economics and from that perspective the norming results for the high school sample
may offer evidence of the “indoctrination” impact of economic education. Learning about any discipline involves training and exposure to a new set of ideas which, in the extreme case of blind acceptance, may be called conformity or indoctrination. There is, however, an “economic way of thinking” which allows a person to avoid the misconceptions of common sense (Heyne, 1980) and which may also shape attitudes that differ from those based on popular beliefs. It is hoped that these sophisticated attitudes are what is being measured by this instrument, but the possibility exists for alternative explanations.

Finally, several features of the norming process should also be noted. First, it is not known if the EAS measure will prove to be stable over time. As any discipline evolves, both the answers and the questions change. The need for revision and renorming is certainly necessary for all cognitive tests in economics, and in the case of this affective measure, what is considered a sophisticated attitude will also change over time. Second, there may be a tendency for users of the EAS measure to report both before and after item statistics on certain controversial topics (e.g., profits) in order to demonstrate the effect of a program on a particular issue. This type of item interpretation is an invalid use of the instrument. Scores should be reported and interpreted in the aggregate as an index of student views on economic issues, just as a cognitive test score provides an overall measure of achievement.

Despite these words of caution, the two-part SEA appears to be an attitude measurement tool with good validity, reliability, and known characteristics. Preliminary analysis of the technical properties indicates that this survey instrument should be of value in research and evaluation applications. Since exposure to instruction in economics may have an impact on economic knowledge and attitudes towards the subject or economic issues, these cognitive and affective outcomes in economics or social studies courses are worth assessing as teachers and researchers explore the educational process.

Endnotes

1This study was originally presented at a College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) session of the National Council for the Social Studies annual meeting in Detroit, 1981, and a previous version of this study was presented at the American Council on Consumer Interests 27th annual conference in Minneapolis, 1981.

2The committee was organized initially by the Joint Council on Economic Education but operated on an independent basis. The committee members were: W. Walstad (chair), J. Henry, W. Luker, J. Manahan, P. Senn, J. Soper, and R. Strom. The data collection was sponsored by the Joint Council as part of an evaluation of its Developmental Economic Education Program (DEEP) and economics teaching awards program. For a study on the results of the evaluation, see Walstad and Soper (1981).

3No item concerning foreign trade met reliability or validity tests, so that topic is not represented in the instrument.

4The 1980 Consumer Economics Institute for College and University Consumer Teacher Educators, held in St. Louis, Missouri.
Another construct validity question may be raised as to how the views of economists who are directors of councils and centers for economic education at universities compared with a random sample of university economists. While the differences are not expected to be great, the issue is a topic under further investigation by the authors. For an interesting study on what a random sample of economists think on economic issues, see Kearl, et al. (1979).

References


### Appendix 1

Survey on Economic Attitudes: Attitudes Towards Economics  
(N = 2,048 high school students)

*Directions*: Please indicate your opinions about the following statements. Mark 1 if you strongly agree; mark 2 if you agree; mark 3 if you are undecided; mark 4 if you disagree; mark 5 if you strongly disagree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Mean (X)</th>
<th>Standard Deviation (α)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy reading articles about economic topics. (+)</td>
<td>3.181</td>
<td>0.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I hate economics. (-)</td>
<td>3.698</td>
<td>0.995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Economics is easy for me to understand. (+)</td>
<td>3.053</td>
<td>1.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Economics is dull. (-)</td>
<td>3.249</td>
<td>1.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I enjoy economics. (+)</td>
<td>3.177</td>
<td>0.991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Studying economics is a waste of time. (-)</td>
<td>4.166</td>
<td>0.929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Economics is one of my most dreaded subjects. (-)</td>
<td>3.579</td>
<td>1.043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. On occasion I read an unassigned book in economics. (+)</td>
<td>2.238</td>
<td>1.120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I would be willing to attend a lecture by an economist. (+)</td>
<td>3.139</td>
<td>1.118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Economics is a very difficult subject for me. (-)</td>
<td>3.348</td>
<td>1.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Economics is one of my favorite subjects. (+)</td>
<td>2.633</td>
<td>1.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I use economic concepts to analyze situations. (+)</td>
<td>3.019</td>
<td>1.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Economics is practical. (+)</td>
<td>4.071</td>
<td>0.866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Economic ideas are dumb. (-)</td>
<td>4.199</td>
<td>0.894</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(+) Indicates the positive ATE response is to agree strongly. Plus (+) items are reverse coded in scoring.  
(−) Indicates the positive ATE response is to disagree strongly.
### Appendix 1 (continued)

**Survey on Economic Attitudes: Economic Attitude Sophistication**  
(N = 2,048 high school students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Government should control the price of gasoline. (−)</td>
<td>2.527</td>
<td>1.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Inflation is caused by greedy business and union leaders. (−)</td>
<td>2.962</td>
<td>1.183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Business makes too much profit. (−)</td>
<td>3.075</td>
<td>1.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People should not have to pay taxes. (−)</td>
<td>3.841</td>
<td>1.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Free medical care should be provided for all Americans. (−)</td>
<td>3.276</td>
<td>1.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Banks should not charge interest on loans to customers. (−)</td>
<td>3.769</td>
<td>1.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Most people who don't have jobs are too lazy to work. (−)</td>
<td>3.226</td>
<td>1.244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. When a business gets big, it should be controlled by government. (−)</td>
<td>3.618</td>
<td>1.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. New factories are not needed. (−)</td>
<td>3.865</td>
<td>0.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. People should not be told how to spend their money. (+)</td>
<td>4.111</td>
<td>1.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. If everybody had more money, we'd all be better off. (−)</td>
<td>3.607</td>
<td>1.088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Profits should not be regulated by government. (+)</td>
<td>3.144</td>
<td>1.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Most unemployed people are lazy. (−)</td>
<td>3.435</td>
<td>1.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. When a strike occurs, government should step in and settle the dispute. (−)</td>
<td>3.016</td>
<td>1.074</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(+) Indicates the sophisticated response is to agree strongly. Plus (+) items are reverse coded in scoring.  
(−) Indicates the sophisticated response is to disagree strongly.
Elementary Teachers’ Views on Economic Issues

Mark C. Schug
School of Education
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53201

The last few years have seen increasing interest in the teaching of economics at the elementary grades. A study by Yankelovich, Skelly, and White, Inc. (1981) found that 16 states have programs calling for teaching economics at the K-8 or K-12 levels. A variety of print and non-print economic curriculum materials have been developed and numerous teacher workshops and university courses have been taught. At the same time, there appears to be a growing interest in the measurement of the attitudes of various groups toward economic issues (Dawson, 1980). A recent research conference suggested that we know little about in-service or preservice teacher attitudes toward economics (Walstad, 1980). Very little research has been done to establish what the economic attitudes of elementary teachers are and how they might compare to teachers at other grade levels.

Why is knowledge of teachers’ economic attitudes important? Teachers, like other people, hold an implicit or explicit model of how the economic system operates. It is reasonable to think that the attitudes individual teachers have toward the economic system will influence their teaching. For example, holding highly a cynical view of the economic system may influence the specific type of curriculum materials and learning activities a teacher might select. It makes sense, then, to provide teacher educators and curriculum developers with a clearer picture of elementary teachers’ current economic attitudes. Secondary social studies teachers and preservice elementary
teachers were also included in the study to provide comparative data about how teachers’ attitudes may differ.

Method

The inservice teachers in this study were randomly selected from one midwest state’s computer list of all public school elementary teachers and a similar list of secondary social studies teachers. A total of 170 teachers participated in the study, including 105 elementary teachers and 65 secondary social studies teachers. Twenty-six of the elementary teachers were men and 79 were women. Three-quarters had been teaching for six years or more. Fifteen of the secondary social studies teachers were women and 51 were men. Nearly 90 percent had been teaching for six or more years. In addition, 45 preservice elementary teachers from one university also participated in the study. The preservice teachers were undergraduate students who were near completing their elementary teaching certification. Eight of the participants were men and 37 were women. Over half were already student teaching.

Data for the study were gathered by using Riddle’s Survey of Opinions on Economic Issues. This 40 item questionnaire was designed to measure attitudes toward economic concerns in such areas as labor unions, economic organizations and power structures, socialism and social welfare, and economic freedom. A four-point Likert-type scale was used in which the respondents checked agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, or disagree. The developer of the scale established the face validity of the items and took steps to assure that each item was correlated with one of the five scales (Riddle, 1978).

The questionnaire was mailed to 300 inservice teachers with 57 percent returning usable questionnaires. Preservice teachers responded to the questionnaire in their teaching methods courses or in their student teaching seminar.

Three steps were used to analyze the data. First, the mean scores of the elementary teachers were inspected for each of the scales used in the questionnaire to assess the teachers’ overall position on various economic issues. Responses to questions representing the employment and inflation scale were omitted due to difficulty in interpreting these responses in a meaningful way given the constraints of the questionnaire itself. Second, analysis of variance was used to test the statistical significance of the differences between the participating elementary and secondary social studies teachers. Finally, analysis of variance was used to test the statistical significance of the differences among all three groups—elementary teachers, secondary social studies teachers, and preservice elementary teachers.

Results and Discussion

Elementary Teachers. Table 1 shows the elementary teachers’ mean scores on a one-to-four point scale for four of the attitude scales. A low score on
the labor scale was viewed as an indication of opposition to labor unions. The 2.56 mean on the labor scale showed that the elementary teachers in this study are moderately favorable in their attitudes toward organized labor. Considering that nearly all public school teachers are members of teacher unions, it appears somewhat surprising that they are only moderately supportive of broader union activity. For example, while 71 percent of the elementary teachers disagreed or tended to disagree that the President should use the national guard to drive trucks in the event of a truckers' strike, only 12 percent agreed or tended to agree that labor unions should become stronger and more influential.

A low score on the economic organization scale indicated cynicism toward economic organizations such as government, labor unions, and business. The mean of 2.94 suggests that elementary teachers are quite supportive of existing economic organizations and power structures. For example, 96 percent agreed or tended to agree that profits are essential to the United States' economic system. This finding seems to contradict the fear sometimes expressed by some members of the economic community that educators do not support profit as an economic incentive. Elementary teachers, at least, appear to be supportive. This result might also reflect a generally favorable attitude toward other existing economic structures. For example, 70 percent of the elementary teachers felt that federal aid is needed to provide equal educational opportunity.

A positive attitude toward economic freedom was indicated by a low score. The elementary teachers' 2.52 mean suggests that the respondents were somewhat unfavorable in their attitudes toward economic freedom. While 69 percent agreed or tended to agree that government should stay out of private business, only 21 percent agreed or tended to agree that employers should be able to hire and fire as they wish. It may be that elementary teachers, as a general principle, are supportive of economic freedom. However, in some specific areas, such as the hiring and firing of employees, they are far less confident.

Positive opinions concerning social welfare and socialism were indicated by low scores. The 3.00 mean of elementary teachers strongly suggests that the respondents were not in favor of ideas usually associated with socialism.

Table 1: Elementary Teachers' Mean Scores for Each Questionnaire Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor Unions</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Organizations and Power Structures</td>
<td>2.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Freedom</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialism and Social Welfare</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For example, 87 percent disagreed or tended to disagree with the idea that all of a student's education costs from grade one to college should be paid for by the government, and 83 percent disagreed or tended to disagree with a statement that government should insure a secure job and standard of living for everyone. This is additional evidence that elementary teachers are highly supportive of existing economic structures.

**Secondary Social Studies Teachers.** Data collected from secondary social studies teachers help provide contrast and comparison with the information from the elementary teachers. Statistically significant differences were found between the responses of these two groups on 13 questionnaire items. Conjecture on the part of the researcher suggested that secondary social studies teachers would be somewhat more liberal in their attitudes toward economic issues than their elementary colleagues. Liberal, in this case, was interpreted to mean favoring government intervention in solving economic problems while conservative was interpreted as favoring market oriented solutions to economic problems. The survey data, highlights of which are reported in Table 2, were usually supportive of this speculation. On 10 of the 13 items where significant differences were found, secondary social studies teachers were judged to have taken more liberal positions when compared to the elementary teachers. While elementary and secondary social studies teachers often had responses that favored the same direction on a particular issue, the secondary teachers tended to take a more strongly liberal position. The following paragraphs provide a more detailed analysis of the specific responses.

Both the elementary and secondary social studies teachers agree that American labor unions are too strong. However, the secondary teachers are more supportive of organized labor on this issue. Over 70 percent of the elementary teachers agreed or tended to agree that today's labor unions are too strong compared to 57 percent for the secondary teachers. Similarly, both elementary and secondary teachers agree that labor should have the right to strike when collective bargaining fails; however, 43 percent of the secondary teachers agreed with this idea compared to 28 percent of the elementary teachers.

An important difference was found in elementary and secondary social studies teachers' responses concerning the role of government in the private economy. Nearly 70 percent of the elementary teachers agreed or tended to agree that the government should keep its hands off private business operations. Only one-third of the secondary social studies teachers agreed or tended to agree with the same statement.

Differences between these two groups involving social welfare and socialism tended to be a matter of emphasis rather than direction. For example, 17 percent of the elementary teachers felt that government should guarantee everyone a job and a good standard of living, compared to 25 percent for the secondary teachers. Sixty-three percent of the elementary teachers
Table 2: Percentage of Elementary and Secondary Teachers’ Responses to Economic Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Elementary Teachers</th>
<th>Secondary Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tend to Agree</td>
<td>Tend to Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. American labor unions of today are too strong.</td>
<td>22 50 22 6 2.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Labor unions are largely responsible for inflation; therefore, wages should be controlled because high wages cause higher prices.</td>
<td>8 28 43 21 2.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Government should keep its hands off private business operations.</td>
<td>25 44 26 5 2.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A successful campaign to “buy American” would, in the long run, harm our economic well being.</td>
<td>11 26 39 23 2.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. When collective bargaining has failed, labor must be able to strike.</td>
<td>28 42 20 10 2.83</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. It’s up to the government to make sure that everyone has a secure job and a good standard of living.</td>
<td>2 15 33 50 3.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (cont'd)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Questionnaire Items</th>
<th>Elementary Teachers</th>
<th>Secondary Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tend to Agree</td>
<td>Tend to Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. There would be very little unemployment in America if people would just get out and look for a job.</td>
<td>16 36 32 15 2.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Federal Government should assist the cities with such social problems as lack of low-cost housing, and inadequate transportation to and from work.</td>
<td>15 48 19 18 2.56</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. It would be a good thing for America if some method could be devised to make the distribution of income more nearly equal.</td>
<td>12 18 27 43 2.99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. If a corporation's profits are too high, then the government should tax away those excessive profits.</td>
<td>16 40 22 21 2.43</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

*p < .05
**p < .01
***p < .001
agreed or tended to agree that the federal government should provide aid to cities while 79 percent of secondary social studies teachers favored the same idea. A sharper difference existed in the responses regarding distribution of income. Over 50 percent of the social studies teachers favored devising a system to equalize income, while only 30 percent of the elementary teachers took a similar position.

Preservice Elementary Teachers. The responses of the preservice elementary teachers provide additional insights about prospective elementary teachers’ economic education and attitudes. However, because only one institution was used in deriving the sample for this part of the study, caution should be used in generalizing from these findings.

The data in this study suggest that economic education is not emphasized in undergraduate courses of preservice elementary teachers and is an area where inservice education predominates. Only 39 percent of the preservice elementary teachers in this study had taken one or more economics courses, compared to 56 percent for the inservice elementary teachers. This finding suggests that elementary teachers do not seek to increase their formal economic education until they are actually teaching. It may be that preservice elementary teachers are not interested in taking economics courses or that their educational programs are too crowded to permit taking such a course. Another explanation may be that the established elementary teachers find economic education inservice courses an attractive way to continue their professional growth. The Joint Council on Economic Education and its affiliated councils and centers for economic education around the country have done a great deal of work in this area by offering numerous teacher workshops. However, it should be noted that over two-fifths of the inservice elementary teachers have no formal economic education.

Based on experiences from working with inservice and preservice teachers, it was expected that college students training to become elementary teachers would be more liberal in their economic attitudes than inservice elementary teachers but not as liberal as secondary social studies teachers. This expectation was only partially supported. Analysis of variance tests found statistically meaningful differences among the three groups on 19 questionnaire items. On 16 of the items where there were significant differ-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Preservice Elementary Teachers</th>
<th>Inservice Elementary Teachers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Economics Courses</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One Economics Course</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Economics Courses</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ences, the preservice elementary teachers' responses were judged to be more liberal than the inservice elementary teachers. However, on 13 of the same items, the preservice teachers' responses were as liberal or more liberal than were the secondary social studies teachers' responses. Thus, the preservice elementary teachers tended to be the most liberal of the three groups.

Table 4 presents the responses of the preservice students to selected questionnaire items. The most frequent differences between the groups were found on the economic organization and power structure scale and on the socialism and social welfare scale. For example, 85 percent of the preservice elementary teachers felt that the government should try to prevent unemployment compared to 68 percent of the secondary social studies teachers and 65 percent of the inservice elementary teachers.

Similarly, the preservice elementary teachers were least supportive of economic freedom. Sixty percent of the preservice teachers disagreed or tended to disagree with the idea that a home owner should have the right to charge as high a rent as desired so long as someone is willing to pay. Thirty-five percent of the inservice elementary teachers and 27 percent of the secondary social studies teachers disagreed or tended to disagree with the same idea. On several issues involving socialism and social welfare, each of the groups took moderate or conservative viewpoints; however, the undergraduates were the least conservative. For example, 37 percent of the undergraduates favored the idea that government should insure a job and a good standard of living for everyone compared to 25 percent for the social studies teachers and 17 percent for the elementary teachers.
Summary and Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn from this study. It appears that elementary teachers are moderate in their views on economic issues. They tend to support organized labor and existing economic organizations and power structures but are willing to trade-off some economic freedom on specific economic issues. They are strongly opposed to several ideas frequently associated with socialism and social welfare such as government guaranteeing a job and standard of living for each citizen.

Secondary social studies teachers tend to be more liberal in their views on economic issues when compared to elementary teachers. While the differences between these two groups were often a matter of emphasis, some sharp contrasts did emerge. For example, secondary social studies teachers were willing to tolerate a greater role for government in private business than were the elementary teachers.

Two additional conclusions can be drawn from the comparison of undergraduate students' responses to those of the elementary and social studies teachers. First, preservice elementary teachers tend to be more liberal in their economic attitudes than are elementary teachers especially on issues related to economic organizations and power structures and socialism and social welfare. Frequently, preservice elementary teachers are as liberal or more liberal than secondary social studies teachers about economic issues. Second, it appears that only a minority of preservice elementary teachers take an economics course as part of their undergraduate program. This situation is troublesome to those who feel some economics background is important for prospective elementary teachers. One possible solution might be to change the preservice elementary curriculum to require that students take at least one economics course. In many colleges and universities, however, this would be a difficult change to make due to the many other important areas which are currently competing for a place in the preservice elementary curriculum. Other, somewhat more creative solutions, such as increasing the emphasis given to economic concepts and teaching approaches in elementary social studies methods courses, may need to be considered along with continuing to make economic education inservice courses attractive to elementary teachers.

References


We are seeking critical reviews of scholarly works related to the concerns of social educators. This includes books on education, the social sciences, history, philosophy, research and any other works which might make a contribution to the field.

Normally, textbooks will not be reviewed with the exception of those which appear to advance theory and research. Essay reviews of two or more works on the same topic will be considered if they conform to manuscript guidelines for reviews. Reviews which exceed the guidelines for length must be handled on a case by case basis as space permits. Reviewers who have suggestions for reviews which might exceed the guidelines are urged to contact the book editor prior to submitting the review.

Reviewers should provide sufficient detail regarding the book's substance and approach, including positive and negative evaluations where relevant. Finally, the review should include the specific importance of the book for social educators.

**Manuscript Form**

The length may vary from 1,000 to 2,000 words; the manuscript must be typed, double-spaced (including quotes) on 8½" × 11" paper. The format is as follows for the top of the first page of the review, left side:

Book Author's Name (Last Name first),
Title, City of publication: Publisher, Date;
Total pages; list price (if known).
Reviewer's Name (Last Name Last)
Institution

Submit review manuscripts to:
Professor William B. Stanley, Book Editor
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
64 Long Field House
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
Books

Reid, Robert L., Editor, BATTLEGROUND: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MARGARET A. HALEY (University of Illinois Press, 1982).

Reviewed by Murry R. Nelson, Col. of Education, Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802

Every fall teachers somewhere go on strike and there arise the cries of "Bring back the good old days when teachers did their job without gripping." There was a variant of this in Chicago that tied recent teacher strikes to the malevolent machinations of a political and tightfisted Board of Education which used the strikes to save money and embarrass teachers.

Reading Battleground reveals that the good old days, at least in Chicago, were even more politically corrupt in the ways that the Boards of Education and the mayors of the city mistreated and abused the teachers of that city. This book, rescued from the obscurity of the papers of the Chicago Teachers Federation in the Chicago Historical Society by Professor Robert Reid of Indiana State University, was written mostly between 1900 and 1915 and "completed" in the 1930's. It is a most appropriate complement to George S. Counts' classic volume, School and Society in Chicago, written in 1928 and often used by educational historians as the best study of politics and the schooling process ever written. In contrast to the "professional" style of Counts, Haley is a streetfighter who backed away from conflict only to muster her forces before plunging into battle.

"Who was Margaret A. Haley?" is a question many may be asking by now. A simple response is that she was a teacher who became the leader of the nation's most militant teacher organization, the Chicago Teachers Federation. In that capacity she labored for nearly 40 years lobbying in Chicago and Springfield for better treatment of Chicago's teachers. The closest comparison to Haley today is probably Albert Shanker, and that would be an extremely gross analogy requiring many qualifications.

Haley was born during the first year of the Civil War and died during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1939). In those 78 years Haley became a confidant of educators, governors, mayors and even presidents as she used personal and political muscle to thwart attempts to rescind the slight gains teachers had made.

This book is a personal account and brims with heroes and villains. At times the villainy is gross incompetence. At other times it is clearly (at least to Haley) malice aforethought. Most of the mayors of the city of Chicago fall into the "bad guy" camp, though some changed their political tunes enough to be praised at times. One notable exception was George Dunne, mayor of Chicago from 1905-1907 and later governor of Illinois. To Haley, Dunne was always a friend of Chicago's teachers, although their greatest
friend was the fairest governor Illinois ever had, John Peter Altgeld. Altgeld has faded into history, but Haley's presentation of his just and wise qualities make "The Eagle" rise again.

The superintendents of Chicago also come in for "good guy/bad guy" reviews. Most seem well intentioned, although E. Benjamin Andrews ("Bulletin Ben") and his supporter, William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago, come in for particular abuse.

The most remarkable person presented in this book was Haley's colleague and friend, Ella Flagg Young. Mrs. Young was a public school teacher, an assistant superintendent of Chicago's schools, a teacher under John Dewey at the Lab School, principal of the Chicago Normal School (for teacher training) and, finally in 1910 at the age of 65, the superintendent of Chicago's public schools. For five years Mrs. Young served as superintendent (the first woman in the U.S. to hold such a position) and during that time she also served one year as president of the National Education Association.

Haley details many of the inside dealings of politicians in the state of Illinois, and her revelations are ugly, but usually accurate. Haley aspired to no political heights and battled for better education, not personal gain. This kind of claim to altruism by Haley is almost a bit too hard to swallow, but she was clearly a woman of strength and integrity.

Robert Reid's excellent introduction and footnotes put events into historical and social perspectives, lending deeper understanding to Haley's work. This, to me, is the best education book to appear in 1982. It is thought-provoking, inspiring, insightful, interesting and historically useful. There aren't many books that can lay claim to one of those adjectives, let alone all of them. Teachers, professors and students should find this book exhilarating.
Abstracts

Modern Secondary Economics Textbooks and Ideological Bias

The basic purpose of this paper was to determine if, and to what extent, ideological bias is present in recently published high school economics textbooks. Texts were examined based on pre-determined categories and the analysis was made in conjunction with a declared theory of education. The study is in the spirit of other studies which have assessed the content of social studies materials and texts. The increased emphasis on economic education within social studies curricula coupled with the traditional reliance on the text by classroom teachers gives the findings special relevance for the present.

The Great Depression: A Textbook Case of Problems With American History Textbooks

For nearly twenty years, reviewers of secondary U.S. history textbooks have criticized these texts for faculty economic analysis and errors of fact. This paper renews this criticism based on a review of the treatment of the Great Depression in sixteen recent texts. The texts reviewed failed to incorporate economists' research on the causes of the Great Depression and consistently presented information to students that the economics profession has rejected. In light of the continuing debate on the quality of social studies textbooks in general and the importance of textbooks as primary teaching tools, the article suggests a number of strategies that social studies educators might adopt to improve the quality of economic analysis in textbooks.

Measuring Economic Attitudes in High School

Although there is substantial recent interest in assessing economic attitudes, many attitude instruments are poorly defined and fail to report technical information on reliability, validity, or national norms. For this study, a two-part attitude measure, the Survey on Economic Attitudes, was developed to assess: (1) attitudes towards economics as a subject; and, (2) attitudes towards economic issues using an attitude sophistication approach. Data on reliability, validity, and norms were obtained from a large national sample of high school students and college professors, and the development procedures represent a distinct improvement over the approach used for many ad hoc attitude measures. The instrument should find many uses in research or evaluation of economics learning in economics or social studies courses.

Elementary Teachers' Views on Economic Issues

The purpose of this study was to investigate the economic attitudes of inservice elementary teachers. Secondary social studies teachers and preservice elementary teachers were asked to participate in the study to provide comparative data. Riddle's Survey of Opinions on Economic Issues was the main instrument used in the study.
Statistical analyses of the questionnaire data suggested that elementary teachers are moderate in their views toward economic issues. Secondary social studies teachers tend to be more liberal than elementary teachers in their economic views in the sense that they favor greater government intervention in the economy. The preservice elementary teachers in this study tended to be as liberal or more liberal in their economic views than the secondary social studies teachers.
1983 Research Award in Social Studies Education

The Research Advisory Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies is sponsoring an annual Research Award to acknowledge, communicate, and encourage scholarly inquiry into significant issues and possibilities for social education. Awards will be made to published research studies that extend our understanding of what is, our vision of what might be, and our efforts toward improvement of social studies education and research. Ideally, such research would:

1. offer an explicit conceptual framework and rationale, sensitive to the interconnections of theory, inquiry, and practice;
2. evidence scholarly integrity, methodology appropriate to the questions raised, credible procedures and analysis; and
3. attend to social, political, and ethical implications.

Studies bearing 1981 and 1982 publication dates will be considered for the 1983 Award to be presented at the Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Applicants should submit five copies of the published article, chapter, book, or monograph; five copies of a one-page abstract; and their agreement to present the research, if selected for the Award, in a special session at the NCSS meeting in San Francisco. Send materials, by June 15, 1983, and address inquiries to: Catherine Cornbleth, Instructional Studies, 4C01 Forbes Quad, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.