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The Expanding Environments Sequence in Elementary Social Studies: The Origins

Leo W. LeRiche
The University of Western Australia

Abstract

This paper examines the historical development of the expanding environments sequence in the elementary social studies curriculum. In this sequence, the child's study of the world begins with the home and family in the first grade and proceeds to the neighborhood, the community, the state, the nation, regions of nearby nations, and the world. The findings indicate that this curriculum sequence originated in the writings of Charles A. McMurry, a prominent American Herbartian, and is derived from a combination of the three distinguishing features of Herbartianism, apperception, concentration centers, and, more importantly, the culture epochs theory of child growth and development, the obsolete, thoroughly discredited nineteenth century idea that the growth of the child recapitulates the cultural history of the race. The origins of expanding environments should be sufficient reason for considering other models as a basis for elementary social studies.

Introduction

This article is an account of the early development of the expanding environments sequence in elementary social studies education. A number of questions arise concerning the use of expanding environments as the dominant sequence for elementary social studies: (a) How and why did it come into use in the social studies? (b) Where did it originate and when? (c) What theory of child growth and development is it based on? (d) How has it come to be dominant? The following account attempts to answer these questions by presenting an historical analysis of the effect that this sequence has had on the curriculum and on the children using it.

One purpose in presenting this account is to demonstrate that historical analysis applied to the development of the curriculum can have immediate practical benefits. That is, educational history can and should provide a basis for significant changes and improvements in curriculum. The school curriculum is strongly rooted to a tradition that few criticize. Historical analysis can provide a basis for criticism of those traditions that are no longer appropriate and thus provide a substantial basis for improving a
school curriculum that has proven stubbornly resistant to change. The major purpose here is to demonstrate this with the specific example of expanding environments in the elementary social studies curriculum by exposing its historical origins and the presently unacceptable theory of child growth and development on which it is based.

A second purpose is to analyze the form of the curriculum rather than its content, form in this case referring to the categories of thought used. Most analysts of the school curriculum have considered only its subject matter content and the messages, both overt and covert, that it imparts to children rather than the more subtle and effective element of curricular form. Although analyses of curricular form are difficult to find in the educational literature, some educators have recognized the importance of form and called for its analysis. Michael Apple has suggested the importance of form.

Currently of immense import here is the way the logic and modes of control of [cultural] capital are entering the school through the form the curriculum takes, not only in its content. (1982, p. 312)

C. A. Bowers has emphasized the lack of analysis of curricular patterns of thought which he considers to be the more important aspect of curriculum.

Critics of the school, representing both left and right persuasions, have focused on the content, and have generally ignored the categories of thinking used to organize and transmit the content of the curriculum. . . . these patterns of thought are the main lessons to be learned in school and they will endure as shapers of thought long after the content of what is talked about in schools is forgotten. (1980, p. 302)

The reason that curricular form has not been analyzed in the past is that the tacit messages imparted through form are more elusive, less straightforward than those of content. The analysis of curricular content in social studies was a great beginning, but the problem with content analysis is that even though the content may be changed, unless the form also changes, the tacit messages contained therein remain the same.

Marshall McLuhan, in The Medium is the Message, also described the importance of form in curriculum in his unique style.

Today's television child is attuned to up-to-the-minute 'adult' news—inflation, rioting, war, taxes, crime, bathing beauties—and is bewildered when he enters the nineteenth century environment that still characterizes the educational establishment where information is scarce but ordered and structured by fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, and schedules. (1967, p. 18)

An example of this fragmented, classified pattern that orders and structures social studies is examined here in some detail. It is called expanding environ-
ments, among other things. It seems reasonable to suggest that a social studies curriculum should give children an honest picture of the social reality in which they are forced to live. Expanding environments, however, is conventional social science providing a mask for reality.

Expanding Environments

The expanding environments concept is a set of implicit assumptions that has been implanted in the subconscious thought patterns of children for a number of generations, a common pattern that strongly affects the way we think about such things as political and economic problems. It has been the major organizing idea for the elementary social studies curriculum for the past fifty years in the United States. It is also used in other countries such as Australia and Canada. It has been used to guide the sequence and content selection through the grades. It is referred to by a variety of names including expanding environments, expanding communities, widening horizons, expanding interests, and widening interests. The basic idea is that the child's understanding grows like a set of widening concentric circles and that the child should study social life based on this presumed sequence of conceptual development.

As presently interpreted and utilized in the social studies curriculum, the sequence begins with a study of the home, family, school, neighborhood, city, and county in the early grades. Then the child studies the state, the nation, and finally in the sixth grade, subjects from the international community. There are slightly differing versions of the expanding environments sequence, but the progression suggested here is the classic version. Generally, this expanding geographic horizons interpretation of the child's expanding environments conceptual development has become synonymous with the concept itself.

In the 1980s, several major publishers including Bowmar/Noble, Follett, Graphic Learning Corporation, Harcourt, Heath, Holt, Houghton Mifflin, Macmillan, McGraw-Hill, Riverside, and Scott Foresman are still publishing social studies curricula based on expanding environments or one of its variations. None of the texts produced by these publishers make any reference to the educational origins of this sequence, the child growth and development theory on which it is based or the theory of learning behind it.

Herbart and the Culture Epochs

The culture epochs theory of child growth and development—the idea that as they grow up, children relive the cultural history of their race—was brought to the United States from Germany in the late nineteenth century by the American Herbartians. In discourse on the Herbartian movement in education, it seems logical to begin with the writings of its founder, whom most would assume to be Johann Friedrich Herbart. This is, however, not the case. Harold Dunkel, the leading authority on the Herbartian move-
ment, pointed out that it was Tuiskon Ziller who founded Herbartianism in 1865, 24 years after Herbart’s death, with the publication of his, *Foundation of Educative Instruction*.

Ziller received his doctorate in 1854 from the University of Leipzig, having studied there under Drobisch and Hartenstein, two of Herbart’s students and collaborators (Dunkel, 1970). Ziller introduced two important ideas that were to become, with apperception, the three defining attributes of Herbartianism. He added concentration centers and culture epochs. “A concentration center was a general topic on which the work of a whole school year focused” (Dunkel, 1969, p. 107). Culture epochs, “is the educational equivalent of ‘ontongeny recapitulates phylogeny’” (Dunkel, 1969, p. 109). The child, in its growth and development, relives the cultural history of the race. Although both had some basis in Herbart’s thought, culture epochs going back much further in time, they had remained undeveloped. Ziller maintained that Herbart would have arrived at these concepts had he been able to develop his ideas on educational theory and practice to their logical conclusion (Dunkel, 1969).

Ziller utilized Herbart’s concept of apperception although he revised it considerably. Generally, the apperception concept maintains that new presentations must be attached to similar presentational masses already in mind in order to stay above the threshold of consciousness (Dunkel, 1969). Herbart’s vaguely defined steps in apperception were: (a) clarity, (b) association, (c) system, (d) method. “Herbert did not always use the same names to refer to the steps” (Dunkel, 1969, p. 114; 1970, p. 167). Ziller substituted analysis and synthesis for Herbart’s first step, clarity. Wilhelm Rein, a student of Ziller’s, thoroughly revised the steps and carefully defined them.

1. Preparation—Pupil recalls material.
2. Presentation—Teacher introduces new material.
3. Association
   - Teacher and pupils combine old and new material.
4. Generalization
5. Application—Pupil fits new material into the general concept.

Rein’s version of the steps in Apperception bore little resemblance to Herbart’s original ones (Dunkel, 1969).

Apperception and its five steps provided the teaching method, the concentration centers defined how the curriculum would be organized, the culture epochs determined that the subject matter content of each concentration center would be based on the idea that the child, in its growth and development pattern, relived the history of its ancestor’s cultural development. It can be seen that the three major defining characteristics of Herbartianism provided teachers with a complete picture of how and what to teach. They gave teachers a detailed set of procedures to follow in the classroom. It can also be seen that the three defining attributes of Herbartianism
contributed substantially to the expanding environments concept, apperception providing the idea that new presentations must be attached to similar ones already experienced. Moving from the known to the unknown, concentration centers supplied the notion of focusing the work of an entire school year on a single, general topic. Culture epochs determined what those topics should be.

The German Herbartians emphasized the study of history in their curriculum, but combined it with literature so that the two were indistinguishable in the early grades. They began the first grade with the epic German fairy tales. The rationale for their use being that they had been derived from a primitive state of German culture and would be well understood and appreciated by first graders because they were in the same stage of development. Using the same rationale, Robinson Crusoe was recommended for the second grade. An additional reason for the use of Robinson Crusoe was that Rousseau recommended it for use in the education of Emile. The biblical epochs were studied from the third grade through the eighth grade (Dunkel, 1969).

**The Herbartian Rise to Prominence**

Herbartianism was imported to the United States from Germany initially by three young graduates of Illinois State Normal School (now Illinois State University), Charles DeGarmo, Charles McMurry, and Frank McMurry. All three studied Herbartian pedagogy at Jena University under Wilhelm Rein. DeGarmo and Charles McMurry received their doctoral degrees in 1886 and 1887 respectively from Halle University and Frank McMurry received his Ph.D. from Jena University in 1889 where all three did postdoctoral study with Rein. Upon their return to the United States, they began publishing numerous articles and books on Herbartian pedagogy (Dunkel, 1969).

The decade of the 1890s was a period of intense published criticism of the public schools (Cremin, 1962). It appears that the Herbartians found that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Biblical</th>
<th>Secular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Epic Fairy Tales</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Robinson Crusoe</td>
<td>Thuringian Sagas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Patriarchs</td>
<td>Niebelungen Sagas</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Judges</td>
<td>The German Kings</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>The Kings</td>
<td>The Life of Luther</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Life of Jesus</td>
<td>Spread of Protestantism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Apostles</td>
<td>German Nationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Reformation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
American educators under fire from the press were receptive to the new German pedagogy. The Herbartian curriculum and method must have seemed highly scientific compared to the rigid Hegelian tradition in the American schools at the time. Dunkel suggested that the pedagogical pragmatism in the Herbartian doctrine contributed heavily to its success. The steps of apperception and the concentration centers told teachers what to do in some detail. Culture epochs provided the major topic headings of the curriculum for each grade (Dunkel, 1969; 1970).

One measure of their success is the number of copies their books sold. DeGarmo's, *Essentials of Method*, remained in print until 1934, selling, 33,000 copies. Charles McMurry's, *Elements of General Method*, totaled 30,000 copies before the fifth edition was printed in 1897. Their books continued to sell well far into the twentieth century. The 1903 edition of Charles McMurry's, *Elements of General Method*, remained in print until 1922 and totaled 75,000 copies. The McMurry brothers', *The Method of the Recitation*, totaled 23,000 copies in the new edition alone (Dunkel, 1969). Considering the relatively low population of the United States in the 1890s and early twentieth century, these figures indicate that the Herbartian movement had a strong and enduring impact on American education. Another measure of the significance of the Herbartians in the United States is the quality of the people who became involved in the movement. When DeGarmo and the McMurrays organized the National Herbart Society in 1895, John Dewey, Nicholas Murray Butler and other important figures in education served on the executive council (Dunkel, 1969).

Some of their books sold very well in Australia as well as in the United States. Handbooks, which I was able to locate at Sydney Teachers College, New South Wales and Claremont Teachers College, Western Australia, indicate that Charles McMurry's books were used there as teacher training texts at least as early as 1910 and at least as late as 1927. Handbooks before and after these years were not available.

The most prolific writer of the original American Herbartians, Charles McMurry, transformed the German curriculum into the first American culture epochs curriculum. The culture epochs theory was the characteristic of Herbartianism that tended to be identified with the movement. The Darwinist theory of evolution had an important influence on Western thought in the 1890s. This popularity of evolutionary thinking among late nineteenth century intellectuals boosted the Herbartians, who became closely linked with culture epochs, to the fore in education. Culture epochs, became thought of as synonymous with the rising recapitulation theory of child growth and development that replaced cultural history with evolutionary stages.

An early attempt at a viable elementary social studies (the term had not been coined at the time) curriculum based on culture epochs appeared in 1893 when the Herbartian movement, with Charles McMurry at the helm,
was in sharp ascendency in American education (Dunkel, 1969). Since grades seven and eight are not part of the elementary school in most places, only the first six years of McMurry’s curriculum are shown here.

McMurry’s curriculum for the first three grades is the classic German culture epochs curriculum. He suggested, however, that first grade teachers relate fairy tales to home studies and Robinson Crusoe to home and neighborhood studies. He was also the first to recommend the study of the home state for the fourth grade and the study of the nation for the fifth grade. McMurry thus laid the rudimentary foundation for what was to become the expanding environments sequence.

Decline, Fall, and Resurrection

Harold Dunkel marked 1896 as the year in which the American Herbartian movement reached its peak. After that time it declined rapidly as a philosophical movement producing new articles and books (Dunkel, 1969). It was in the 1896 Yearbook of the National Herbart Society, forerunner of the National Society for the Study of Education, that John Dewey unleashed a devastating attack on the culture epochs theory.

Dewey pointed out that the criterion or standard employed in culture epochs was ambiguous and that the lack of an exact parallel from the race to the child was admittedly absent. It was unjustifiable to draw conclusions about child development from the culture epochs of the race. Also, he emphasized that the stages of development in the child must be studied and established independently. He criticized the Herbartians taking for granted that cultural products should be the objects of study and suggested that they were equivalent to giving the child a toy instead of reality. He went on to say that a direct interest in history on the part of children was impossible and concluded by hitting hard at the Herbartian use of myths.

It seems to be assumed in the discussions that the myth is a primitive, simple product which the mind sheds by a sort of direct radiation, or, to

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### Table 2
Charles McMurry’s 1893 Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Epic Fairy Tales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Robinson Crusoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mythical Stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pioneer History Stories (biographies of the home state and surrounding states)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pioneer History Stories, 2nd Series (New England, eastern seaboard, California and the west)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Colonial Epoch (to the close of the French and Indian War)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
mix the metaphor, by spontaneous combustion termed fancy. And that, therefore, there is some special, almost pre-ordained fitness in it for the child . . . that by some inner affinity to the child's nature, he is being morally introduced into the civilization from which the myth sprung, and is receiving a sort of spiritual baptism through 'literature'. No . . . Let us treat the intellectual resources, capacities and needs of our children with the full dignity and respect they deserve, and not sentimentalize nor symbolize the realities of life, nor present them in the shape of mental toys. (Dewey, 1896, pp 89-95)

It seems that much of Dewey's criticism consisted of simply stating the unstated assumptions underlying the Herbartian culture epochs theory and corresponding curriculum sequence. If one substitutes community for myth, Dewey's criticism could almost be applied to the third grade social studies curriculum today.

After the detailed havoc wreaked on culture epochs by Dewey in 1896, the theory was scarcely mentioned by the Herbartians again. Instead, McMurry shifted course to salvage the wreckage of Herbartianism and kept it afloat. He had apparently been edging away from the culture epochs idea in his curriculum recommendations before Dewey's critical article even though he still had been formally paying lip service to the theory in his writings. After the devastation wrought by Dewey on culture epochs, the need to drop it became urgent. Dewey, in his critical article, suggested the basis for a new curriculum that was, in effect, to study the sequence of development in the child and base the curriculum on that.

In a supplement to the Herbart Society Yearbook for 1898, McMurry recommended an elementary school geography curriculum which suggested that topics in geography should be developed from a study of home, neighborhood, and local community geography. This geography curriculum also included topics from the pupil's home state and region of states for the fourth grade, topics from the nations generally for the fifth grade, and European geography for the sixth grade (McMurry, 1899). In this article McMurry indicated that he was aware of the possibility of moving from the study of North America in the fifth grade to the study of South America in the sixth grade. He carefully chose to have sixth graders study Europe instead of South America because he thought that American children were psychologically closer to Europe than to South America. His rationale could have been applied to sixth grade history as well as geography. In an earlier article, McMurry pointed out that fifth grade pupils studied national history. This involved the study of European explorers and settlers in a new land (McMurry, 1895).

In February, 1903, McMurry presented a paper on the elementary history curriculum at the annual meetings of the National Society for the Scientific Study of Education, formerly the National Herbart Society (McMurry, 1903b). This article was the forerunner of his book, Special Method in
History (McMurry, 1903a), published later the same year. In both his article and book, McMurry made no specific recommendation for years one and two. Both contain identical introductory remarks still hinting that fairy tales and myths were appropriate curricula for the early school years. For grade three, McMurry had something different to offer. He suggested that the third grade pupils study about national holidays. But his major emphasis was:

The family and neighborhood traditions are the best beginnings of history, and an interest in them should be regularly cultivated both in the home and school. The grandfather stories give the first notions of chronology.
Aboriginal native life and relics: Stories of aboriginal native life and adventure in the early settlement of the neighborhood and of the region of country adjacent.
Different nationalities in the community and where they came from.
The geography for year three is expected to deal with the hills, streams, valleys, products, and occupations of the village and adjacent country. (McMurry, 1903b, p. 248)

McMurry only lightly mentions the use of myths in the book version of his 1903 curriculum. It is obvious that a major shift in emphasis had taken place in McMurry’s third grade content. Although he still mentioned myths, he relegated them to a position of relative unimportance. His emphasis shifted to the study of the history of the town or neighborhood, local Indians (the study of primitive people was possibly a replacement for Robinson Crusoe), different nationalities in the community, and local geography. It took only a little imagination on the part of curriculum writers to stretch these topics over the first three years instead of including them all in grade three.
The National Herbart Society for the Scientific Study of Education was discontinued in 1899 but McMurry reestablished it in 1902 as the National Society for the Scientific Study of Education. He and his brother Frank rewrote all of their many textbooks in education, deleted any mention of culture epochs as a theoretical basis for curriculum and produced new editions of nearly all of their books in 1903. The other two major identifying attributes of Herbartianism, apperception and concentration centers had not been criticized so the Herbartians, primarily Charles McMurry, continued publishing, albeit newer editions of older books. There was no attempt to devise a new theory of child growth and development to replace culture epochs. All talk of educational theory was simply omitted from the
Table 3  
Charles McMurry's 1903 Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pioneers of the state and neighboring states. Early exploration and settlement. Geography of the state and region of states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>American colonial history to the French and Indian War. History of Greek and Roman Civilizations. Geography of North America.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

new editions. Table 3 contains a summary of McMurry's 1903 recommendations for a history and geography curriculum for the elementary school. Again, only those recommendations affecting the six year elementary curriculum are shown here.

In June, 1903, John Dewey published comments that may be taken as a stamp of approval on the changes made in the Herbartian curriculum.

The culture-epoch theory in education, like the recapitulation theory in biology, is undergoing a promising transformation. The conception is no longer that the individual is compelled to pass through certain periods of development simply because his animal or human progenitors passed through like states. The emphasis has shifted to the common forces and elements in the life and social processes. . . . Upon the social and education side we turn to history, not for light upon what the child must go through, or must be made to go through, but for help in interpreting the development which he is actually going through, and for help in guiding that growth. (1903, p. 727)

Although Dewey used the word theory instead of curriculum, there is no evidence of any change in the culture epochs theory in the Herbartian writings. This theory is absent after 1896 but pragmatic concessions to criticism appear in the form of different subject matter headings for the elementary grades, so we may be permitted to assume that Dewey was referring to the curriculum when he said theory. Dewey was referring to the Herbartian writings generally, but his reference to the use of history was most pointed.

The altering of the culture epochs based elementary school history curriculum in the 1903 edition of McMurry's, *Special Method in History*, was part of a general shift in his writings. There were similar changes in McMurry's 1903 editions of *Elements of General Method* and *The Method of the Recitation*. 146
Eight years later, in 1911, Andrews, Gambrill, and Tall in their *Bibliography of History for Schools and Libraries*, indicated the importance of the 1903 edition of McMurry's *Special Method in History* for teachers. "For the great majority of school teachers, this is by far the most valuable single volume" (Andrews, Gambrill, & Tall, 1911, p. 9). The authors of this annotated bibliography evidently considered McMurry's book more valuable than the other important publications in elementary school history that they listed. These included the *Report of the Committee of Eight*, Henry Johnson's *The Problem of Adapting History to Children in the Elementary Schools*, Emily Rice's *Course of Study in History and Literature*, and Lucy Salmon's *Some Principles in the Teaching of History*, as well as several other volumes.

With culture epochs deleted. McMurry proposed a more refined, although still rudimentary, form of an expanding environments sequence, albeit without a theoretical basis. Curiously, McMurry omitted the first two grades, but curriculum writers quickly shifted family and neighborhood history to grades one and two in line with his 1893 suggestions.

**The Curriculum Guides**

A survey of curriculum guides indicated that the frequency with which curriculum guide writers utilized the expanding environments sequence increased sharply in the decades from the 1910s ($\bar{X} = 20.5\%$) to the 1950s ($\bar{X} = 67\%$) (Leriche, 1974). In considering data from curriculum guides. Ruth Ellsworth's comment should be kept in mind.

Any survey of the organization of social studies curriculum in the elementary school must take into account the fact that for many school systems the organization is determined by the textbook chosen. (Ellsworth, 1962, p. 108)

Only the first six grades of school are shown here since these grades represent all of the elementary school experience for a great majority of American children during these years. There are thirty-one states represented in the curriculum guides including state, county, and school district guides. More curriculum guides recommended the expanding environments sequence than any other scheme over the years. Five referred directly to McMurry, including Alabama, 1910, 1915, and 1924; Idaho, 1915; and Merced, California, 1925. All five suggested that teachers read his *Special Method in History*.

Even though expanding environments came to dominate the curriculum guides by the 1950s, being the leading general sequence for all grade levels, the dominance was never as complete among the curriculum guide writers as it was among the educational publishers, who by the 1960s, demanded rigid adherence to expanding environments from any social studies curriculum writers seeking publication (T. R. Tomlinson, personal communication, 1973).
Virtually all of the many teacher training texts for elementary social studies written during the last fifty years refer to the expanding environments concept as the dominant sequence for curriculum in this area but no mention is made of the educational origins of expanding environments. The few writers who mention a theoretical basis refer only to the vague near-remote principle. There is little criticism of expanding environments by these authors and the criticism, except for a few recent writers, has usually taken the line that young children already know many of the concepts presented in the early years of the sequence. The more substantive criticisms leveled at expanding environments in teacher training texts were by Malcolm Douglass in 1967 and Welton and Mallan in 1976. Douglass included two major points of criticism that stand out as critically important, especially from the perspective of political socialization. The first states:

To study only one ‘community’ in a year, such as the neighborhood or state ‘community’ as is commonly suggested for the second and fourth grades, prevents the child at either level from becoming oriented to the broadest aspects of society. (Douglas, 1967, p. 73)

The second states, in part:

This approach discourages the utilization of current issues and tends to eliminate consideration of controversial material and that which is fraught with the greatest interest and meaning for children. (Douglass, 1967, p. 73)

Welton and Mallan begin their criticism of expanding environments by indicating that it is without any basis in educational or psychological research on child growth and development and is an example of adult logic.
(1976). They continue their criticism by indirectly pointing out the adult logic employed in the sequence.

At the elementary level, however, we fail to see why it is necessary for children to study their families (or the family) before studying their (or the) neighborhood. Rather, it seems to us that a way to go about studying the family is by examining various families in a neighborhood. (1976, p. 100)

They seem to see the role of sequence in a very different way from that implied by expanding environments. The lock-step, one year at a time sequence imposed on children by this scheme would seem to obscure the understanding of the interrelationships between the family and the community and, by implication, the interrelationships between all of the other communities in the sequence as well. Welton and Mallan state this position directly in their concluding remarks.

The fact that we were unable to identify essential prerequisites leads us to suggest that a rigid sequence that separates the various environments by grade levels increases the chance that children will not see the interrelationships that exist between and among the family, neighborhoods, communities, states, and nations. (1976, p. 102)

The criticisms only begin to indicate the full extent of the effects this sequence of studies may have on children.

**Early Critics of Expanding Environments**

Although the Expanding Environments concept has been criticized by a few writers through the years, the total effect of these criticisms has not been strong enough to bring about a change in the sequence on the part of most educational publishers. Henry Johnson raised fundamental objections to expanding environments in 1915. The fundamental question is, how does one determine what is appropriate for a child to study at any given point in its development?

The soundness of using the pupil's immediate environment in the study of history is beyond dispute. This environment determines most of his experience and experience is the key to any understanding of history. In an important sense, every course in history should, therefore, begin in the community and end in the community, and every lesson in history should begin in the community and end in the community. There would be constant passing, not only from the near to the remote, but also from the remote to the near. The principle is fundamental, but is scarcely a principle of grading at all. Unless our concern is merely with the counting of years or miles, the degree of nearness or remoteness can offer no adequate test of difficulty. The question, for example, of
whether Socrates or Benjamin Franklin is more suitable for study by children is scarcely to be answered by an appeal to the years or miles that separate Socrates or Franklin from us. (Johnson, 1940, p. 91)

According to Johnson, a number of eighteenth and nineteenth century curriculum innovators including Haupt, Pestalozzi, Salzmann, and Neef experimented with home, community, and expanding geographic studies. None of these experiments developed into a systematic expanding environments curriculum, however. These early educators were able to interpret and apply the culture epochs idea with only partial success. Also, all of their efforts added together provided no clear prescription for a systematic, expanding curriculum for the entire age range of elementary school children. Nevertheless, Haupt's study of home life in the first year of school and Salzmann's community studies were suggestive beginnings in the early attempts to develop a curriculum relevant to the experiences of children.

Much later, modern versions of studies of home life and community studies were major emphases in elementary grade social studies throughout the development of the expanding environments concept in the United States. Since expanding environments ultimately became a geographical year by year, step by step progression from the home and family to the world, it became the very thing that Johnson argued against. He obviously considered progressive geographical expansion to be a weak rationale for content selection in the study of history.

In 1932, Joy Lacey conducted a survey of the knowledge of social science concepts previously studied by elementary children. She found that the children, from urban and rural Indiana communities, retained knowledge of certain social science concepts in varying degrees. Correct responses to questions about community helpers (e.g., postman, policeman, fireman) were made by 66% of the pupils in grade one, 71% in grade two, and 78% in grade three. Correct responses to questions about distant lands were made by 50% of the pupils in grade one, 62% in grade two, and 83% in grade three (Lacey, 1932, p. 62–63). Lacey's data on concepts of distant lands appear to suggest that a majority of elementary grade pupils in the early 1930s were capable of learning and retaining a substantial number of social science concepts that were beyond the expanding environments pattern. Lacey, however, reached a different conclusion.

With regard to community helpers the percentages of correctness are not very high... The percentages for concepts of distant lands indicate that these concepts are far from clear and are full of errors. (Lacey, 1932, p. 62–63)

Lacey saw her results as indicating how little the children had learned and consequently advocated a more simplified curriculum while completely ignoring the fact that her data indicated that the majority of these children
had developed concepts about distant lands and could have benefited from a curriculum that would have corrected their misconceptions.

**Conclusion**

There were at least two likely reasons for the survival, persistence, and eventual dominance of the expanding environments sequence in elementary social studies education in the twentieth century, a period of wrenching changes in American society and its educational system. One possible reason for this was the adoption of the home, neighborhood, community sequence by progressive educators for their elementary social studies curriculum. Another was the general nature of the topic headings in the sequence that permitted it to endure major shifts in subject matter content.

The meaning of the expanding environments concept has varied somewhat over time. It has never been a clear idea and has always contained considerable ambiguity. The history of the expanding environments concept probably reflects the confusion over the years as to what children should be taught at any given age. Part of the problem lies in the lack of knowledge at any given time. It is also related to disagreements and changing ideas as to what social values and knowledge children should acquire in school.

McMurry was apparently the first to develop a systematic sequence for the elementary grades that could be used for the study of history and geography. He utilized the home, neighborhood, community sequence and attached it to his state and nation recommendations for grades four and five. McMurry's 1903 recommendations for curriculum were a significant change from his earlier classic culture epochs curriculum and appear to be an attempt to convert culture epochs into a more viable curriculum.

The expanding environments concept thus became identified with this geographical, spatial definition as developed by McMurry and later refined by Paul Hanna. McMurry's geographical definition competed with the curriculum recommendations of the Committee of Eight of the American Historical Association, 1909, in the elementary school courses of study from 1910 to 1929. During the rapid rise of the junior high school in the 1920s that resulted in the six year elementary school instead of the traditional eight, there was a major shift in the administrative organization of the schools that led to agitation among educators to abolish history as an independent course of study in the elementary and junior high schools (Tryon, 1935). Although this was largely accomplished by the end of that decade, expanding environments managed to survive and even thrive. This period coincided with the rise of the term social studies, which originated in the Report of the Committee on Social Studies of the 1916 National Education Association Commission on Secondary Education. The expanding environments idea actually predates the social studies concept by several years!
From the 1930s onward, the geographical definition of expanding environments was dominant in courses of study. After 1930, the child centered concept replaced the Committee of Eight’s recommendations as the principal competitor of expanding environments in courses of study. The success of the geographical definition of expanding environments in the courses of study during the 1930s when the child centered concept was on the rise may have been due to the fact that these two rather divergent concepts shared the home, neighborhood, community sequence in their recommendations for elementary grade social studies. This sequence, although suggested by McMurry in 1893 and used by various earlier nineteenth century educators, tends to be associated with the early phases of the progressive movement in education. Its use at John Dewey’s Laboratory School at the University of Chicago near the turn of the century may have provided expanding environments with a progressive image at a time when progressivism was a powerful, expanding force in education.

It was not until the 1950s that Paul Hanna began to develop a detailed curriculum sequence based on the geographical definition of expanding environments for each of the elementary grades. Hanna extended the geographical definition and carried it to its logical conclusion. In balance, the original Rousseauian justification is somewhat obscured.

Expanding environments has proven to be a durable competitor in the elementary school social studies courses of study since 1903 and has dominated them since the 1930s. Hanna’s refinements and modifications of it made the sequence appear to be more relevant to the mid-twentieth century. My survey of courses of study shows that it has continued to dominate the elementary social studies curriculum to recent times. Some innovators in elementary social studies began to turn away from expanding environments after the mid-1960s. Nevertheless, the presence of this sequence, or variations of it, in most of the major elementary social studies projects since that time indicates that this sequence still has wide appeal for publishers of elementary social studies curricula.

It is perhaps safe to say that the expanding environments concept has a fundamental weakness in its rationale in that it developed from the culture epochs theory by simply changing the curriculum content for certain grade levels. There is no indication in the Herbartian literature of any attempt to develop a new theory to replace culture epochs. The changes in the curriculum recommendations seem to be pragmatic concessions to criticism. Some of the criticism that Dewey leveled at the culture epochs theory and the curriculum based on it in 1896 could be made today of the expanding environments concept and its curriculum.

Upon reflection, it seems incredible that expanding environments, a curriculum sequence based on an obsolete nineteenth century theory of child growth and development, could have persisted in elementary social studies through most of the twentieth century and, in fact, been widely accepted by educators as a normative pattern for children. The persistence of expanding
environments appears to be attributable to three major factors. First, there is the very real problem of adapting the curriculum to the growth and development patterns of children. This problem is made especially acute when the curriculum emphasizes subject matter content instead of child growth and development. Secondly, unlike other subjects, the social studies curriculum has the potential to clash with the beliefs of various segments of society and foment conflict within communities. Social studies curriculum writers and publishers have been playing it safe for many years by continuing to use expanding environments, a sequence of studies that upsets few people outside educational circles. The second problem leads to the third, the marked conservatism in educational thought. Throughout the tumultuous social, economic, and political upheaval in the United States in the twentieth century (the advent of the technological society, two world wars, the Great Depression) few educators before the 1960s had ever looked askance at or questioned the validity of the expanding environments concept, a curriculum sequence derived from the educational thought of a time when the United States was still basically an agrarian society. Expanding environments plodded through the pandemonium of the twentieth century posing as an accurate manifestation of child growth and developmental patterns. It is to the credit of certain social studies educators of recent times that they have called into question the legitimacy of expanding environments.

References


Historical Factors in the Development of Elementary Social Studies: Focus on the Expanding Environments

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Abstract

Elementary social studies began to evolve during the early 1900s. Examination of data suggest several influences in the development of the organizational framework known as expanding environments. Recapitulation theory and related concepts of primitive life and surrounding occupations meshed with emerging theory and practice. Unification and correlation, a concern for citizenship education, and awareness of an increasingly complex urban society all influenced the expanding environments organizational framework in elementary social studies.

Introduction

With its evolution in the early 1900s the expanding environments organizational framework established a remarkable hold upon elementary social studies curriculum in the United States. Virtually every contemporary elementary social studies textbook series, every state curriculum guideline and conceptual framework, and every local school system curriculum guide reflects the influence of the expanding environments. Primary grade social studies usually follows a progression through self, home and family, neighborhood, and communities. Intermediate grade social studies progress through regions, United States history or the entire western hemisphere, and culminate with the eastern hemisphere or world geography and world history (Superka, Hawke, & Morrisett, 1980).

The expanding environments progression from family, neighborhood, and community in primary grades through regions, western hemisphere, and eastern hemisphere in intermediate grades has not been without its critics. Earlier analyses (Kaltsounis, 1964; Smith & Cardinell, 1964) suggested that children possessed knowledge which obviated much of the content in elementary social studies. Recent analyses such as Eagan’s (1980) outlined more substantial flaws in the expanding environments framework and described alternative paths for elementary social studies. Even governmental officials such as Reagan Secretary of Education William Bennett
found fault with the expanding environments as "an odd, amorphous social science grab bag" which lacked the rigor needed to develop historical, geographic, and civic literacy" (Bennett, 1986, p. 125).

This discussion seeks to identify and analyze selected historical roots from which the expanding environments evolved. Initially rooted in recitation theory, compatible with curricular practices at flagship campus schools of major universities, and amenable to emerging conceptions of a unified curriculum, the expanding environments curriculum evolved from a vacuum in which no other competitor offered serious challenge. A comprehension of its bloodlines provides initial evidence for the longevity and resilience of the expanding environments curriculum. Like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, the expanding environments curriculum survives the slings and arrows of its many critics to exert a continued influence on modern elementary social studies.

**Elementary Social Studies: 1900**

At the turn of the twentieth century elementary social studies curricula lacked a consensus sequential pattern. The expanding environments sequence of family, neighborhood, community, state, region, western hemisphere, and eastern hemisphere did not dominate the social studies curriculum. Croswell (1897) pointed out that many Michigan district schools did not begin geography instruction until fourth grade and history instruction until seventh grade. Worcester, Massachusetts and Chicago, Illinois did not include any form of social studies in the first three grades. There existed, however, specific practices at influential flagship institutions such as the Horace Mann and Speyer schools operated by Teachers College of Columbia University and the University of Chicago Laboratory School. Burks and Edgar (1903) identified a K-5 social studies curriculum organized around the concepts of surrounding occupations and primitive life. Topics by grade level in the Speyer school social studies curriculum included:

- **Kindergarten:** Various stories and games based upon surrounding occupations and primitive life.
- **First Grade:** The home, street, buildings, vegetable and fruit gardens, grocery store, ice industry, bakery, butcher shop, and dairy store.
- **Second Grade:** Vegetable and fruit gardens, a typical farm, a typical village, Eskimo life, the home, frame buildings, lumbering, and brickmaking.
- **Third Grade:** The Thompson, Algonquin, Iroquois, Cliff Dweller, and Pueblo Indians, Robinson Crusoe, the great industries (agriculture, food getting, making of dwellings, making of clothing, trade and transportation), preservation of knowledge and the aesthetic arts.
- **Fourth Grade:** Homeric Greeks, later Greeks, Hebrews, the Middle Ages, the Crusades, discovery and exploration, and the geography of New York City.
Fifth grade: Exploration with emphasis upon the settlement of North America and Colonial History to 1776. (Burks & Edgar, 1903, pp. 10-11)

The Speyer social studies curriculum offered a content and a sequence not unfamiliar to educators working in the last two decades of the twentieth century. Speyer clearly includes a progression from simpler topics to more complex topics. The study of the home in first grade appears much less complex than the fifth grade exploration and settlement of North America in the colonial period.

Recapitulation Theory and Child Interests

The concepts of surrounding occupations and primitive life provide additional cues to the assumptions upon which the Speyer social studies curriculum obtained its simple to complex progression. Surrounding occupations provided a focus based upon the immediate local environment in which the child lived. Such a focus meant that the work of family members and members of the community would readily fit into the formal articulation of an expanding environments curriculum. The familiar could be studied while the child possessed limited background experience and a preparation laid for the study of topics more distant in time and place.

Primitive life referred to recapitulation theory championed by G. Stanley Hall which asserted that ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis. Recapitulation theory represented a developmental psychology derived from Herbartian philosophy and from anthropological theory which postulated that children pass through stages of growth which mirror the cultural epochs of human evolution. The child, like the human race, evolves through a variety of stages—prehistory, patriarch, tribal, feudal, absolute monarch, revolutionary, and republic or self-governing (Thayer, 1969). Recapitulation theory implicitly placed primitive societies on the lower end of human development and placed western societies as the logical evolutionary end point of human development. Despite its ethnocentric assumptions, recapitulation theory suggested developmental levels in children which could be matched with the appropriate social studies content at each grade level. The younger the child the apparently simpler the society studied in the classroom.

Teacher Miriam Winchester (1906) thus described selection principles in a slightly modified and unattributed quote from Dewey's (1969) The School and Society which first appeared in 1899.

... many anthropologists tell us there are certain identities in the child's interests with those of primitive life. There is a sort of natural occurrence of the child mind to the typical activities of primitive people; witness the hut which the boy likes to build in the yard, or his desire to play at hunting with his bows, arrows and spears. (pp. 13–14)

Other teachers and observers described primary grade social studies in similar terms. Wade (1911) described Kindergarten social studies in terms of "great festivals" (Christmas, etc.) as "they are the outcome of the ex-
perience of the race” (p. 25). Steele (1911) claimed that in second grade “the study of the tree dwellers, the cave men, and the Indians of the plains” moved to the Cliff Dwellers “as the Indians of the Southwest . . . lived better and had progressed further than the Indians of the plains” (p. 45). H. M. Hodgman’s (1900) description of the University of Chicago Laboratory School reflected a recapitulation influence with “the study of history . . . preceded by that of primitive cultures” as children learn about the “savages who dwelt in cave, hut, or wigwam” (p. 235). Hodgman identified the natural sequence of history instruction from the industrial life of primitive Greece to the end point of United States history.

Primitive life and surrounding occupations thus provided two key components for the development of the elementary social studies curriculum. Both primitive life and surrounding occupations fit neatly with the notion that the social studies should begin with the child’s immediate surroundings and immediate experiences. Surrounding occupations focused upon the production of goods and services common to an emerging urban landscape in the late 19th and early 20th century. An increasing number of public school children lived in urban centers yet did not have the intimate knowledge of the occupations common to their environment. Topics based upon Indians fit neatly with primitive life. While children had no direct, first-hand experience with Indians the child’s developmental level, interpreted through recapitulation theory, provided an apparent linkage.

In and of themselves neither primitive life nor surrounding occupations directly translated into the expanding environments framework. Movement from simple cultures to complex cultures does not directly translate into a sequence beginning with family in first grade and ending with the eastern hemisphere in sixth grade. Surrounding occupations cannot completely mandate a family, home, neighborhood, community progression. However, the intellectual distance needed to modify primitive life and surrounding occupations into the expanding environments curriculum appears to be short.

Shifts in thought about recapitulation theory took place in journals such as The Pedagogical Seminary edited by G. Stanley Hall. Ellis (1897) used The Pedagogical Seminary to identify pressures causing modification in Herbartian thought and recapitulation theory. Anthropology and child study provided “some scientific basis” to the philosophy of Herbart and others, but early curricula of Herbartian educators “proved crude and in need of modification” (p. 165). Guillet (1900) also argued in The Pedagogical Seminary that “the child’s initiation into the delights of nature and history should begin at home . . . his own neighborhood” (p. 437). Guillet believed that geography and history should be “widened outward and backward to include the county and district of which the community forms a part, then the province or state, then the country, the continent, the empire, the world” (p. 438). The fit of Guillet’s thinking to the progression of expanding environments proves striking.
Other influential educators participated in conceptual modifications which resulted in the development of an expanding environments approach. John Dewey often receives a great deal of credit. Eagan (1980) suggested that Dewey’s emphasis on starting with the familiar and working to the unfamiliar served as an impetus to expanding environments. Dewey did stress linkages to the personal experiences of children and did make statements tinged by recapitulation theory. One portion of Dewey's thinking, however, did not provide a strong impetus to expanding environments. The structure of thought processes per se should not be attributed as part of Dewey’s influence on the development of the expanding environments.

When I seriously began to give my mind to the subject that was selected for me, I found nothing very special to say about the reasoning of early childhood. There is not any reasoning of early childhood which is different from that of later childhood, adolescence, or adults . . . I have come to believe that reasoning itself, the capacity or ability to reason (or that bundle of minor capabilities of which reasoning consists), is not capable of being improved with growing years, or at least, its improvement is not sufficiently marked to be worth mentioning. Since the power of reasoning in little children does not differ fundamentally from that of adults, if we want to understand it in children we must study it in our selves. (Dewey, 1914, pp. 9–10)

Developmental considerations, such as those found in Piaget, did not influence Dewey although he did make some use of recapitulation theory. Thornton and Eagan’s (Eagan, 1984) confrontation over Dewey and the expanding environments stemmed from perceptions about Dewey and the education-socialization dichotomy. Whatever Dewey meant, however, does not cloud the impact which his thoughts concerning the interests and experiences of the child exerted in the hands of interpreters.

LeRiche (1975) points out Charles A. McMurray’s linkage to Herbartian cultural epochs and McMurray’s influence on the development of the expanding environments. As with Guillet, McMurry’s modification from strict adherence to cultural epochs took little apparent effort. McMurry authored a series of methods texts. First published in 1903, his *Special Method in History* suggested that no formal history instruction take place in the primary grades. Through third grade McMurry suggested incidental instruction including a “few simple historical stories . . . at Thanksgiving and Christmas time, and on national celebrations (1918, p. 34). In addition, McMurry recommended that in “third grade also it may be well to discuss the family and neighborhood traditions, and the stories of a few of the early settlers in the home district” (p. 34). Such reasoning reflected the social studies vacuum in the primary grades while making family and neighborhood suggestions which easily meshed with the expanding environments.

McMurry advocated systematic history instruction beginning in fourth grade. The scope and sequence of grades four through eight “begin and end
Two major points guided McMurry's thinking for the fourth grade in the use of biographical stories as the primary vehicle by which to teach history. First, the biographies be "taken from the simple, primitive period of early discovery and settlement" (p. 34). Second, that biographies from the home state should be studied first, and that the movement "be gradually outward toward the neighboring states and to the whole of North America and the world" (pp. 34-35). McMurry felt that the complexities of contemporary society could not be addressed by the fourth through eighth grade student. Early discovery and settlement appeared to be primitive and simple; certainly an attractive assumption to someone brought up with cultural epochs. However, McMurry made no attempt to relate cultural epochs to the primitive, simple situations of discovery and settlement. While the term epoch received occasional mention, no specific grade-level epoch-content articulation took place. Of equal significance, McMurry could set forth a sequential development from home to world which fit neatly with the expanding environments. McMurry also stated the notion in his *Special Method in Geography* originally published in 1903. He indicated that the "general movement is from the home and neighborhood outward first to the home state, then to the surrounding states, to the United States and to North America as a whole, later to Europe and the rest of the world" (1926, p. 15). McMurry allowed that the initial phases of home geography could deal with topics of the United States, and parts of the world from China to South America.

Home geography provided a concept which lent itself well to the development of the expanding environments. At the Horace Mann school of Teachers College geography entered the social studies curriculum overtly linked to recapitulation theory. Geography began in the third grade as a distinct subject with home geography providing the initial encounter with systematic study. Dodge and Kirchwey (1901) argued that home geography began "through the door of his own home and life" from which the "child should work outwards from the home . . . and gradually be led into a study of larger and larger world units" (p. 69). Dodge and Kirchwey acknowledged differences of opinion over whether the outward movement should be through concentric circles or along the lines of interest similar to the rays of a spiders web. In either case, the developmental assumption held that the child's immediate surroundings provided the appropriate starting point.

Some twelve years later, Pearson (1913) discussed the Horace Mann geographic sequence in terms similar to Dodge and Kirchwey. Beginning in third grade Pearson justified home geography as self-evident with the "reason for beginning geography with observations in the home field are too well known to need defining. . . . The city (New York) is the child's laboratory, and it is to this busy life that we must appeal for notions with which he may imagine remote areas beyond his vision" (p. 1). Such assumptions created a sequence leading from study of early Manhatten in third
grade, selected topics from North America in fourth grade, trade with Europe and South America in fifth grade, and study of Africa, Australia, and Eastern North America in sixth grade. The sequence appears similar to expanding environments in that it focused on regions, the western hemisphere, and the eastern hemisphere in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, respectively. The physically and psychologically remote topics awaited the older, more mature intermediate grade students.

Unification and Correlation

Closely linked to adaptations of recapitulation theory stood the unification movement and the emphasis upon correlation. The elimination or minimization of separate subjects provided the focus of the unification movement. Separate subject matter classifications clashed with the developmental level of children and their inability to deal with separate subjects in social studies. Such cognitive assumptions meshed neatly with recapitulation theory. Guillet (1900) felt that primary grade teachers should not be specialists but should have a “rich store of information and accomplishment drawn from all sides, from nature and art, from history and literature” (p. 439). Richards (1904) believed that the unity of knowledge should be found in the child’s social world.

The only form of experience possessing unity and continuity for the child is found in the activities of social life. Only in the wholeness of the child’s world, in the entirety of his common experiences, is there full meaning and sufficiency. (pp. 12-13)

Richards found the wholeness of the child’s world to be related to the evolution of primitive society. G. Stanley Hall himself complained that the many geographic subjects should be reduced. Hall lamented that “in these days of correlation . . . geographies do not respect the unity of the child’s mind” (1901, p. 480). The quest for unification would readily adapt wholeness and unity from the child’s social life to a progression of family, neighborhood, and community.

Unification and correlation also represented a reaction against the proliferation of courses in the curriculum and a tendency toward fragmentation and specialization in American society. Dewey (1902) commented to the National Education Association that “life is getting so specialized, the division of labor carried so far, that nothing explains or interprets itself” (p. 379). Charles McMurry echoed such thinking at a National Education Association convention. McMurry saw a “great necessity for a condensation or simplification of the materials now in use in our courses of study” (Boone, 1901, p. 319). For McMurry correlation meant connecting various parts of studies such that a “unity may spring out of the variety of knowledge” (1911, p. 162). Using the falls of Minneapolis, Minnesota as an example, McMurry traced the correlation of disciplines. Rock strata geology, the
physics of the mills and turbines, the history of Indians and Hennepin County, the geographic aspects of commerce, and the railroads in the Minneapolis region all correlated with the falls. A correlated study provided greater impact than separate and unrelated studies (pp. 173–74). In his *Elements of General Method*, McMurry (1911) related correlation to the process of concept formation, to the linkage of new knowledge to existing knowledge, and the linkage of school material to the lives of students. In so doing, McMurry referred to Herbartian apperception, quoted John Dewey, used the term ego, discussed William James, and referred to E. L. Thorndike's theories. The early twentieth century contained too many academic streams of thought to allow culture epochs and recapitulation to survive unscathed.

By the 1920s unification in social studies represented a widely held belief. Jones et al. (1926) conducted a survey under the auspices of the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association which pointed to strong support for unification in grades one through twelve. Teachers expressed overwhelming sentiment for unification in the primary grades and strong support in the intermediate grades and the junior high school. The survey indicated that 90.5% of first grade teachers and 58.8% of ninth grade teachers favored unification. Even 37.7% of twelfth grade teachers favored unification (p. 327). The expanding environments progression certainly fit with the emphasis upon unification and its interdisciplinary thrust.

**Additional Influences**

Psychological considerations aside, the expanding environments also fit neatly with the rise of business and industrial models in the administration of schools. Dewey (1901) commented on the control of educational practice by conservatives and indicated that "unification, organization, harmony is the demand of every aspect of life—politics, business, science" (p. 336). Callahan (1962) pointed out the emphasis upon efficiency, cost effectiveness, and scientific principles in curriculum and school management in the early 1900s. The expanding environments promised an efficient delivery of social studies instruction. Separate subjects implied inefficiency besides the psychological confusion which they might engender. Indeed, confusion itself would be its own form of inefficiency.

No overt pressures by superintendents or other administrators to create an efficient social studies curriculum appears to have taken place. Administrators went about their business to create an efficient bureaucracy and a school curriculum based upon scientific principles. However, the development of the expanding environments and the parallel quest for administrative efficiency did not function at cross purposes. Common sets of assumptions existed as conventional wisdom to guide thought and action. Each complemented the other.

Efficiency sprang from curricula which took into account scientifically
determined developmental levels and scientifically determined objectives and content. Gray (1917) dealt with "The relation of silent reading to economy in education" and subsequently served as the reading director in Hanna and Hoyt's social studies series "The Social Studies Program Curriculum Foundation Series" first published in 1935. Gray also served as reading advisor to Hanna and Hoyt's "The Basic Social Studies Program Curriculum Foundation Series" first published in 1956. Washburne's (1923) study titled "Basic facts needed in history and geography: A statistical investigation" reflects the efficiency climate in which the expanding environments evolved. If the expanding environments seriously compromised the educational efficiency movement the chances for its taking root would have been slim indeed.

An awareness of citizenship, of civic duties, in an increasingly complex society also provided an impetus for expanding environments. Purely historical or geographical knowledge might not provide an adequate basis for students to make informed decisions as citizens in the urban, industrialized twentieth century. Lybarger (1980) points out the impact of William Arthur Dunn upon the emergence of the secondary level civics curriculum. Although directed at the secondary level, Dunn's work exerted a great deal of influence in orienting educators to the concept of community as the laboratory for civics and citizenship education. In the "Introduction for Teachers" of his The Community and the Citizen (1914) Dunn made clear the connection between the student's growth in citizenship and the community:

Civics itself must be "socialized," adapted more closely to the needs of the pupil and of the community, both in subject matter and in methods. . . . If civics instruction is to be vital, the object of study must be, not the pages of the textbook, but the actual community of which the pupil is a member. (pp. viii-ix)

Within the text, Dunn presented the expanding series of communities early.

You may live in a small city which is a community in itself, with its group of people, its boundaries, its common interests, and its common laws. A few miles outside of your city is a community of farmers, whose houses are far apart, but who have common interests, such as keeping up the roads and the bridges in their neighborhood. The farmers bring their produce to the city for the use of the people there, and in turn depend upon the city for many of their necessities and pleasures. The country and the city communities thus have certain interests in common, and their dealings with each other are regulated by common laws. You are, therefore, a member not only of your city and community, but also of a larger community including the farmers. You belong also to the community of the whole state, and to a still larger one including the nation. (p. 8)
Barnard (1913) quoted directly from Arthur Dunn in explicating the teaching of civics in the elementary and secondary school. Barnard cited the logical progression from "the home, the school, the church, the shops, the township, village or city, the commonwealth, the nation" (p. 85). The notion of a series of concentrically ordered, mutually interdependent communities, suitable for fostering citizenship, and related to the immediate experiences and abilities of the student received an influential hearing.

A final form of pressure on elementary social studies consisted of blue-ribbon commissions and academic specialists. Historians believed that their domain of influence legitimately descended into the elementary school curriculum. The Committee of Seven illustrates one such effort. The committee provided Lucy M. Salmon of Vasser College an opportunity to set forth a history curriculum which spanned primary grades through university graduate work. Ms. Salmon (1902) articulated a developmental sequence consistent with her beliefs concerning child development. Indeed, Ms. Salmon argued that there "must be a progressive development in the selection of material . . . with reference to the mental condition" (Salmon, p. 39). Matching the content and child's developmental level concerned Ms. Salmon much as it does modern day educators armed with Piagetian concepts.

First and foremost, Ms. Salmon suggested an orientation to history for the child. She referred to the child's developmental structure "where the imagination holds sway . . . where he lives somewhat from the everyday life by which he is surrounded" (p. 39). Imagination, the first developmental level, logically led to mythology for the first encounter with history. Mythological heroes offered imaginative content which "represents not the world of today, but that world known to the early races whether definitely or through vague tradition" (p. 40). In addition to conceptual simplicity, mythology possessed qualities analogous to recapitulation theory. Biography provided the second major component of historical study to be completed in the imaginative stage of development. The continuous development of the child creates a demand for true stories. However, Ms. Salmon believed that young children could not deal with abstractions such as church, state, or society and must have stories about heroes. Study of heroes meant that "the horizon is widened" from the simplicity of mythology (p. 42). Through biography children move to the study of real heroes, but without reference to time and location. Completion of mythology and biography study would occur by the end of fourth grade. Ms. Salmon's developmental progression precluded the study of history through concepts such as change, wants, needs, or a host of similar abstractions.

Enthusiasm, the second developmental level, provided increased conceptual sophistication in grades five through eight. History further expanded
the level of complexity and abstraction by moving from the familiar to what is unknown. Characterized by enthusiasm, the maturing student also seeks conceptual cohesion—some unifying principal—to organize the separate history already known. Conceptual cohesion took place by relating a person to more inclusive entities. Thus, Joan of Arc related to the House of Valois, Lycurgus to Sparta, and Arthur to the Round Table. The sequence proceed from “Ancient History to 800 A.D.” in fifth grade to the “main outlines of American history” in eighth grade (pp. 55–56).

Ms. Salmon thus mixed a developmental stew drawn from recapitulation theory, child study notions about dominant thought patterns, and curriculum theory with concern for a logical scope and sequence. Her reference to widening horizons and her diagrammatic use of expanding circles pointed to notions already in circulation which became staples of the expanding environments. Her recommendations prove remarkably similar to those made by Kieran Egan (1982) for replacing the expanding environments with an historically oriented elementary social studies. Ms. Salmon’s recommendations, like those of other historically oriented commissions, did not result in the curricular emphasis desired. However, the developmental considerations and sequential choices suggest the degree to which such notions permeated the milieu of educational thought in which the expanding environments emerged.

The Expanding Environments Taken Root

In the early 1900s, then, there existed a variety of practices and theoretical positions which proved congenial to the emergence of the expanding environments organizational framework. Educators of various backgrounds easily found something to their liking in the expanding environments at that point in history which witnessed the birth of public school administration and curriculum development. The apparent developmental truth, compatibility to the interests and experiences of children, the efficiency of an interdisciplinary approach, and the appropriateness in light of emerging citizenship needs in an urban society all served to enhance the establishment of the expanding environments as the dominant curriculum framework for elementary social studies. In addition, its sheer simplicity made the expanding environments easily comprehensible to lay persons and professionals alike.

The shifts necessary to enthrone the expanding environments could be observed in “Some Language Situations Likely to Arise From Content Subjects and School Activities.” Threlkeld et al. (1926) identified correlations between language arts and the remainder of the curriculum for the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association. The following selected first grade correlations of language to social studies point to the establishment of the expanding environments.
Grade One

1. What does the milkman do for us?
2. Chart of various materials used in building houses—names, descriptions.
3. How our cotton plant grew.
4. Why does father read the newspaper? magazines? books?
5. Chart of cutting tools—names and uses.
6. How can you show appreciation for the work of the janitor? postman?
7. List of various people that protect our health.
8. How does the dentist help protect our health? doctor? nurse?
9. How does the fireman know when there is a fire?
10. Play going to the store for mother.
11. Play going to town on the street car.
12. How do the people in the school work together? (pp. 261–262)

Such linkages of language to social studies point to topics immediately within the child’s environment similar to family, home, school, neighborhood, and community helpers. They also resemble the notion of surrounding occupations. Second grade language linkages to social studies included references to Indians (How did the Indians provide meat?), cave men (How did the cave man light his home?), neighborhood (chart showing various means of transportation in the neighborhood), and the community (Where does the merchant get the thread, caps, suits, dresses, shoes, stockings, cloth, he sells to us?) (pp. 264–269). Likewise, third grade contained linkages dealing with Indians, Egyptians, and Hebrews as well as linkages to study of the community and cities. The report also included intermediate grade linkages to social studies which reflected the expanding environments’ acceptance as conventional wisdom.

Social studies methods texts provide further evidence of the degree to which conventional wisdom embraced the expanding environments. The integration of developmental appropriateness, citizenship education, and the interests of the child were mentioned in such texts. By 1931, Storm quoted John Dewey and outlined in detail “The Home Unit” for first grade. She claimed the unit was appropriate since as “a member of the family he belongs in the home made by that group and the two words, home and family, may be used synonomously” (p. 10). In 1941, Lacey published Teaching the Social Studies in the Elementary School.

The social studies program which provides significant socializing situations will lead children progressively to a realization of the values of a desirable social living. They will use the social life of their immediate environment but gradually widen their horizons....

In the lower elementary school the child will be led to, understand home
and family relationships, community helpers, life in the city or on the farm, and the occupations and industries that provide for his material needs. (pp. 11, 12)

Such methods texts introduced prospective teachers to the dominant curricular content. Clearly, the expanding environments found itself established as the common sense, taken-for-granted organizational framework which existed in school systems. Even the term social studies clearly emerged as the common curriculum descriptor. Separate disciplines contributed, but did not dominate in such an interdisciplinary—correlated, unified—effort.


The New Baby

Something New

"Here we are," said Tom. "Here is the house. We are home! We are home! It is fun to go away. And it is fun to come home!" "Look, Tom," said Grandfather. "See Father and Mother."

"Here we are," said Tom. "Here we are," said Susan. "Oh Mother!" "Oh, Father! It is fun to come home." "Come in the house," said Mother. "I want you to see something. It is something little. And something new. It is something we wanted."

"Oh, Mother!" said Susan. "Is it a baby?" This family wanted a baby. "You will see," said Mother. Tom and Susan went in the house. Grandmother went in. And Grandfather went, too.

"Look, Susan!" said Tom. "Look, Grandmother! Look Grandfather! The new baby is here. We have a new baby. A new baby in this family." (pp. 6-9)

Accompanied by drawings, the tenor of "The New Baby" is reflected throughout Peter's Family. The content obviously focuses upon things which overtly relate to the first grader's immediate environment and ex-
periential level. Throughout *Peter’s Family* the focus remains upon events such as how fathers go to work, grandfather’s farm, and a variety of occurrences closely linked to everyday existence.

A similar emphasis took place in a broader effort by Hanna (Hanna & Hoyt, 1963). The mature expanding environments approach could be seen in the “Basic Social Studies Program” first published in 1954. The texts in the “Basic Social Studies Program” followed a progression in primary grades from *At Home* and *At School*, through *In the Neighborhood*, to *In City, Town and Country*. The intermediate grades progressed from *In All Our States*, to *In the Americas*, and concluded with *Beyond the Americas*. Thus, by sixth grade students managed to complete study of the entire world in the progression dictated by the expanding environments.

*At School* provides a glimpse into the social world not at all unlike that of *Peter’s Family*. The scene depicted on the cover of *At School* shows an orderly existence free of conflict. A suburban setting shows a contemporary single level school complete with canopy extending from the front entrance. A United States flag is being raised in a triangular area of grass bounded by sidewalks. Children walk on the sidewalks without walking on the grass. Children stand behind a school patrol figure waiting for their opportunity to cross the street within walkway boundaries. Billowy clouds dot the sky. In the background may be seen a tree lined residential section with cars on the street and in a driveway. Content of the first unit titled “The School Family” begins with “To School, To School.” Dialogue between Tom and Susan deals with the problem posed by Happy the dog. Tom tells Happy “Go home, Happy . . . You cannot go to school” (Hanna & Hoyt, 1963, p. 6). Happy refuses to go home. Tom takes Happy home. Grandfather drives Tom to school so that Tom arrives on time.

Like the earlier social studies series of *Peter’s Family*, *At School* provides children with a bland, conflict free, conceptually limited, middle class view upon the world. Implicitly, the expanding environments matured into a vehicle which represented the world in a simplistic manner. The assumptions concerning primary grade children’s ability to deal with the immediate environment translated into a bland curriculum which presented no new information, which underestimated the interests and abilities of children, and which delivered its content in written passages designed to promote passivity. It is not surprising that the new social studies of the 1960s would attack the elementary social studies curriculum and attempt to infuse or dismantle it with the structure of the disciplines. The failure of the new social studies to achieve the demise of the expanding environments merits substantial analysis outside the domain of this specific historical discussion.

**Conclusion**

The expanding environments organizational framework for elementary social studies witnessed a variety of factors which contributed to its develop-
ment. Each factor readily meshed, or did not create serious discord with other factors, as educators gradually developed the concept of the expanding environments. Belief in working with the interests and experiences of children, belief in developmental stages of children's mental growth, belief in unification and correlation, belief in citizenship education, and belief in moving from the simple and concrete to the abstract and complex all worked nicely with the evolving conception of social studies. The expanding environments thus became enthroned as the dominant social studies curriculum pattern.

The flaws in the expanding environments organizational framework merit substantive analysis outside of this analysis. Suffice it to state that the dependency upon developmental psychology, interpretations of what constitute children's immediate experiences and interests, the artificially happy and conflict free picture of society, and the manner in which the social world presents itself to children suggest flaws of major dimensions. The very flaws which pervade it, however, may well contribute to its longevity. The simplicity of the progression and its assumptions can be readily understood by professionals and lay-persons alike. On the surface, the expanding environments makes sense. Children do need to begin with the simple and move to the complex. Arguments against the expanding environments will require substantial elaboration and be more difficult to internalize by professionals and the lay-public. As the incumbent, the expanding environments possesses the advantage of being known. As a result, into the 1980s it demonstrates a resiliency, an ability to stave off the onslaughts of those professionals who attack its manifest and latent attributes. Given its roots and its commonsense approach to content and citizenship one should not be surprised to see its survival.

References


Civic Education and Preservice Educators: Extending the Boundaries of Discourse

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Abstract

The data reviewed in this study suggest that, although the literature about civic education reveals a diversity of available discursive practices, student teachers in social studies classrooms exhibited only a narrow range of pedagogical skills in support of rather narrow civic education goals. Aware of their limited response to perceived civic education opportunities, some student teachers expressed frustration with existing power relations. These findings raise questions about the degree of access to various discursive traditions within the disciplines and professional education available to pre-service educators.

As social studies educators struggle to articulate a rationale which can inform classroom practice and which will address charges of student apathy, boredom, and passivity (Goodlad, 1984; Schug, Todd, & Beery, 1984), there remains widespread agreement that the central purpose of the social studies curriculum is civic education (Engle, 1986; Giroux, 1985b; Hahn & Avery, 1985; Hartoonian, 1985; Hertzberg, 1981; Leming, 1986; Martorella, 1985; Morrissett & Haas, 1982; Stanley, 1985). The broad consensus established at this elemental level, however, should not obscure the vigorous dialogue among mainstream educators whose view of preparation for citizenship emanates from very different assumptions, nor should that consensus distort the ideological nature of the challenge posited by the radical critique of mainstream citizenship education.

This essay will briefly review the dimensions of the dialogue among mainstream social studies educators about appropriate citizenship preparation and will examine the critique offered by the radical perspective of that mainstream or centrist position. The author will then present the results of a study of preservice secondary social studies educators’ discourse about citizenship education and will conclude with observations about the consequences of these findings for proponents of both the mainstream and radical positions on citizenship.
The Dialogue About Citizenship

The Centrist Position

In a review of objectives gleaned from a spectrum of citizenship rationales, Stanley (1985) finds broad agreement on the following goals: knowledge of the historical and continuing human experience, information processing skills, values awareness, and active application of these dimensions in some setting. Yet, while such accord may exist in principle, specific citizenship education practices clearly diverge as underlying assumptions distinguish among and, in effect, prioritize the broad citizenship goals identified above.

The dominant centrist approach, citizenship transmission, is characterized by recitation of fact, a study of the structure of dominant institutions, and a technical cognitive orientation toward the study of government (Newmann, 1985). Frequently textbook bound, such instruction in history, geography, economics or problems of democracy is oriented toward the acquisition of unproblematic knowledge and a passive acceptance of social institutions. Appropriate citizenship behavior is modeled in the curriculum literature and nurtured by the school in the confidence that students will make the connection between these passive school experiences and the demands of community living.

Although not seriously threatened, this mode of citizenship education has been vigorously defended in recent literature. That literature has reiterated the goals of civic intelligence, of enlightened citizens, of civic mindedness, by producing students who are in touch with their cultural heritage, who possess appropriate attitudes, and who have a working knowledge of democracy (Hartoonian, 1985; Mathews, 1985). According to Mathews (1985, p. 681), "talk is doing democracy"; good talk enlarges the mentality. Longstreet (1985), in a search for a discipline of citizenship, finds hope in the potential offered by value free social sciences and warns against the diffuse quality of action-oriented school citizenship projects. Finally, Leming (1986), in an apparent response to the accountability movement, counsels withdrawal from a "rational/activist/New England town meeting model of what it means to be a good citizen" (p. 147). Since current research does not, according to Leming (1986, p. 148), demonstrate that creating such a model citizen is an achievable goal, it is appropriate that social studies educators adopt a more modest cognitive view of citizenship consistent with our current system of government.

Centrist critics of the cognitive orientation have faulted this approach to citizenship education for its failure to develop critical decision-making skills, its inattention to values issues, its failure to utilize the existing social science knowledge base, and for its passive, classroom-based processes. Brown (1985) offers models of student participation in issues at the national, state, and local level. Alleman (1985), in response to Mathews' civic-minded curriculum, argues that students require active learning, an
opportunity to engage real-life civic problems and to participate in student-oriented civic projects. Other critics, stopping short of active learning, believe that schools should equip citizens with the ability to make informed, rational decisions on matters of public policy (Hahn & Avery, 1983). Advocates of values education/moral development assert that responsible citizenship education must build character and confront values questions directly (Donnan, 1985; Gibbons & Neuman, 1986; Lockwood, 1986; Wynne, 1986).

Centrist critics of citizenship transmission education, whether advocating decision-making, reflective inquiry, or active participatory models, agree with the underlying assumptions of the mainstream model. All avoid a debate on the fundamental issue of the dominant political/economic ideology. None of the centrist models provide students with an opportunity to challenge the central assumptions of the dominant ideology; the non-problematic nature of epistemological assumptions precludes the emergence of classroom strategies which would ultimately question the facts and values of the citizenship messages. The critics have, instead, questioned the "conventional" ways of packaging knowledge for students" (Newmann, 1985, p. 3). The centrist position is rooted in the belief that the political system works and that schools contribute to its success.

Critical Theorists on Citizenship Education

With the evolution of the radical critique of schooling, its literature has begun to reveal an increasing level of specificity with respect to school practice. From the central themes of ideological critique and human emancipation and empowerment has emerged a classroom practice broadly described as critical discourse from which civic literacy is to emerge (Newmann, 1985). For Wood (1984), the centrist position led to a protectionist democracy in which the established order is strengthened through the limitation of the individual's legitimate sphere of political activity. Critical literacy, viewed by Wood (1984, pp. 234-37) as a pedagogy for democratic participation, is multifaceted, it includes fostering basic academic skills, consciousness of current social relations, an understanding of personal biography, values analysis, awareness of alternative political and economic models, and requires teachers who model participatory democracy in and outside the classroom.

Classroom critical discourse, most clearly articulated by Cherryholmes (1983, 1985) will, if a variety of criteria are met, adjudicate conflicts among value claims. Giroux's (1985b) contribution to this dialogue can be summarized with his assertion that social studies teachers must "make the pedagogical more political" (p. 379), that school is, in effect both a struggle to define meaning and a struggle over power relations. Thus, schools are identified as public spheres, as places where questions of culture, politics, and the state can be rationally considered and which, as a consequence, turn the public sphere into an instrument of political change (Giroux, 1983, p.
Teachers, within such a matrix become transformative intellectuals who "use forms of pedagogy that treat students as critical agents; make knowledge problematic; utilize critical and affirming dialogue; and make the case for struggling for a qualitatively better world" (Giroux, 1985a, p. 379).

Central to critical pedagogy is an epistemology which moves traditional social studies content into the domain of the problematic and which would characterize existing institutions as representing choices from within a universe of choices. It rejects the limiting, socializing role of mainstream citizenship education while linking reflection in the school classroom to civic empowerment and civic courage. The critical perspective rejects the notion of democracy as a static quality but, rather, defines it as a constant struggle for equality and justice. Social justice, or an equitable system of distribution, as the central normative value within the critical perspective has recently been challenged by Liston (1986) as inadequate for a radical pedagogy. An ethical base must support both the critique of the system as well as prescriptions for change and, thus, Marx's naturalistic ethic with freedom as its central value is offered by Liston as an alternative.

In summary, critical pedagogy views the citizenship transmission mode of civic education, employing a largely passive encounter between student and content and adhering to a central goal of socialization to existing standards and practices, as an inappropriate social studies mode.

The Dilemma of Reform

Confronted by the array of literature interrogating current citizenship education, how might an interested teacher educator respond? Centrist as well as radical educators agree that the classroom teacher holds the key to change; therefore, the preservice educator might reasonably become the focus of alternative preparatory strategies. Again, a variety of specific suggestions have been offered.

Turner believes that even the limited civic intelligence goals advocated by Mathews (1985) will require schools of education to "design new and radically different methodology courses" (p. 688). Goodman and Adler (1985), in a study of pre-service elementary teachers, conclude with a list of prescriptions for methods courses. In an ideology of educators model, Wasburn (1986) identifies teacher education as the obvious starting point for improving political socialization. Giroux (1985a) sees improvement only if educators develop a new discourse so that a new theory of political education can be fashioned. Cherryholmes (1985) charges teachers with mastering the principles and practices of critical discourse while McNeil (1983) has uncovered a striking sameness of teaching strategies among teachers holding widely divergent ideologies.

An initial response to this conflicted and complex literature is to elicit and understand the discourse and the informing discursive practice of preservice professional educators. Upon what sort of an epistemology does the dis-
course rest? What does the discourse reveal about perceived parameters of acceptable classroom talk and pedagogy? What are the implications of these findings for social studies specialists in teacher education? The remainder of this paper addresses these questions by describing the discourse of a limited number of secondary preservice social studies students about civic education. If teacher preparation is to empower, then teacher educators must respond to the reality perceived by their clients.

The Discourse of Secondary Preservice Educators

Discursive practice, following Foucault's work on idea systems, "is a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (1972, p. 117). It is, in effect, an understood regime of truth constituted and maintained by culture, ideology, and power which delegates the authority to speak, legitimates some discourse and discourages or prohibits other. Such practices are not merely linguistic but, rather, reflect the rules and realities of social power. Power may be negative or prohibitive, or it may be permissive in that it creates opportunities to speak, to write, to teach within a discursive practice (Stanley, 1985, p. 374). Thus, power relations, knowledge claims, and ideology fuse to define acceptable practice in the social studies.

The rules of discourse tend also to claim the loyalty of the practitioner; they represent a world view, a belief system, which tends to shape one's behavior. Cherryholmes (1983, p. 345) suggests that people make commitments to the discourse in which they participate which, in turn, serve as a source of support and authority for their work. Although discourse is both constitutive of and a product of power, it is coercive only in the weak sense since its social appropriation is often contested. Education remains "an instrument whereby every individual . . . can gain access to any discourse. But . . . in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict" (Foucault, 1972, p. 227). Cherryholmes' (1983) analysis of orientations to social studies education is hopeful; it indicates the existence of a variety of discursive practice. Thus, it is possible for social studies educators to redefine the substance of their discourse, alter classroom behavior, and find support within an existing discursive tradition.

The central questions addressed in this study were: What is the nature of the preservice teachers' discourse about civic education? What is the nature of the discursive practice which structures this discourse? What are the classroom and social implications of such discourse? What can teacher educators do to enhance the opportunity for their students to gain access to, to choose from among, and to operate from within any one of a variety of discursive practices?

Three distinct approaches were used to gather data: a survey instrument
requiring written responses, a structured interview, and classroom observation of the students in their student teaching settings. Triangulation of these data was viewed as a means to strengthen the validity claims of the indicators (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984).

The written survey was distributed to secondary preservice social studies educators prior to student teaching. Classroom observations were conducted during a ten week student teaching assignment. Students were observed in their classrooms for a full class period for from five to seven times; and a total of forty-two hours of observation were recorded for the seven student teachers. Concluding interviews were conducted individually with each student teacher.

Setting and Participants
Participants in the study attended a regional university in a large southwestern community characterized by substantial cultural and economic diversity. The schools in which the participants completed student teaching reflected this diversity and ranged from schools whose populations were largely Anglo to school populations that were largely Hispanic. Five of the participants taught in senior high schools while the remaining two taught in junior high schools. The range of social studies courses taught included American History, state history, economics, world geography, and American Government.

For each of the participants, social studies was identified as the major field of study and, therefore, the field in which the student teaching would be done. None of the participants could be described as traditional students; three were completing their education following military service, three were changing careers, one was a former law school student. Each of the students had traveled in Europe, several in Asia, and two were naturalized American citizens. They brought rich and varied biographies to their teaching.

Findings
A review of the data on the discourse of preservice social studies educators about civic education suggests the following:
1. Discourse about the goals of civic education placed preservice educators within the centrist tradition ranging from citizenship transmission to a rational/activist model of civic education.
2. Student’s discourse warranted a narrow range of acceptable citizenship behavior.
3. Classroom practice revealed a paucity of teaching skills with which to support all civic education goals, but especially the rational/activist model of civic education.
4. That the expressed social vision of some students was not revealed in their classroom instruction suggests that power relations were skewed toward what was perceived by the students as a hostile discursive practice.
5. Students evidenced an awareness of a prescriptive discursive practice with respect to social studies curriculum and instruction.

Discussion

A centrist model of civic education. The discourse of secondary preservice social studies educators placed these students squarely within the centrist tradition and almost exclusively within the citizenship transmission model of civic education. Language used to describe the purposes and goals of civic education included the following statements: to inculcate the history and values of the political system, to teach rights and responsibilities, to explain the social contract, to create responsible and concerned citizens, to become citizens in a community, and to produce conformity to certain beliefs and laws. Only several phrases—"active participation" (Jerry) and "the need to act" (Al)—suggested anything beyond passive receptivity for students in the secondary classroom or minimal participation in the adult community.1

What specific content, attitudes, skills, and core values should be taught to support the goals of civic education just identified? The discourse about content focused on rights and responsibilities, government structure and function, the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, historical instances of the consequences of civic abuse, and on the existence of alternative social systems. Attitudes to be fostered included, "Yes, I do make a difference; what I think is important" (Patricia); "If you're not willing to work for change, don't complain" (Mary); and, "The action of one does count" (Jerry). A variety of skills—critical thinking, thinking clearly, problem-solving, "the ability to access the social system to make changes" (Jerry), effective speaking and listening were identified as instrumental to the realization of appropriate citizenship behavior. Values supporting such behavior included freedom of expression, an open mind, participation, life, liberty, love, and diversity. Patricia, who listed participation as a value, also added, "I'm not even sure that core values can be taught in a classroom, in a minidictatorship."

The weight of this discourse placed these preservice educators within the parameters of Mathews' (1985) civic intelligence model where good talk about our cultural heritage, about appropriate attitudes and values, and about democracy is synonymous with doing democracy. Although the language of civic action was used by two students (Al and Jerry), classroom observations revealed no work with critical decision-making skills, values analysis, with a social science knowledge base, or with efforts to establish connections between the historical experience and students' lives in 1986. The activist New England town meeting model of citizenship was not in evidence and it must be questioned whether even the minimal standards of Mathews' "talk about" mode were satisfied.

Acceptable citizenship behavior. The narrowly defined civic education
goals and the peripheral support given articulated content, values, skills and
attitudes by classroom practice may be partially understood by examining
the range of acceptable citizenship behavior warranted by the discourse of
these preservice educators. Appropriate citizenship behavior involved
voting and staying informed, attending hearings, legal and nonviolent
behavior, awareness of issues, and respect for the rights of others, while
inappropriate behavior included noninvolvement, not voting, breaking the
law, using terror or force, and taking the law into one’s own hands.

Such beliefs about civic behavior appear to be rooted in a commitment to
the dominant ideology, to an unproblematic epistemology, and have con-
siderable consequences for the content considered in social studies class-
rooms. There is, given such perspectives on civic behavior, little inclination
to interrogate the nation’s political or economic ideology; it is taught as a
given, without reservation. The centrist position on civic education is rooted
in the belief that the system works. Such a perspective devalues the
historical experiences and the behavior of a variety of individuals and
groups—Martin Luther King, Jr., Philip Berrigan, Father Groppi, Caesar
Chavez, labor, feminists, the poor, Viet Nam peace activists, and racial and
ethnic Americans—as the struggle for justice and equality extends far
beyond the parameters of the centrist position on appropriate citizenship
behavior.

Teaching skills. Forty-two hours of classroom observation revealed a
paucity of relational teaching, i.e., an unwillingness to engage students in
a consideration of current public issues clearly related to the historical,
geographic, economic, or governmental issues that constituted the official
curriculum, as well as a paucity of teaching skills appropriate to such
engagement in the several instances when such issues were joined. The
observational record is replete with missed opportunity and inadequate
teaching skills.

The absence of relational teaching was characterized by treating historical
events as disconnected from antecedent or subsequent events or, in the case
of geography, economics, and political science, teaching the factual content
as if unrelated to current issues or events. Several examples are illustrative
of this pattern. A unit in Central and South American geography taught by
Gordon, while rich in a description of resources, people and culture, re-
mained disconnected from the political events of the region. The unit,
taught while the U.S. Congress debated Contra aid, remained isolated from
the daily events of the region depicted on television screens and described by
daily newspapers.

Patricia, whose discourse, like that of Gordon, did not support an activist
citizenship model, offered her students opportunities to engage social issues
after the completion of the day’s formal lesson in American History. Her
Question of the Day approach considered two issues that were popular in
the spring of 1986—acid rain and the Chernobyl nuclear reactor incident in
the Soviet Union. In both cases, the issues were raised in the last twenty minutes of the class period, students were invited to share personal observations, and the issues were dropped at the end of the class period. There was no observable model in effect for considering these issues; no values analysis, data analysis, problem-solving or decision-making model was in evidence.

Although committed to an active citizenship model, Al evidenced a similar lack of teaching skills. On the morning after the American bombing of Libya was announced, in the spring of 1986, Al’s ninth grade American History students were eager to talk about the event. It was an emergent event, rich with opportunity, particularly since the class was engaged in a study of America’s war in Viet Nam. Al took roll and then asked the class, “What do you all think about it?” Following a series of students responses that ranged from chauvinistic to apologetic, Al asked, “Do you think we will accomplish it (stop terrorism)?” Again, a series of opinions from the students. There was no analysis, no question of values, ethics, implications, no historical review; no structure was provided to help these ninth grade students think or talk about the event. When significant occurrences did not intrude, Al’s lessons on Viet Nam, personalized because of his involvement there, remained unrelated to the current foreign policy issues in Central America, Libya, or the Middle East.

The Libyan event received similar treatment in Rosa’s twelfth grade government class. Students were asked, “What do you think about it?” What followed was a widely ranging discussion, much of it centering on the humor to be found in a local disc jockey’s offer to pay $100,000 for Moammar Gadhafi’s nose. Again, no model for studying this event was in evidence. No questions were raised about the power of the executive branch even though the class was studying the American government’s system of checks and balances.

A final example of student teacher behavior in support of civic education is a case where personal discourse supported an active participation model but where the student was so constrained by the pressures of traditional curriculum that no digression was deemed possible. Jerry reflected on his experience, “Civic education was a goal of mine but it remained a peripheral endeavor. We were all too concerned with fact memorization and if I ever see another word-search vocabulary exercise without meaningful use of the information, I’ll vomit.”

Several interpretations of the above events are possible. One might question the veracity of the discourse of students committed to an activist citizenship model. Or, one might argue that the instructional climate in some schools had the effect of altering the discursive practice which had given rise to an activist civic model and that, in fact, Jerry was paralyzed by an environment which did not sanction his preferred mode of teaching. It is also possible that the student teachers observed in this study may not have been taught the processes required of them in these social studies classrooms, that
their preparation had been ideologically naive and epistemologically arrogant.

**Perceived power relations.** The cases of Al and Jerry evidence circumstances where personal discourse was not supported by observed classroom practice. While it might be possible to question the veracity of their discourse about civic education, there is further evidence to suggest that two discursive practices were in contention, that these student teachers were caught in a circumstance of unequal power relations. The perceived prevailing discourse of the school prevented these student teachers from adhering to the world view or belief system which shaped their non-professional lives.

Both men, perhaps reflecting their Viet Nam era military experiences, expressed clear social visions, visions they believed were not supported by the schools in which they worked. Jerry envisioned “a community-based society that moves away from national suicide and multinational corporate greed (and moves) toward democratic local control, disarmament, and that feeds its children.” That vision, he believed, was inadequately supported by the civic education of schools as evidenced by “gross inequity of wealth, poverty and hunger, a general lack of self-worth and low participation in the democratic process.”

Al’s social vision was implicit in his indictment of civic education; evidence of school failure, he said, was to be found in “the national kneejerk reaction to crisis by the use of force and the need to feel strong.” He concluded the post-student teaching interview by stating, “I believe that in order to engender a feeling of connection between the student and citizenship the student should be put in greater control of situations requiring the practice of citizenship roles, but I don’t think that will happen.”

School-based mechanisms of power and control prevailed in these two cases; both student teachers successfully met institutional demands to cover the material, to accumulate a student grade each day, to focus student efforts on the memorization of discrete data, to maintain classroom decorum, and to prepare students for district testing programs. Neither was willing to challenge the prevailing regimen of truth from their status as student teachers.

**Prescriptive discursive practice.** A final conclusion to be drawn from a review of the ethnographic data on preservice teacher discourse about civic education focuses on student perceptions of the discursive practices within which they worked. It cannot be said that all students were aware of the mechanisms of the regimen of truth within which power relations, knowledge claims, and ideology fused to provide opportunities for them to speak and teach. At some level, however, each of these student teachers expressed dissatisfaction or frustration with either the dominant system of management and pedagogy or with the selection of available social studies content.

At the most general level, all of these students expressed dissatisfaction
with the civic education efforts of the schools. They cited as evidence for the perceived inadequacy the political apathy of the youth, voter apathy, adolescent values oriented toward monetary acquisition, tolerance of racial injustice, a foreign policy governed by militarism, and the neglect of children in poverty.

During the post-student teaching interviews a variety of institutional practices contributing to civic malaise were identified. The most detailed institutional indictment was offered by Jerry:

The basic message of the school was, "You're free to be but don't rock the boat! The student government was shallow. It had no power or rights and the process of election was faulted by our own system's lack of legitimacy and active participation. In the elections for various positions held while I was there they had a 9% turnout. The school newspaper was a bland instrument, kudos for individual accomplishments, mostly sports, and devoid of critical voices. It appears that the end product sought is the homogeneous student—you either play the game or drop out.

Further criticism of the institutional structure was offered by Patricia who described the school's dress code and its policies on truancy and tardiness as "arbitrary and inappropriate." Al argued for greater student participation in the school while asserting that "running a school like a detention camp is counterproductive."

Social studies content, too, was subject to some criticism at the conclusion of the student teaching experience. It was Al's belief that civic education had been peripheral, at best, in his classroom "due to the nature of the text (simplistic format) and the students' feelings of not being connected to anything we studied." Despite this awareness, he had felt powerless to alter either content or process. Jerry believed that he had been able to enhance civic education only when he abandoned the textbook; however, in the long run civic education remained peripheral because he was unable to alter the curriculum and address real student concerns within the classroom. Patricia deplored the selection of social studies textbook content as well:

Too often the United States History chosen consists of examples of policies motivated by self interest and greed in most accounts of our foreign policy in Latin America. However, the tables can be turned if the 'losers' in these arena are emphasized. A bad example often teaches a good lesson.

Several students were able to identify one source of their frustration by reflecting on the consequences of state reform legislation for their classroom work. State-wide regulations on minimum student absences, a state-wide rule on academic standards, and state-wide curriculum mandates in each discipline alerted these students to the power relations which defined
the discourse in their work. Jerry's pessimism was reflected in this concluding comment: "I believe that the flexibility and autonomy of educators to teach this area (social studies) is in doubt."

In the data just reviewed, preservice social studies teachers revealed varying levels of awareness of the discursive practices guiding both their classroom management and their social studies content. It might be assumed that few of the student teachers had thought carefully about the nature of power relations informing the prohibitive/permissive system which, in turn, guided their selection of content and their daily classroom practice. However, it is apparent that some students were able to address matters of knowledge claims, ideology, and power relations following brief experiences in social studies classrooms. The post-student teaching interview data evidenced some discursive looseness and suggested that opportunities to break out of the existing discursive practice circumscribing civic education do exist.

**Summary and Implications**

The foregoing data suggest the predominance of two discursive practices in the settings in which these student teachers worked: a discourse of management and control (Giroux, 1985a) and a discourse of citizenship transmission (Cherryholmes, 1983). In these settings classroom life was structured around content, not around students' interests or needs, activities were focused on the transmission of positive knowledge, and teacher behavior was circumscribed by external mandates on attendance, on the accumulation of grades, on essential social studies content, and on external achievement tests. Social studies content mandated by state guidelines was simply presented at face value; there was no question of ideology, interest, interpretation, or revision. The central commitment was to existing institutions, a safe unconflicted historical record, and to a perpetuation of existing power relations.

What is most striking about the observational data is the paucity of available pedagogical skills with which student teachers might support even minimal civic education goals. It could not be argued that Mathews' (1985) "good talk" goals were reached even by those student teachers aspiring to the citizenship transmission model. Those whose social vision required a more active citizenship model were frustrated, as well, not only by an unsupportive school discursive practice, but also by their own lack of professional skills and their inability to move beyond an ideologically naive posture within their chosen discipline.

Several implications are suggested by this study. First, there is strong evidence to suggest that the academic and professional preparation of these student teachers precluded access to the variety of discursive practices available within the disciplines. Their education had not been an instrument whereby each individual gained access to a variety of discursive practices;
hence, their choices and commitments were limited to a centrist model of civic education. These findings support earlier theorizing suggesting that teacher education is not commonly viewed as "a problem of the State, of ideology, culture or social commitment" (Popkewitz, 1985, p. 2) and, therefore, these problems must be formulated as problems if the current thrust toward reform is to contribute to raising professional consciousness. Data reviewed by Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981) indicated that, contrary to popular assumptions, the university may not represent a liberal force in teacher education but, rather, may work together with the schools to provide a "powerful conservative force for defending existing institutional arrangements from closer scrutiny and challenge" (p. 9). The message system of the university may, in fact, be strengthened by the student teaching experience. Thus, without access to diverse traditions and to the supportive community of scholars within those discursive traditions, student teachers either knowingly and willingly committed themselves to prevailing social studies practices or participated in those practices with reservation and frustration.

I (Kickbusch, 1985) suggested elsewhere that much social studies discourse is surface, i.e., "it tends to be descriptive of content or practice without revealing the theory of social totality embedded within the subject of discourse; it does not reveal the practical consequences of a particular social studies approach . . . for students; and, it suggests, largely by its failure to confront the issue, that the consequences of such curricula are the same for all students" (p. 49). Thus, while some discursive practices in the social studies are only weakly supported, e.g., those advocating direct civic action, those criticizing existing institutions, those engaging in ideological critique or values analysis (Cherryholmes, 1983), nevertheless, there is within these discourses a legitimate and supportive tradition from which one can teach and write. Social studies teachers must be able to draw upon those traditions and, if they choose, utilize the interstices in daily classroom life to address questions of ideology, human agency, social ethics or personal values.

There are implications for social studies teacher educators. If access to varying discursive traditions within the social studies is to be warranted, what tradition will inform our work? The radical critique of schooling (Giroux, 1985a) offers critical discourse as a tradition which renders knowledge claims, ideology, and power relations problematic. It is a tradition which might usefully interrogate discursive practices in pedagogy and classroom management and in civic education since it makes explicit matters of epistemology, axiology, and power. Zeichner's (1983) review of alternative paradigms of teacher education suggests that the discursive looseness of the field presents opportunities for movement beyond a conserving model. Elements of the inquiry-oriented paradigm, which values liberation "from the unwarranted control of unjustified beliefs" (Zeichner, 1983, p. 6), and reflective action by teachers appear in Beyer's (1985) description of a criti-
cally-oriented foundations approach. There is an adequate discursive tradition to support such a critical pedagogy in the social studies (See for example: Anyon, 1983; Apple, 1979, 1983, 1984; Cherryholmes, 1983, 1984; Giroux, 1983; Kickbusch & Everhart, 1985; Liston, 1984; McNeil, 1983; Wood, 1984; Zinn, 1980, 1984). If our purpose is to nurture among preprofessional educators an informed choice and commitment to a model of civic education, then we can do no less than to assure access to the existing competing traditions.2

Endnotes

1. Quoted material is taken either from written responses to the survey instrument or from transcripts of the post-student teaching interview. In several instances material from classroom observation is quoted directly; that material is drawn from observational field notes. Pseudonyms are used throughout the discussion to protect the identity of the participants.

2. Richard Diem and Tony Johnson, The University of Texas at San Antonio, provided useful suggestions on matters of style and interpretation. An earlier draft of this paper was presented to the College and University Faculty Assembly of the NCSS in November, 1986.

References


Effects of a Best Example and Critical Attributes on Prototype Formation in the Acquisition of a Concept

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Abstract

According to the traditional approach to concept formation, concepts are formed by learning a list of critical attributes. However, recent research indicates that students learn concepts by forming mental prototypes after being exposed to best examples. This study compared the effectiveness of the two approaches. One hundred and three undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups and taught the concept transfer propaganda. An achievement posttest and a protocol test were administered immediately following the administration of treatments, and the same two tests were administered two weeks later. No significant achievement differences were found on either the immediate or retention posttests. Findings from the protocol tests indicated that subjects could list fewer of the critical attributes after two weeks; however, the number of correct examples generated increased from 65% to 78%. The number of correct examples generated decreased for the group taught with best examples.

According to the traditional approach to concept learning, the learner internalizes a concept's critical attributes, essential characteristics, and uses these characteristics to identify newly encountered instances (Merrill & Tennyson, 1977). Recently, researchers have argued that concepts are formed by encoding prototypes in memory (Brooks, 1978; Nelson, 1974; Park, 1984; Tennyson, Chao, & Youngers, 1981; Tennyson, Youngers, & Seub-
sonthi, 1983; Yoho, 1985). Park (1984) defined prototypes as meaningful dimensions, abstract and internal, which are stored in memory; on the other hand, critical attributes are concrete and external. Meaningful dimensions are more general than critical attributes and are formed by learning a best example. Best examples are defined as clear cases of the concept.

Three studies are directly relevant to the present research (Park, 1984; Tennyson et al., 1983; Yoho, 1985). Tennyson et al. (1983) taught the concept *regular polygon* to 107 third-grade students. All lessons included a definition and student practice. Group 1 received two best examples and an expository set of examples. Group 2 received best examples only. Group 3 received critical attributes and an expository set of examples. Group 4 received critical attributes only. An achievement posttest and retention test (two weeks later) were administered. Also, a protocol test was administered with the immediate posttest. They concluded that the group that received a definition, two best examples, an expository presentation, and a practice presentation produced significantly higher achievement than the group which received a definition and critical attributes, or the group that received a definition, critical attributes, an expository presentation, and practice. In addition, the group that was presented with the definition, two best examples, expository presentation, and practice performed better on a protocol test that asked subjects to answer three questions: What do you think when I say regular polygon? How would you describe a regular polygon? Give an example of a regular polygon. Tennyson and colleagues concluded from this study that the best example provided the initial prototype and that the expository presentation further elaborated the concept's dimensions. As further evidence, they concluded that the groups that received best examples were able to present a richer source of examples, while those subjects who did not receive the best examples did not appear to have formed a clear mental prototype.

As a result of the Tennyson et al. (1983) study, Tennyson revised the original Merrill and Tennyson (1977) design for teaching concepts. The revised model now consists of the following parts: (a) analysis of the type of concept to be learned in terms of whether it is a conjunctive, disjunctive, or relational concept; (b) presentation of a definition; (c) presentation of a best example; (d) presentation of a rational set of examples; (e) presentation of an interrogatory practice (Tennyson et al., 1983). In addition, Tennyson recommended that learners should be instructed to refer to the best example when differentiating between examples and nonexamples. This revised design places little emphasis on critical attributes—the emphasis is now placed on the best example.

The second study, conducted by Park (1984), compared two groups. The first group received a definition of each of four concepts, critical attributes of each concept, and an interrogatory practice, while the other group received the definitions, best examples, and an interrogatory practice. He reported that the group taught with critical attributes missed fewer items
during the interrogatory practice, that there were no significant differences on the immediate posttest, and that the group taught with best examples scored significantly higher on the delayed posttest. Eight protocol items were also administered with the delayed posttest. He reported that the subjects taught with best examples wrote more acceptable definitions and examples than the group taught with critical attributes. Also, the subjects who were taught with best examples were able to give more acceptable examples than acceptable definitions. He also concluded that best examples facilitate prototype formation, and he claimed that the interrogatory practice allowed for elaboration of the concept’s dimensions.

Yoho (1985) taught four social studies concepts over a two-day period to 147 ninth-grade students. The purpose of the study was to compare the effectiveness of critical attributes and best examples. Students who were taught with a definition, a best example of each of the four concepts, an expository presentation of examples only, and a practice that stressed the best examples performed significantly better on the delayed posttest than students from three other groups including those who were taught with definitions, critical attributes, examples only, and practice; those who received definitions, critical attributes, examples and nonexamples, and practice; and those who received definitions, best examples, examples and nonexamples, and practice.

The present study had two major purposes. The first purpose was to replicate the findings from previous studies explicating the role of best examples and critical attributes in prototype formation. Neither Tennyson et al. (1983) nor Park (1984) administered both an immediate protocol test and a delayed protocol test; therefore, a second major purpose of the study was to compare differences between students’ responses on an immediate protocol test and a delayed protocol test administered two weeks after the first test. A secondary purpose of the study was to compare the effects of an expository presentation of examples and nonexamples with a best example presentation to determine whether the expository presentation served as a best example.

The specific questions addressed in this study were: (a) Is a best example more effective in teaching concepts than a presentation of critical attributes? (b) Is there evidence that a series of examples and nonexamples (expository presentation) serves as a best example? (c) Will there be differences among groups on a protocol test that asks subjects to define the concept, describe how they would explain the concept to a friend, etc.? (d) Will there be differences among the subjects’ responses on the achievement and protocol tests after two weeks?

**Procedures**

*Sample.* The sample consisted of 103 undergraduates enrolled in four sections of education classes. Students were randomly assigned to one of four treatment groups. There were 81 females and 22 males, 62 elementary and
41 secondary education majors, and all but six were juniors or seniors. Eleven students were absent on the day that the delayed posttest was administered. Therefore, 92 students were included in the data analysis.

**Lessons and treatments.** The concept *transfer propaganda* was taught. All of the lessons began with the same definition and all had the same student practice presentation. The lessons were presented via slides. Treatment 1 consisted of the definition, an expository presentation of six matched pairs of examples and nonexamples, and the student practice presentation of six examples and six nonexamples. No special attention was given to the critical attributes. Treatment 2 consisted of the definition, the presentation of the best example, and the student practice presentation. The picture of the best example, a cigarette advertisement, was placed in full view of the students, and the students were told to refer to it during the practice. Treatment 3 consisted of the same definition, the expository presentation, and practice presentation as in Group 1. During the administration of this treatment the critical attributes, which were written on a chart, were placed in front of the class. Students were told to refer to the chart during the practice. Treatment 4 consisted of the same definition, critical attribute chart, and practice as in Group 3. The expository presentation and best example were omitted from this group.

**Instrumentation.** Two types of instruments were used. The first was a 32-item multiple choice achievement test. Each item consisted of two photographs presented via a slide. Possible responses were: (a) Both pictures are examples of transfer propaganda. (b) Neither picture is an example of transfer propaganda. (c) Only Picture A is an example. (d) Only Picture B is an example. The reliability of the test, as estimated by Cronbach’s alpha, was .57. The posttest was administered immediately after each lesson. The same test was administered two weeks later.

The second instrument, the protocol test, was administered with the achievement test. This instrument consisted of the following questions: (a) How would you explain the concept of transfer propaganda to a friend who has no knowledge of the concept? (b) How did you tell the difference between examples and nonexamples of transfer propaganda? (c) Write a definition of transfer propaganda. (d) Develop an advertisement that uses transfer propaganda to sell flashlight batteries.

**Design.** Three 4 X 2 (four treatments and 2 repetitions) repeated measures analyses of variance were used to analyze the achievement data and two of the items from the protocol test. Two of the protocol items yielded nominal data which were less amenable to formal parametric statistical analyses.

**Findings**

**Achievement.** Analysis of posttest and delayed posttest achievement data indicated that there were no significant main effects nor were there signifi-
Table 1
Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA for Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>14.2835</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>23.4876</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.0625</td>
<td>.850</td>
<td>.5271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (G)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>23.6044</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5.1793</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.6250</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.7343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G x T</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.1250</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.9947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (T)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>5.4034</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

cis interactions (see Table 1). The means for the four groups were nearly identical on the immediate posttest (25.1, 23.65, 24.3, and 23.95 respectively).

Protocol items. The first protocol item asked the subjects to tell how they would explain the concept to a friend. The purpose of this question was to determine whether students differed by groups according to their method of internalizing the concept. The expectation was that those students taught with a best example would cite examples. Responses were divided into the

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Posttest and Delayed Posttest: Achievement

<table>
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</thead>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>25.1200</td>
<td>2.8325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>23</td>
<td>23.6522</td>
<td>3.4378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.3182</td>
<td>3.4694</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Expository</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23.9545</td>
<td>3.9938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Delayed Posttest</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.9600</td>
<td>3.0887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23.4348</td>
<td>5.7035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24.3636</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Expository</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4.0194</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: All groups received a definition and practice.
following categories: critical attributes, examples, combination of critical attributes and examples, and other. On the posttest, fifty-eight percent of the students used critical attributes in their explanations, while the number increased to 66% on the delayed posttest. Thirty-four percent on the posttest and 30% on the delayed posttest used a combination of critical attributes and examples. An examination of the frequencies reported in Table 3 indicates that the majority of students, regardless of the group, used critical attributes. However, six subjects who were taught with a best example used examples on the immediate posttest. None of these six used examples only on the delayed posttest.

The second protocol item asked the subjects to explain how they differentiated examples from nonexamples. As with the first protocol item, the students' responses were categorized into critical attributes, examples, combination of critical attributes and examples, and other. Frequencies reported in Table 4 indicate that 76% of the students reported that they relied on critical attributes; i.e., in stating how they differentiated between examples and nonexamples, the students stated that they looked for the presence of critical attributes. This number increased slightly to 79% on the delayed posttest.

The third protocol item asked the students to write a definition of the concept. These data were analyzed in two ways. The first analysis was based on the number of critical attributes listed (scores could range from 0 to 3). Second, the frequency of correct responses (all three critical attributes were present) was calculated. Results of a repeated measures ANOVA indicate that there were no significant differences on the number of critical attributes listed by groups (see Table 5); nor were there statistically significant posttest, retention posttest, or interaction effects. The means and standard deviations, reported in Table 6, were nearly identical for the groups on the immediate posttest ($\overline{X} = 2.28, 2.09, 2.09$, and $2.18$ respectively) and on the delayed posttest ($\overline{X} = 2.08, 1.9, 2.09$, and $1.82$ respectively).

Since the concept taught was a conjunctive concept (i.e., all of the critical attributes must be present), the students should have listed all three critical attributes for their definition to be correct. Data reported in Table 7 indicate that 38% of the students gave correct definitions on the immediate posttest, while 23% gave correct definitions on the delayed posttest. The two groups that did not receive critical attributes (Groups 1 and 2) listed fewer correct definitions on the immediate posttest. All groups decreased in the number of correct definitions from the immediate posttest to the delayed posttest with the exception of Group 1 (expository only).

The fourth protocol item required the students to develop an advertisement of their own that used the concept transfer propaganda. The dependent variable was the number of critical attributes used in the examples supplied. Results of a third repeated measures ANOVA (see Table 8) indicate

194
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
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<th>Delayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td><strong>53 (58%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>61 (66%)</strong></td>
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<th>Delayed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td><strong>7 (8%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>3 (3%)</strong></td>
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<th>Delayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td><strong>31 (34%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>28 (30%)</strong></td>
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<table>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>92</td>
<td><strong>1 (1%)</strong></td>
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Table 4
How Did You Tell the Difference Between Examples and Nonexamples?
Frequencies of Response

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Immediate</th>
<th>Delayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Attributes</strong></td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes</td>
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<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>and Expository</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>70 (76%)</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>and Expository</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Immediate</th>
<th>Delayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combination</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Expository</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>5 (5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Immediate</th>
<th>Delayed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Expository</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9 (10%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
no significant differences among the four groups nor were there significant interactions. However, there was a significant effect for trials. An examination of the means and standard deviations reported in Table 9 indicates that the students increased their number of correct written examples on the delayed posttest.

Data reported in Tables 7, 8, and 9 were based on the number of critical attributes included in the definition.

Table 5
Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA for Number of Critical Attributes Present in Definition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F Prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>.6890</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.9405</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.3550</td>
<td>.370</td>
<td>.7781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (G)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.9604</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.4402</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5706</td>
<td>3.618</td>
<td>.0572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G x T</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.2437</td>
<td>.561</td>
<td>.6462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (T)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.4341</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6
Means and Standard Deviations for Number of Critical Attributes Included in Definition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>2.2800</td>
<td>.5416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>2.0870</td>
<td>.9002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>2.0909</td>
<td>1.0650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>2.1818</td>
<td>.8528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>2.0800</td>
<td>.8124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>1.9130</td>
<td>.6683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>2.0909</td>
<td>.8112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>1.8182</td>
<td>.8679</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
attributes in the students' written examples. These data were further broken down into correct (all critical attributes present) or incorrect responses (no critical attributes present or only one or two of the three critical attributes present). On the immediate posttest the percentage of correct examples by groups was similar (68%, 65%, 55%, 73% respectively). However, on the delayed posttest the number of correct examples increased for all groups except for Group 2, which was taught with the best example: 76%, 56%, 91%, and 91% respectively (see Table 10).

### Table 7
**Number of Correct and Incorrect Definitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7 (28%)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9 (39%)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10 (45%)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9 (41%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>35 (38%)</td>
<td>57 (62%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 8
**Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA for Number of Critical Attributes Listed in Subjects' Examples**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F ratio</th>
<th>F prob</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>.7850</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>.8094</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3184</td>
<td>1.665</td>
<td>.1791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (G)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.7920</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>.7609</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trials</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.5869</td>
<td>14.209</td>
<td>.0006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G x T</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.3469</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>.6778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error (T)</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>.6747</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

198
Table 9
Means and Standard Deviations for Number of Critical Attributes Listed in Subjects' Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>2.1200</td>
<td>1.0132</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>2.2174</td>
<td>1.1264</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>2.1364</td>
<td>.9902</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>2.4545</td>
<td>.9117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Delayed Posttest</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(X)</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>2.6000</td>
<td>.5416</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>2.4348</td>
<td>.7878</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>2.7727</td>
<td>.2942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>2.9545</td>
<td>.2942</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10
Number of Appropriate Examples Created

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17 (68%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15 (65%)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12 (55%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16 (73%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>60 (65%)</td>
<td>32 (35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Delayed Posttest</th>
<th>Correct</th>
<th>Incorrect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expository Only</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19 (76%)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Example Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13 (56%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes and Expository</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20 (91%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Attributes Only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20 (91%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>72 (78%)</td>
<td>20 (22%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One purpose of this study was to compare the effects of instruction using critical attributes versus best examples on the acquisition of a concept. There were no statistically significant differences on the immediate or delayed posttests. These findings are inconsistent with some previous research. According to Park (1984), Tennyson et al. (1983), and Yoho (1985), students taught with best examples scored significantly higher than subjects taught with critical attributes. There are at least two possible explanations for the inconsistency in the concept acquisition literature. First, the studies reported data from students of different age groups, and consequently from different levels of cognitive sophistication. The study conducted by Tennyson et al. (1983) used elementary age subjects, while Park (1984) and Yoho (1985) used high school age students. Our study utilized a sample of college undergraduates. Second, the three previous studies used individualized instruction, while the present study used group instruction.

A secondary purpose of this study was to see if there is evidence to support the claim that an expository presentation constitutes a best example. Tennyson et al. (1983), Park (1984), and Yoho (1985) claimed that students should be presented an example that is typical of the concept. We attempted to replicate these findings by comparing data across groups. Their findings did not replicate. There were no significant differences on achievement or on the number of critical attributes cited in the written definitions. However, Group 1 (expository presentation only) and Group 3 (critical attributes and expository presentation) produced more correct examples on the delayed protocol posttest. The number of acceptable examples actually decreased from the immediate to the delayed posttest for Group 2 (best example). Based on these findings it appears that an expository presentation did not confuse learners, but actually resulted in better prototype formation than a best example only.

Although there appeared to be no differences on the first three protocol items, Group 3 (critical attributes and an expository presentation) and Group 4 (critical attributes only) performed significantly better than Group 2 (best example) on the delayed protocol test item (Item 4) which required the students to generate their own examples. Examination of the definitions (Item 3) provided by students in all groups indicates that their knowledge of the concept's critical attributes deteriorated from immediate to delayed posttests. Yet, the subjects in Groups 1, 3, and 4 were able to generate more correct examples (Item 4) on the delayed protocol test than on the immediate protocol test. This can be interpreted to mean that students who were taught critical attributes were better able to form a mental prototype than were students in Group 2 who were taught with a best example and practice.

In summary, there were no differences among the four groups on achievement or on the number of critical attributes listed. There appeared to a general deterioration of the number of acceptable definitions from the immediate to delayed posttest. However, those subjects taught with critical at-
tributes were able to increase the number of correct examples that they generated on their own. This appears to support the claim that learners create a mental prototype of concepts and then forget the specific critical attributes.

References


Toward Improving Research in Social Studies Education

Jack R. Fraenkel
San Francisco State University

Abstract

The types of research most commonly conducted by social studies educators fall into one of three categories: surveys, experiments, or content analyses. There are additional research methodologies that might be considered, however. Brief descriptions of these methodologies, as well as examples of potential research questions involving them, are presented. A number of ways to improve the quality of social studies research are then discussed.

Toward Improving Research in Social Studies Education

The types of research most commonly conducted by social studies educators typically fall into one of three categories: either a survey, an experiment or quasi-experiment, or a content analysis of textbooks. Such research is often important for obtaining demographics about the profession; as a necessary first step to the suggestion of possible hypotheses to pursue within a given field of inquiry; or as a way to investigate the effects of a particular treatment on one or more outcomes of interest. Recent reviews of research (e.g., Armento, 1986; Hepburn & Dahler, 1985; Stanley, 1985) document that these types of research continue to dominate the efforts of researchers in social studies education. They also are the methodologies most commonly found in social studies doctoral dissertations. Based on a review of the abstracts of some 394 doctoral dissertations in 1983, Hepburn & Dahler (1985) found that descriptive studies comprised 45%, or 177 of the total. Experimental research comprised 27%, or 105 of the total. Thus, the two together totaled 282, or almost 72 percent of the total (Hepburn & Dahler, 1985, pp. 77–78).

Other forms of research, such as historical inquiries and ethnographic studies, are far less commonly found, both in doctoral dissertations and in research journals in the field, although they do occur. Some research methodologies, such as causal-comparative investigations, are truly rare. In the

1. I wish to thank my colleagues Andrew Dubin, George Hallowitz, Enoch Sawin, and Norm Wallen for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.
three journals which report most of the research in social studies, Theory and Research in Social Education (TRSE), Journal of Social Studies Research (JSSR), and Social Education, out of a total of some 185 empirical studies reported during the ten year period from January, 1977 to December, 1986, only one (0.05%) was a causal-comparative investigation! By way of contrast, during this same period, 54 (29%) of those reported were either true or quasi-experiments; 52 (28%) were surveys; and 20 (11%) were content analyses, for a total of 126 (70%).

This is too narrow a vision of research to dominate the field. The term, research, means any sort of “careful, systematic, patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to discover or establish facts and principles.” (Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language, 1984). Many methodologies fit this definition. Additional models which might be utilized by social studies educators more frequently include in-depth interviews; case studies; historical inquiries; correlational studies; structured observations; participant observations; causal-comparative investigations; ethnographic studies; and cross-cultural comparisons. In the same three journals referred to above, for the same time period and the same total number of studies, 13 (7%) were correlational studies; 11 (6%) were interviews; 8 (4%) were ethnographies; 8 (4%) were historical inquiries; 3 (1.5%) were case studies; 3 (1.5%) were structured observations; while there was only one (0.5%) participant observation, and one (0.5%) cross-cultural study.

While all of these methodologies (including experiments and surveys) have various limitations (and thus can be well or poorly executed), their wider use would help to provide some additional, and different, perspectives about important questions in social studies education. It is encouraging to note that, while they still remain relatively few compared to the more common forms of experimental or survey research, the previously mentioned reviews of research reveal that more studies using some of these alternative methodologies are being reported in the social studies research literature (Armento, 1986; Hepburn & Dahler, 1985; Stanley, 1985).

This is a good thing. There is still much in social studies education about which we know very little. There are many kinds of questions that need to be investigated. How do students think about social problems? What kinds of content organization promote the learning of different types of subject matter? What kinds of subject matter are easiest to learn, and why? What sorts of subjects are best taught when, and where? Why do relatively few students like social studies while so many others do not? How can the frequently expressed dislike by so many students for social studies courses be remedied? What kinds of teaching strategies work best with students at different ability levels? What sorts of learning activities are most effective with younger as opposed to older students? What effect does the ambiance of the classroom have on students? The ambiance of the school? And so forth.
Many of these questions, and others like them, can be studied through experiments or surveys, but they also might well be investigated by other methodologies. Indeed, some of these other methodologies often are better suited than various forms of experimental or survey research to provide investigators with the information they desire.

Methodology notwithstanding, however, notice that a social studies educator interested in any of these questions might operate from either of two assumptions. He or she might feel that the social studies field is okay as it is, and seek, therefore, primarily to understand more clearly and in more detail various aspects of it. Another researcher, however, might believe that there is much about the field, including instructional objectives, that needs to be changed, and hence try not only to understand what is going on, but also to point up inaccuracies, distortions, or ideological bias. Although the former assumption still appears to underlie the work of most researchers in social studies education, there is a growing amount of research being reported by those who operate under the second assumption (e.g., see Anyon, 1978; Giroux & Penna, 1980; Popkewitz, Tabachnick, & Wehlage, 1982; Romanish, 1983; Saltonstall, 1979).

Regardless of assumption or methodology, many commentators have pointed out that much of the research in social studies education continues to suffer from a number of flaws. Many of the research questions are trivial. Treatments are often vaguely defined, briefly administered, and/or weakly implemented. Control and experimental groups are seldom equivalent. Hawthorne or John Henry effects contaminate findings. Aptitude X treatment interactions are almost totally ignored. Instruments are poorly designed, and frequently lack validity or reliability. The durability of effects, when any are detected, are almost never assessed. Statistical procedures are frequently inappropriate. Legitimate generalizability is almost non-existent (Fraenkel, 1980; Leming, 1985; Martorella, 1977; Nelson & Shaver, 1985; Shaver & Norton, 1980; Wallen, 1983).

What is currently lacking is a systematic effort on the part of the research community to build a cumulative base of knowledge about many of the important questions of interest to the profession. Doctoral students continue, in the main, to do isolated studies, often unaware that similar or related work is being done by their counterparts elsewhere (Hepburn & Dahler, 1985). Few doctoral, and fewer master’s, studies are expanded or developed further once they are completed. Replication of studies is more the rare example than standard practice. Perhaps Shaver has described the current state of affairs most clearly. There is “a failure in many instances . . . to relate a piece of research to previous studies in any sort of programmatic way. The consequences are, on the one hand, the repetition of unproductive prior research and, on the other, a disconnectedness of studies on similar topics. Both are counterproductive to knowledge building” (Nelson & Shaver, 1985, p. 410).
I would like to do two things in the remainder of this paper, therefore. First, I want to give a few examples of the many different types of research questions that social studies educators might pursue, along with a very brief summary of the sorts of methodologies that these questions call for. My intent here is to illustrate the great variety of questions and methods that lend themselves to social studies research.

Second, I want to offer some ideas about how the quality of research involving these methodologies might be improved. I would hope that much of what I have to say here would be familiar to experienced researchers; if so, that is all to the good. And if my ideas provide food for thought, even better. But I especially want to direct my remarks toward three other groups of social studies educators: professors who direct master’s theses or doctoral dissertations who do not teach courses in educational research; graduate students who intend to do research; and classroom teachers who have an interest in research.

Research Questions in Social Studies Education

While the same question often can be pursued in a variety of ways, it is frequently (even usually) the case that certain methods are more suitable than others. Consider the following:

- How do students suggest that the teaching of social studies might be improved? (Survey research.) The researcher might prepare questionnaires or interview schedules, check their validity and reliability, and then give or send them out to be completed by a variety of students. Students could be questioned either orally or in writing, but all should be asked the same questions. If more details are wanted about certain questions, the researcher could conduct personal interviews with respondents (e.g., see Palonsky & Nelson, 1980).

- Why do some students learn social studies material easily? (Case study research.) To start with, one such student could be observed on a regular basis to see if there were any noticeable patterns or regularities in his or her behavior. The student’s teachers, counselors, coaches, etc., as well as the student, might also be interviewed in depth. The researcher could attempt to obtain as much information as possible about the student—study style, classroom behavior, attitudes about the subject, etc.—to gain insight into the student’s success. (A similar series of observations and interviews might be conducted with a student who finds the learning of social studies material difficult.) As many details about the student as possible, usually in narrative form, should be reported. The same procedures could then be applied in the same way to a representative sample of such students.

- What sorts of ideas do social studies teachers transmit to students? (Focused observational research.) The researcher could determine beforehand what constitutes an idea, and then several classroom teachers could be observed regularly to tally the kinds of ideas which they transmit to their students. The type, quantity, and nature of these ideas could be summed
and described. The manner of their presentation might also be described and analyzed.

- What goes on in a social studies class during an average week? (Ethnographic research.) The researcher could try to document or portray the everyday experiences of students and teachers in their classrooms. A single classroom could be observed on a regular basis, and an attempt made to describe, as fully and as richly as possible, what exists and what happens in that classroom. Prose descriptions, audiotapes (videotapes, if possible) of classroom discussions, teacher lesson plans, completed student assignments, etc., could be collected. The goal would be to paint a portrait of the classroom in as thorough, accurate, and vivid a manner as possible so that others could also see that classroom and its participants, and what they do.

- How do the records of social studies students from 40 years ago compare with the records of similar social studies students today? (Causal-comparative research.) Various documents which describe student characteristics, performance, and activities (e.g., transcripts, grade point averages, extracurricular activities, demographics, etc.) in the past could be compared with the records for similar students (i.e., similar ages, grade levels, gender, etc.) of today to see what similarities and differences exist.

- What images do social studies textbooks present of people of different gender, ethnicity, age, and occupation? (Content analysis research.) A sample of textbooks on a particular subject (e.g., U.S. History), covering a particular time period, could be collected. Pertinent categories could be formulated to enable the researcher to identify what types of images are presented in the textbooks. A coding sheet could be prepared to tally the data in each of the categories as it is identified in each text.

- What sorts of arguments have been made in the past as to what should be included in the social studies curriculum for grades K–12? (Historical research.) The writings of various social studies and other curriculum theorists in the past could be read and compared as to the positions they espoused concerning what should be included in the social studies curriculum.

- How effective are various kinds of activities in helping students to learn social studies concepts? (Experimental or quasi-experimental research.) The researcher could systematically (randomly, if possible) assign students to classes, and then train the teachers of those classes to use different activities (e.g., discussions, role-playing, small group work, or individual seatwork) on a regular basis. A serious attempt could be made to control for other relevant variables, such as student ability level, age, grade level, time of instruction, materials, or teacher characteristics. Student learning in each group could be compared by an objective test, with the reliability and validity of the test checked. The scores on the test, if they differ, would give some idea of the relative effectiveness of the different activities.

- How does the use of different types of study techniques correlate with academic achievement in social studies classes? (Correlational research.)
The types of study techniques which different students use (e.g., taking notes in class, outlining the reading material, or writing summaries of what one has read) could be identified and tallied. The examination scores, course grades, GPA’s, etc. of those students could then be listed. Various techniques of correlation and regression could be employed to see if there is any relationship between any of the techniques and the measures of academic achievement.

- What levels of intellectual skills are assessed by teacher-made and/or commercially made tests? (Evaluation research.) The researcher could collect a variety of teacher-made and commercially made social studies tests. The questions in these tests could be compared with regard to the kinds of intellectual skills they are supposed to measure. The tests could be categorized in a number of ways (types of questions represented, skills emphasized, difficulty level of the questions, and so forth).

- What social studies objectives are most important for students to attain? (Philosophical research.) This type of question is different than the preceding ones, since it cannot be resolved by empirical investigation. It can only be resolved by discussion and assessment of the degree to which various answers to the question seem to contribute to the attainment of desired ends. Philosophical questions, however, are very important, and need to be resolved before questions about what particular research methodology to use, or how to use it, are considered.

Although philosophical questions *per se* do not lend themselves to empirical investigation, this does not mean that the views of social studies educators concerning such questions cannot be empirically investigated. To determine what objectives social studies professionals *think* are most important, questionnaire- or interview-surveys could be conducted of different groups, such as professors, teachers, and/or students.

- How do answers to many of these questions compare with answers to the same questions obtained by researchers in other nations? (Cross-cultural research.) Data collected by researchers in other countries would be analyzed and compared with similar data in the United States.

Not all of these questions would appeal to all researchers. Some, I think, would. Many others certainly might be asked. Those above, however, illustrate many of the kinds of inquiries that can be conducted and research methodologies that can be employed in social studies education.

Once again, notice that researchers who attempt to investigate any of the research questions presented above might operate from different assumptions. They might assume that social studies classes are not enormously different from one school to another, and hence expect that the teaching of social studies will be essentially the same in different classrooms. Or they might assume that there is no average social studies classroom, and thus wish to document the considerable diversity that they believe exists among teachers and students in social studies classrooms in various locations.
It should be stressed that each of the research methodologies described so briefly above have value. Each constitutes a different way of inquiring into the realities that exist within social studies classrooms and the minds and emotions of social studies students, teachers, and other professionals. Each represents a different tool for trying to understand what goes on in social studies education. But it is inappropriate to consider any one or two of these approaches as being superior to, or better than, any of the others. The effectiveness of a particular methodology depends in large part on the nature of the research question asked and the specific context within which the particular investigation is to take place.

Nor is it wise, I think, to compare the effectiveness of one methodology using the criteria of another, or attempt to impose a single model’s standards on all social studies research (Popkewitz, 1984). We need to gain insights into what goes on in social studies education from as many perspectives as possible, and hence we need to construe research in broad rather than narrow terms.

So far as I am concerned, research in social studies education should ask a variety of questions, move in a variety of directions, encompass a variety of methodologies, and use a variety of tools. Different research orientations, perspectives, and goals should not only be allowed, but encouraged.

**Improving the Quality of Social Studies Research**

It is helpful at this point, I think, to make a distinction between the terms social education and social studies, for the remarks which follow have mainly to do with social studies research. The distinction to which I subscribe is the one offered by Nelson and Shaver in the 75th Bulletin of the National Council for the Social Studies (Stanley, 1985). Social education is “a term inclusive of the broad concerns of social knowledge, social relations, social development, and social improvement, which are among the goals of social studies, but go beyond schooling practices in their intentions, activities, and research implications,” whereas social studies identifies “the schooling part of social education” (Nelson & Shaver, 1985, p. 401). Most of my suggestions apply primarily to research in schools. This is not to say that these suggestions cannot apply to studies that take place outside of schools. It is just that such studies are not the focus of these remarks.

What follows, then, are some ideas about how to improve the quality of social studies research. Since experiments, surveys, and content analyses are the most commonly conducted types of research, most of my suggestions will focus on these methodologies. Space limitations prevent an extensive discussion of other methodologies, but I shall offer a few ideas that frequently seem to be ignored in practice. Since most of us are not trained in historical or ethnographic research, these methodologies in particular seem to be logical candidates for further study (e.g., see Agar, 1986; Barzun & Graff, 1977; Boglan & Biklen, 1982; Carr, 1967; Dobbert, 1982; Gottschalk, 1969; and Spindler, 1982).
All of the ideas I shall present are relatively easy to implement. Very few of them, however, are new; most have been identified by one or more other observers. Nevertheless, I believe that they bear repeating. Experience with my own graduate students suggests that even those students who have had two or three courses in research continue to make rather fundamental mistakes. Furthermore, a recent review of the research reported in TRSE over the last eight years reveals that many of these ideas continue to be ignored in practice (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1987).

**Improving Experimental Research**

1. Forget about random samples. Obtaining a truly random sample is almost an impossibility in school-based research these days, given organizational and scheduling constraints. When and where possible, of course, random sampling is to be encouraged, and oftentimes, even in intact classes, random assignment of students to treatment and control groups can be implemented. An alternative strategy, however, is to concentrate on describing relevant demographics of one's sample in enough detail (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, IQ scores, etc.) so that other interested professionals can have a fuller picture of exactly who was involved in the study.

2. Increase the chances of the treatment having an effect. In essence, this suggestion involves *intensifying* the treatment which the experimental group receives. There are three possibilities here. (a) Be clear that there *is* a treatment. Sometimes treatments are so vaguely defined or described that what happened to students in the experimental group, exactly, is not clear. Operational definitions of the independent variable(s) can help a great deal to clarify the nature of the treatment. (b) Lengthen the *time* of the treatment. Oftentimes, the length of time that students are exposed to a treatment is so short that its' possible effect(s) may not be discerned (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1987). Eisner (1983) found that the median experimental treatment time per subject in several education studies that he reviewed in 1978 was only 45 minutes! One can take slight encouragement from the fact that another review by him some five years later showed an increase in the median experimental treatment time to one hour and 15 minutes per subject! (Eisner, 1983, p. 14). (c) Check (through the use of observers, audio or video taping, subject reactions, etc.) to make sure that the treatment *really occurs*, and that it occurs as intended.

3. Concentrate on description and explanation more than prediction. Given the difficulty in obtaining random samples in most school settings, it is to be expected that the generalizability of most social studies research will be severely limited. Concentrate, therefore, on description and explanation and worry less about prediction. More details, described as vividly as possible, of interventions (or in non-intervention studies, of settings) can help others in similar situations assess the applicability of particular results to their situation. As mentioned above, the nature of the treatment should be

4. Use more than one instrument to measure the dependent variable. In the great majority of social studies research, only one measuring device is used by researchers to obtain their data concerning the outcome of interest. This limits unnecessarily the amount of information that might be gathered concerning the possible effects of the independent variable(s) in the study. Of some 51 studies reported in the JSSR between 1980 and 1986 which used instruments, only 9 (17%) utilized more than one measuring device to obtain data of interest.

5. Measure more than one dependent variable. Rarely do social studies researchers look at more than one dependent variable when studying the effects of a particular treatment. Once again, this unduly restricts the amount of information that might, with only a little extra effort, be obtained from a study, and weakens understanding of the possible effects of an independent variable. It is not very difficult, for example, also to measure the attitudes of students in studies where achievement is the dependent variable (e.g., see Smith, 1980).

6. Incorporate additional independent variables into your design. Many times the effect(s) of a treatment will be revealed in one or more subgroups, yet not appear in the total group of which the subgroups are a part. Analyzing a treatment group in terms of gender or ethnic components, for example, may reveal otherwise unrecognized effects. Factorial designs which enable a researcher to study several independent and dependent variables in a single study are almost never employed in social studies research (Fraenkel, 1982).

7. Indicate the magnitude of any effects which are observed. It is standard practice for social studies researchers to report their findings in terms of significance levels, using inferential statistics. But the notion of statistical significance is intimately related to sample size. Given a large enough sample, almost any result will be statistically significant. Whether a finding is significant only tells us the likelihood of an effect occurring by chance; it does not allow us to compare effects across studies of similar phenomena. As many observers have suggested, the calculation of an effect size is helpful in this regard (Borg & Gall, 1983; Nelson & Shaver, 1985; VanSickle, 1983).

8. Be less concerned about statistical significance and think more about educational significance. The significance of a study continues, for most social studies (and other) researchers, to mean statistical significance. But just because the results of a study are statistically significant (were not due to chance) does not mean that they are significant in any larger sense. The import of a study—how it matters in the larger scheme of things, to students, to teachers, to the profession as a whole—is rarely discussed (Fraenkel, 1987). Researchers should watch for noticeable effects whether they are statistically significant or not.
In particular, the emotional reactions of students, if at all possible, should be assessed. How strongly did they react to a particular treatment or experience? Why do they say they react in this way? When students react strongly (either positively or negatively) to an intervention or an experience, it is probably a good sign that further investigation is warranted. Of 54 studies published in the JSSR between 1980 and 1986 which involved the collection of data, only eight (15%) assessed student feelings about social studies subject matter. Only two (4%) assessed student attitudes toward some aspect of social studies instruction (Haladyna, Shaughnessy, & Redsun, 1982; McGowan, 1984).

9. Assess the durability of an effect. Even in those studies which report a large difference between experimental and control groups, rarely are delayed posttests given to see if the perceived effects of the independent variable remain over any length of time, or change in any way (Fraenkel, 1987). The durability of the effects of independent variables in social studies research remains largely unknown.

Researchers should always think about their reporting of research results. At least three criteria are worthy of note. Results, when reported, should be not only: (a) accurate (i.e., correctly determined), and (b) meaningful (i.e., educationally significant), but also (c) appropriate (i.e., the procedures used to obtain the results were the proper ones given the question at issue).

Perhaps this is enough to illustrate some of the ways by which experimental research in social education might be improved. Other suggestions could be given—try to avoid too small and/or biased samples; discuss alternative hypotheses that might account for obtained results (e.g., see Cook & Campbell, 1979); don’t mistake random assignment for random selection, etc. But possibilities for improvement to not exist only in experimental research. Let me offer some ideas, therefore, about how the quality of nonexperimental research studies can be improved.

Improving Survey Research

1. Pretest all questionnaires or interview schedules. Of some 15 survey studies reported in TRSE over the last eight years, none indicated that the questionnaire or interview schedule used was checked beforehand (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1987). Pilot testing a small group similar to the group to whom the questionnaire or interview schedule is to be administered helps to reveal lack of clarity, bias, and/or ambiguity in some questions before it is too late to make changes in them.

2. Check the validity and reliability of the questionnaire or interview schedule being used. Many studies which report survey results do not indicate if, or how, the validity and reliability of the survey instrument was checked. Like any measuring instrument, a questionnaire or interview schedule needs to be checked for reliability and validity to insure that data obtained are related to what the researcher is trying to assess. Out of a total 46 studies reviewed in TRSE that were published between 1978–1986, only
slightly more than half (25) report some attempt to check instrument reliability, while a startling 32 (70%) report no attempt to check validity (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1987)! Content validity, at least, can be assessed through the use of independent judges who rate each of the questions to be asked in terms of whether they measure the variables the researcher has in mind. The researcher can then revise any to which the judges object.

3. Think about the length of the questionnaire or interview schedule. It should be neither too long nor too short. This, of course, is a matter of judgment, but researchers need to consider whether their instruments are sufficiently long to provide them with enough information concerning what they are looking for, yet not so long that respondents become tired, or bored, or careless in answering the questions. The length of a survey instrument may seem too obvious a point to mention, but more than once I have neglected to respond to a survey because the length of the questionnaire discouraged me from doing so.

4. Check for sampling bias. How representative is the accepting sample (those who actually respond to the questions) of the specific group being surveyed? This depends, of course, on the percentage of responses returned. When only a small percentage of responses are received, it may be misleading for the researcher to represent his or her findings as indicative of the invited sample. A simple check on this is to interview a small sample of nonresponding subjects to see how, or if, their views differ markedly from those of the respondents. A second (and sometimes, even a third) administration of the questionnaire also can help to increase the percentage of responses returned.

5. Check respondent knowledge about the subject before administering the questionnaire or interview schedule. This is to make sure that they actually possess some knowledge concerning that which they are to be questioned about. Otherwise, the researcher cannot be sure that the respondents’ replies represent what the respondents actually know (or how they feel) about the issues(s) being surveyed.

6. Be sure that you and your respondents speak the same language. This again may seem an obvious point to make, but several years of experience in helping students design questionnaires has shown me that this cannot automatically be assumed. Sometimes a particular term, in fact, can mean the exact opposite of what the researcher intends. Babbie (1983, p. 230) describes an example of a survey in Appalachia where the word “very,” in the colloquial language of the region, apparently was closer to what people in other parts of the country meant by “fairly” or even “poorly.” Thus, when residents of the area responded “very well” to an inquiry about their health, they actually meant that they were just getting along.

7. Train all individuals who will administer the questionnaire or interview schedule to ensure that they are able to administer it correctly. This can help to ensure that the data that one gets will be both reliable and valid. Such training should include a trial run to check on the manner of ad-
ministration. If possible, the use of videotapes to provide feedback on this can be helpful.

7. Make sure that both researcher and respondents are operating from the same frame of reference—i.e., that respondents are clear about what the researcher expects regarding the questions being asked. This guards against differential expectations leading to erroneous interpretations by the researcher. This is related to the point made in #5 above. For example, if a researcher were to ask, “What do you think about what goes on in your history class?”, one student might respond with regard to the kinds of activities used by the teacher; another may comment about the teacher’s homework assignments; while another talks about the teacher’s way of questioning students. Others, unsure of what the questioner wants, may not comment at all. A less ambiguous question might be: “What do you think of the way your teacher conducts class discussions?” The important point here is that the researcher needs to make it clear to respondents exactly what he or she wants them to respond to or comment about.

Improving Content Analysis Research

1. Be sure to select a random sample of the material to be analyzed. Many times the particular texts or other materials (or portions thereof) to be analyzed are not selected randomly, leading to possibly erroneous or incomplete conclusions. This is particularly distressing since random sampling is much easier to achieve in content analysis than it is in most other research methodologies.

2. Develop and present an argument as to how the data selected for analysis relates to a particular hypothesis or inference of the researcher. Many researchers do not make clear why they think their findings support particular inferences. Suppose, for example, that a researcher were to infer, based on a content analysis of the pictures and descriptions of women in secondary school U.S. History textbooks published since 1960, that there has been a change in the self-image of American women over the last twenty years. The specific reasons for this inference need to be itemized and explained.

3. Insure that the categories selected or developed for analysis are clear and meaningful. One possibility here is to use another rater as a check on the classification system the researcher intends to use. Should interrater agreement be low, this is a pretty good sign that further work needs to be done to eliminate ambiguity. When more than one rater is used, interrater agreement indexes should be reported.

4. Analyze both manifest and latent content. Most content analysis studies consider only the manifest content of a document. Words, phrases, and pictures are counted and categorized according to the coding scheme of the researcher. But the hidden meanings which words, phrases and pictures convey also should be analyzed. Suppose, for example, a researcher is in-
interested in determining how women and minorities are presented in elementary social studies texts. One way to go about this would be to identify what kinds of terms are used to describe women and minorities and count how often they are used. The feeling the researcher gets from reading the descriptions of the actions of women and minorities, however, may give quite a different impression of the message the analyzed document presents, and should be discussed. This rarely occurs. The degree of agreement between the researcher's analyses of the manifest and latent content is almost never discussed in social studies research (Fraenkel, 1987).

**Improving Correlational or Causal-Comparative Research**

1. Be careful not to imply that correlation indicates causation. Although the fact that correlation does not mean causation is one of the most frequently mentioned caveats in research courses and research texts (e.g., Borg & Gall, 1983; Kerlinger, 1986; Vockell, 1983; Wallen, 1974; Wiersma, 1987), many studies still imply, on the basis of a significant correlation, that a cause and effect relationship exists.

2. Don't confuse statistical significance with educational (or practical) significance. This error is similar to that which is found so often in experimental studies. The interpretation of the magnitude of a correlation coefficient continues to be one of the most misunderstood aspects of research in social studies education. Correlational coefficients which range from .20 to .35 show only a slight relationship between variables, even though they may be statistically significant. A correlation of .20, for example, indicates that only four per cent of the variance in the two variables that have been correlated is common to both. Such correlations have almost no value in any practical sense. A correlation of at least .50 must be obtained before any crude predictions can be made concerning groups, although they are usually of little help in making individual predictions. Even then such predictions are likely to be frequently in error, since they indicate only a 25 per cent common variance. It is only when a correlation ranging somewhere from .65 or higher is obtained that individual predictions that are reasonably accurate for most purposes can be made. Correlations over .85 indicate a close relationship between the variables correlated, and are useful in predicting both group and individual performance, but correlations this high are rarely obtained in social studies research (Borg & Gall, 1983).

3. Analyze as many relevant subgroups within the total sample being studied as possible. Many times important relationships may be obscured when correlations are computed just for the total sample, rather than for certain subgroups within it as well. Many sizable correlation coefficients often can be found when subgroups (e.g., males and females) are looked at that would be missed when only a sample as a whole is considered. Sometimes this results in the erroneous conclusion that no relationships exist between certain variables when there may be some.
Improving Focused Observational Research

1. Don't use an observation form with too many categories. As with questionnaires and interview schedules, researchers must take care that their observational measuring instruments (e.g., tally sheets, flow charts, etc.) are neither too long nor too short. Overly long observation instruments require too much of observers, while overly short ones produce only a partial analysis of what one is observing. The difficulty involved in using an overly complicated tally sheet has been the downfall of many a graduate student.

2. Check on the interrater agreement of observers. As with content analyses, the interrater reliability of observers needs to be checked, and a high degree of reliability (I would argue for at least .80) ensured. Once again, reliability agreement indexes should be reported.

3. Make sure that observers work independently of one another.

4. Be sure to take a random or systematic sampling of whatever is being observed. Observing just the beginning of a class, for example, or only on Wednesdays, often can mislead researchers. Many reports of observations in social studies classrooms do not make clear exactly when, or during what period of time, the observations took place (Fraenkel, 1987).

Improving Ethnographic Research

1. Reflect on your own subjectivity. A criticism with which ethnographers have wrestled for years is that it is very easy for the researcher's biases to influence his or her descriptions. Such a criticism, however, is by no means limited to ethnographic studies. All researchers are affected by personal bias. The questions which a researcher decides to include on a questionnaire, for example, indicate the researcher's interests. The task for all of us is to limit our bias. One way to do this in ethnographic research is to try and take into account one's biases by describing, in detail, one's thoughts about what one is observing; in effect, to write memos to oneself about what one is thinking (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

2. Do your best to blend into the woodwork. Many times the subjects of a study will attempt to create a false impression of themselves, especially during the early stages. Teachers might not yell at any students, for example, or be especially patient. Students may be unusually cooperative. Principals may disrupt their normal routines. Accordingly, the researcher needs to act in such a way that the activities and conversations which occur in the researcher's presence are no different from those which occur in the researcher's absence. A thorough understanding of the research setting, therefore, is crucial to determine this. Certain data may not ring true. Some data, in fact, may need to be discounted once they are interpreted in context (Deutscher, 1973).

3. Be a conversational rather than a formal questioner. This idea is related to the suggestion in #2 just above. A more-or-less conversational form of interchange with subjects is more likely to engender natural, non-
staged responses on their part than is a formal administration of an inter-
view schedule or questionnaire.

4. Take care that you are not unduly influenced by subjects who are the
most talkative. Oftentimes, a researcher will talk with certain students a
disproportionate amount of time compared to other students for the simple
reason that they are the most willing to talk. This can result in misleading
impressions and interpretations. This suggestion should not be taken to
mean that you must talk with all subjects for the same amount of time;
rather, that a researcher should not rely exclusively on only a small number
of subjects whose ideas may be somewhat atypical. Less talkative subjects
should not be given up on too quickly.

5. Share your feelings about experiences you observe with your subjects.
A researcher’s feelings can help him or her not only to establish rapport
with subjects, but also to gain insight into their feelings. Bogdan and Biklen
(1982) describe an instance in which an observer was overwhelmed with a
feeling that things were out of control in a junior high school cafeteria that
she visited for the first time. When she mentioned her feelings in the
teachers’ room, several teachers began to discuss their feelings during their
first few weeks on cafeteria duty. Discussing her feelings enabled the
observer to gain insight into the feelings of the teachers in this school (Bog-

Improving Historical Research

1. Indicate how the validity of the documents used in the historical anal-
ysis was established. A key question in all historical research is whether the
sources the researcher uses are authentic, that is, genuine. The steps the
researcher took to ensure that the documents he or she analyzed were gen-
uine need to be spelled out in some detail. This is a frequent omission in
much of the historical research in social studies education (Fraenkel, 1987).

2. Indicate the point of view and qualifications of the author of all docu-
ments analyzed. One frequently finds various individuals quoted or referred
to in historical inquiries without comments by the researcher as to why he or
she believes the author’s comments are worthy of note. It is difficult for the
reader to assess whether an author might have been predisposed to respond
or comment in a particular way. The possibility of bias in historical doc-
uments, and the implications of such, is rarely discussed by those who do
historical research in the social studies field (Fraenkel, 1987).

Some Ideas For Improving Research in General

1. Think about questions of purpose and meaning before you begin. In
much social studies research, there is no attempt made to justify a study in
any larger sense, to make clear the value of the research to the social studies
community (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1987). It seems to be implied that simply
because the researcher himself or herself is interested in the question at issue
that this makes it an important question to pursue. Researchers might well
query themselves as to why a study is worth doing. What knowledge will it contribute to the profession? How will this knowledge be helpful? And to whom? What will the results mean in the larger scheme of things? For example, will certain characteristics, if revealed, indicate that subjects are disadvantaged in some sense, or merely different? Will certain methods or activities help students learn social studies concepts more easily? In this regard, perhaps it is helpful to remember that meaning is not drawn from data, but rather imposed on it.

2. Encourage volunteers as subjects. It is often standard advice that the use of volunteers can be a threat to the generalizability of a study, and hence should be avoided. This is true so far as it goes, but it is important to note that a negative result in intervention studies when volunteers are the subjects is a strong statement concerning the effectiveness of the treatment. If a treatment does not work with volunteers, whom we would assume would be more motivated than most, this is a pretty good indication it will not be effective with most other subjects.

3. Consider the context within which a study takes place. Much experimental, or quasi-experimental research, for example, involves only one classroom, at most a very few, in which a treatment is applied under atypical conditions. Hence the applicability of the results to what most social studies classrooms teachers do on an ongoing basis is often hard to see. This may be one of the reasons why most classroom teachers pay little attention to social studies research. Furthermore, little attention is usually paid to the nature of the school environment within which most teachers work, and whether it would be possible for teachers to manipulate students in ways similar to manipulation in research studies.

4. Indicate how the research relates to previous studies of the question at issue. Oftentimes there is no tie-in made to other, related work, nor any indication of what other researchers have found with regard to the same, or similar questions (Fraenkel, 1987). Attempting to relate one's own research efforts to the work of others is another contribution that social studies researchers could make relatively easily to the building of a cumulative knowledge base in the field.

5. Formulate a hypothesis when appropriate. Many social studies researchers undertake their investigations without formulating and testing a prediction of some sort. Some critics would argue that the generation of hypotheses before a study begins limits the researcher's observations, in that he or she may overlook or ignore data that are not related to the hypothesis. The value of formulating a hypothesis, however, is threefold: (a) it forces us to think more deeply about what we want to investigate and often clarifies what the outcome(s) are that we are looking for; (b) it stimulates us to begin thinking about how we can test our thinking; and (c) it encourages the development of a body of knowledge. Many studies,
designed to investigate the same hypothesis, containing different moderator variables, might contribute to the building of the knowledge base that the profession so badly needs, yet at present does not have.

6. Be sure to define key terms clearly. The lack of clearly defined terms is one of the most common findings in the literature. In much social studies research, the reader is often unsure as to what the researcher means by many of the terms he or she uses. Terms like active learner, critical thinking, values development, citizenship education, and others are frequently not defined. In our review of studies published in TRSE since 1978, for example, Norm Wallen and I found that almost 30 per cent (13 out of 46) lacked any definition whatsoever of the terms involved (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1987). It would be helpful to define all key terms operationally—that is, to specify observable characteristics, behaviors, or conditions (along with how they can be measured). For example, to define motivation as a desire to learn is not very clear. A clearer definition would be: “any statements or actions an individual makes or takes which, in the judgment of at least two teachers or counselors, indicates the individual’s desire to learn.”

7. Use multiple statistical tools to analyze findings. Here, as in so many of the above, a little extra preparation and effort could pay extra dividends. Many, if not most, researchers utilize only one statistical procedure when they analyze the data they obtain. Most usually, means and standard deviations are computed. But frequently additional statistics can be computed and presented, including as appropriate percentages, medians, ranges, correlation coefficients, and effect sizes. This can provide additional information as to how various groups compare (e.g., see Powell & Powell, 1984).

8. Finally, try on occasion to replicate previous research. Almost all research in social studies education consists of work done in isolation. With rare exception (e.g., see Larkins & McKinney, 1982), the replication of previous work under somewhat different settings, with different subjects or modified treatments, in order to contribute to the building of a cumulative body of knowledge about social studies education is ignored (Fraenkel, 1987). As Shaver suggested, the replication of research findings systematically would not only help “to establish their reliability and generalizability” but also past research efforts could be used “as a basis for designing studies to correct methodological errors and build on past findings” (Nelson & Shaver, 1985, p. 411). There is no reason, for example, that more researchers might not cross-validate their research by checking their findings with the findings of others who used different methods. Thus, a researcher who found, through an interview study, that teachers said they asked certain kinds of questions in class could check to see if they really do so by means of an observational study.

All of the suggestions I have proposed in this article are fairly easy to implement if researchers will only think about doing so. As I mentioned
before, many of these ideas have been suggested by others from time to time. My intent, however, was not to be original. It was to remind and encourage the profession to think about the quality of our research efforts.

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Shaver, J. P. (1979). The usefulness of educational research in curricular/instruc-


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