7-1-1997

Theory and research in social education 25/03

National Council for the Social Studies. College and University Faculty Assembly

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THEORY AND RESEARCH IN SOCIAL EDUCATION

Volume 25 Number 3 Summer 1997

The Official Journal of the College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies

Theory and Research in Social Education is the official journal of the College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies. Published quarterly, it is a general review open to all social studies educators, social scientists, historians, and philosophers. A general statement of purpose can be found at the end of the journal. Copyright 1997 by the College and University Faculty Assembly of the National Council for the Social Studies. All rights reserved.
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

All members of the social education community, and CUFA members in particular, are invited to nominate articles previously published in *Theory and Research in Social Education* for inclusion in a planned book commemorating the 25th anniversary of the journal. The aim of this project is to collect articles representative of the full spectrum of theory and research in social education and that have enduring significance. Nominators are encouraged to consider exemplary research studies and articles that have had meaningful impact on theory, research or practice in social education as well as articles that have represented significant, yet under-recognized perspectives on social education.

The 25th anniversary of *TRSE* is an appropriate time to mark the accomplishments of one of CUFA's most visible components, it's journal. This project will provide an opportunity for social educators to engage in retrospective and prospective analysis of the field, particularly the scholarship published in the leading research journal. The planned book will consist primarily of reprints of selected articles from *TRSE*, with brief contextualizing introductions. There will also be a small number of original essays examining the major themes of research in social education over the past quarter century.

The current editor of *TRSE* along with a panel of consulting editors, representing a broad array of scholarly interests and perspectives, will serve as the jury for inclusion of previously published material.

**Guidelines for Submitting Nominations**

Nominations should be submitted via a letter that includes the following: (1) Full bibliographic information for each article nominated. (2) A brief statement describing the significance of work(s) nominated.

Nominations will be accepted via electronic mail. (Nominators please include your postal address, telephone and fax numbers with electronic submissions.) Self-nominations are appropriate. All nominators will be acknowledged in the book. Deadline for receipt of nominations is December 1, 1997.

Send nominations to:

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A LESSON IN DEMOCRACY?
CUFA, PROPOSITION 187, AND THE BOYCOTT OF CALIFORNIA

In 1992, Marker and Mehlinger's review of the social studies curriculum concluded that the apparent consensus that citizenship education is the primary purpose of social studies is "almost meaningless." Few disagree that the purpose of social studies is "to prepare youth so that they possess the knowledge, values, and skills needed for active participation in society" (Marker and Mehlinger, 1992, p. 832). The devil, of course, is in the details. Is "good citizenship" achieved through the study of history (Whelan, 1997) or must students examine contemporary social problems (Evans & Saxe, 1996) or public policy (Oliver & Shaver, 1966) or social roles (Superka & Hawke, 1982) or social taboos (Hunt & Metcalf, 1955) or become astute critics of society (Engle & Ochoa, 1988). Marker and Mehlinger reason that it is unlikely that research will resolve these differences because the various positions that characterize social studies are mainly assertions of personal bias and preference.

Regarding the latter, I agree in part. "Scientific" research cannot supply us with an answer to the question of the purpose of social studies, because it is not something that can be discovered. We—educators and citizens—must decide what ought to be the purpose of social studies. That means asking what kind of society (and world) do we want to live in? And, in particular, in what sense of democracy do we want this to be a democratic society?

In order to construct meaning for social studies as citizenship education we must engage these questions not as merely abstract or rhetorical, but in relation to our lived experience and our professional practice as researchers and educators. With this in mind, CUFA’s decision to not meet in California because of the passage of Proposition 187 (which restricts access to education and other basic human rights for children) and the on-going discussion of that decision within CUFA and NCSS, provides an important, and perhaps historic, opportunity for social educators to explore and give meaning to notions of democracy, citizenship and citizenship education that we act upon. In constructing these meanings there is, however, more at stake than the expression or promotion of personal biases and preferences.

In 1994, at the CUFA business meeting, I along with several colleagues introduced a resolution to be discussed and voted on by CUFA members in attendance. That resolution, which passed on a show of hands, enjoined CUFA not to meet in California until such time that
Proposition 187 was no longer in effect. A similar resolution, which called for NCSS to also find a meeting place outside of California for its planned meeting in Anaheim in 1998, was presented to the NCSS House of Delegates in Phoenix and voted down by an overwhelming majority.

Following the Phoenix meeting, an independent group of CUFA/NCSS members worked together as the Emergency Committee of Social Educators for Social Justice to publicize CUFA's decision to boycott California and encourage other professional education organizations to do the same. Over 500 press releases announcing CUFA's action were sent to media outlets, professional organizations, elected officials and convention and tourism bureaus in California. While the CUFA resolution called on the leadership to encourage other organizations to boycott California, I am not aware of any actions taken by the CUFA Executive Committee to fulfill this charge.

In the past few years, the CUFA boycott has not been a burning issue. Op-ed pieces (pro and con) have been published in CUFA newsletters and there was a flurry of discussion on the TRSE-L (electronic forum) this past spring. There was virtually no discussion of the subject at the business meeting in Chicago (1995), despite the fact that CUFA sponsored a symposium on "The Role of Social Studies Educators as Scholars and Advocates: The Case of California Proposition 187" at the conference. The CUFA business meeting in Washington (1996) witnessed an aborted parliamentary maneuver to reconsider the resolution and the passage of a motion from the floor instructing the CUFA Executive Board to investigate and present plans for an alternative site for the 1998 meeting for discussion this fall in Cincinnati. The Spring 1997 CUFA News reports that the boycott will be "an item for discussion" at CUFA's business meeting in Cincinnati, where "proposals related to the Resolution will be entertained." Nearly three years after passing the resolution, no proposals or alternative plans for the 1998 CUFA meeting have been presented to the membership, although, I know from attending the spring 1997 CUFA Board meeting that there has been some preliminary reconnaissance.

At their spring 1997 meeting—three and a half years after the passage of Proposition 187—the NCSS Board of Directors "resolved, that NCSS condemns California Proposition 187, and will provide for a forum at the 1998 NCSS Annual Conference in Anaheim to educate the social studies community and the public about the significant issues involved, and will refuse to schedule future NCSS conferences in California while these legislative measures are in effect" ("More on CUFA’s Resolution to Boycott the NCSS California Meeting," p. 4). A report in the same issue of CUFA News noted that the NCSS Board supported this action based upon "a final vote of 9 to 8 with 3 abstentions."
In the case of NCSS, its Board of Directors has voted to condemn Proposition 187 and to boycott California in the future (an action consistent with a large number of professional education organizations, if a few years after the fact), although the Anaheim meeting will go on as scheduled because of "contractual obligations." This action comes after the NCSS House of Delegates (the representative assembly of the organization) rejected a similar proposal in Phoenix. In addition, NCSS has appealed to the CUFA Executive Board, asking that CUFA reconsider its decision not to meet in California ("More on CUFA's Resolution," p. 3).

As for CUFA, the Executive Board has not developed plans for an alternative site for the 1998 in a timely manner. This delay contributes to a "crisis" atmosphere regarding the 1998 meeting. Instead, the Board has offered entreaties regarding the importance of organizational elections, "divisive actions that pit professors against teachers," encouragement to increase communication between CUFA and NCSS by attending the Anaheim meeting, and raising the (unsubstantiated) specter of financial insolvency for CUFA if it were to not meet with NCSS (see "More on CUFA's Resolution," p. 4).

The issue of CUFA's boycott of California presents an interesting circumstance from which to judge the conceptions of democracy that we hold and that we employed in governing our own professional organizations. Statements made in recent years at CUFA business meetings, in CUFA News, and on TRSE's on-line forum frequently apply the notion of democracy as majority rule. Arguments follow these lines, for example: "California voters supported Proposition 187, so who is CUFA to say that they are wrong? It's an issue for Californians." Or, "CUFA voted to boycott California back in 1994, but a lot of people have had time to think about it since and wouldn't support the boycott now, so we ought to have another vote." This understanding of democracy equates it with elections and voting. The procedure of allowing individuals to express a choice on a proposal, resolution, bill, or candidate is the perhaps the most widely taught precept in the social studies curriculum. Individual agency is construed primarily as one's vote and voting procedures override all else with regard to what counts as democracy. Democracy, in this case, is not defined by outcomes but by application of procedures.

There is, of course, nothing inherently wrong with majoritarianism as expressed in the above examples, but it is not an entirely unproblematic conception of democracy. The notion of democracy as defined by procedure, rather than outcomes, is the foundation of
Opportunities Lost: Teachers Learning About the New York State Social Studies Framework

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Abstract
The recent spate of state and national curriculum policies promote changes in teaching and learning in social studies. Yet these policies are largely silent on the issue of how teachers will unlearn what they now know and learn to teach differently. In this study of 16 professional development opportunities around the recent New York State social studies framework, I explore three issues: the range of opportunities teachers have to learn about the framework, the content and pedagogy of those sessions, and teachers' responses to the framework and the professional development sessions they attended.

They (professional development opportunities) jump all over the place. One day it's curriculum, one day is about alternative assessment...They're jumping all over the place and I don't have anything concrete that I can go back with in the classroom. And until they do that, I don't see how we can implement anything that might possibly be new and different.
—a high school teacher on the problems of professional development

Considerable energy has been directed toward developing new national and state curriculum policies in social studies. National standards in United States history, world history, civics, and economics have been released recently. State-level activity in California, Kentucky, and New York has produced new curriculum frameworks. All of these proposals promote dramatic changes in the teaching and learning of social studies. All decry teacher-centered instruction, textbook-driven lessons, knowledge as a parade of facts, students as passive learners. All demand that teaching and learning become more active, substantive, and engaging, and that the high expectations held for some students become the standards for all.

These are noble ambitions. Whether and/or how they will be realized is the subject of empirical studies to come. In the meantime, however, there is a curious irony implicit in the reforms offered to date. For while
S. G. Grant

reformers alternatively urge, cajole, and demand that teaching and learning change, the reform documents are largely silent on one seemingly key issue—how teachers like the one quoted above will unlearn what they now know and learn to teach differently.

A survey of recent social studies policies shows that much attention is given to defining and outlining what students should know and do. For example, each of the six standards in the New York State framework, the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Preliminary Draft Framework for Social Studies (Ward, 1995), begins with “Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding...” One can question whether the authors’ carry through on these ideas (Grant, 1997). But the implication remains: Current reforms focus on student rather than teacher learning.

On the one hand, this makes sense. After all, it is the change in students’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will be assessed. Yet no serious change in students can be expected without a change in teachers’ instructional thinking and practices. The research on the connection between professional development and school change is voluminous (cf. Fullan, 1993; Hawley & Rosenholtz, 1984; Lieberman, 1995; Sarason, 1990) and supports Smylie’s (1995) contention that, “we will fail...to improve schooling for children until we acknowledge the importance of schools not only as places for teachers to work but also as places for teachers to learn” (p. 92). Changing social studies teachers’ ideas and approaches presumably will demand new learning. And yet, questions about what teachers need to learn and how they will learn it are left unexplored.3

The reform documents’ inattention to teachers’ learning magnifies a broader concern. For policies are but one way teachers might learn about new ideas. Teachers can choose a wide range of venues: local workshops and inservice, state and national conferences, professional journals, university coursework. Availability is important. The kind and degree of change expected of teachers suggests that few will make it on their own. Yet teachers and others routinely decry the weak substance and pedantic instruction of the opportunities available (Cohen & Barnes, 1993). Newer forms of professional development—e.g., collaborative networks, professional development schools—seem to yield more productive results (Lieberman, 1995). Participation in these efforts is growing. The vast majority of teachers, however, have little experience outside the traditional professional development structure. If and how practicing teachers learn new ideas and approaches within the available opportunities is an area ripe for study.

In this paper, I use the recent New York state social studies draft framework as the context in which to explore how elementary, middle, and high school teachers learn about new ideas. Sixteen professional development sessions related to the framework were observed. Analysis of those sessions yielded three themes. The first, “many opportunities, but few takers,” looks at the range of professional development opportunities available. Teachers had access to several learning opportunities. They attended
very few and most of those were of local origin. The second theme explores the content and pedagogy of the sessions and plays on the adage that "all that glitters is not gold." The introduction (or "roll-out" in New York parlance) of a new state framework provides an opportunity to capture teachers' interest and energies. A look at the content and pedagogy of the sessions observed suggests otherwise. The third theme, "how did you help me?" captures the dominant response of teachers. Some teachers are sanguine about their instructional practices, but others seem quite interested in reworking them. As they do, however, they see little assistance coming from either the state social studies framework or the professional development opportunities available. Taken together these themes suggest that the activities around the new state framework became opportunities lost.

The Study

The research behind this paper comes from a multi-year examination of the relationships between national, state, and local education reform efforts and school/classroom practices. That project explores these relationships in several areas—social studies, English/language arts, and mathematics.

Three questions framed the social studies piece of the study during the first year: What sense do teachers make of state social studies reforms? How do teachers' responses to multiple reforms interact? What influences teachers' responses to reforms?

This paper is based on a new research question added during the second year of study: How do teachers learn about new ideas and practices? The specific questions explored are:

1) What professional development opportunities did teachers have to learn about the New York State social studies framework?

2) What was the content and pedagogy of those sessions?

3) What sense did teachers make of the content presented (i.e., the state framework) and of the way it was presented (i.e., the learning opportunity)?

Data were gathered through observations, interviews, and document analysis. Teachers' classrooms were observed as part of the larger policy and practice study. For this paper, however, I rely on observations of 16 different state and local opportunities to learn about the new New York State social studies framework. Examples include state-level framework roll-out sessions, professional conference sessions, district-level inservices and workshops, and school-level department meetings. Formal interviews were conducted with two district-level social studies supervisors (one ur-
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ban, one suburban) and the classroom teachers observed (two urban; four suburban). Open-ended and broadly constructed interview protocols were developed for these groups. Informal interviews were conducted with several teachers who participated in various opportunities to learn. Finally, document analysis was conducted primarily in three areas: state-level reform documents, district and school-level policies, and the materials distributed during professional development opportunities.

My analysis reflects the interpretative tradition within qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Erickson, 1992). That stance highlights the importance of context and the ways individuals construct meaning. This means that, for example, I look not only at the artifacts of professional development opportunities, but also at the experience—that of the teacher participants and/or the observer—of those in attendance.

To analyze these data I coded field notes, interview transcripts, and documents with three general interests in mind. One was describing the range and array of professional development opportunities available. A second interest was how these opportunities were presented. Here I focused on the content presented and the pedagogical approaches taken. Finally, I was interested in the sense teachers constructed of these opportunities. More specifically I looked at a) how teachers interpreted the newly-offered state social studies framework and b) how they interpreted the opportunities themselves. The three themes noted above reflect my analysis.

The Context: The New York State Social Studies Framework

Before examining the professional development opportunities observed, let me sketch the context in two ways. The first is a brief history of how the draft social studies framework came to be. The second is a survey of the framework components.

Social Studies Policymaking in New York State

Until just recently, the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Preliminary Draft Framework for Social Studies (Ward, 1995) was the latest in a series of state-level actions. In 1991, then Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol initiated an ambitious reform program under the umbrella of the New Compact for Learning (New York State Education Department, 1991). The Compact became the raison d'être for curriculum framework development in all school subjects through the assertion that, “The Regents will state more specifically the skills, knowledge, and values students should acquire as a result of elementary and secondary education” (p. 4). Work on the social studies curriculum, however, predated the Compact. Two task forces, the first established in 1989, issued reports which reviewed the existing curriculum and offered a range of recommendations.6

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New York State has a long history of preparing state curriculum or "syllabi." The reports of neither committee, however, constituted a new state curriculum. So when the New Compact for Learning came out in 1991, a third committee, the Social Studies Curriculum and Assessment Committee, was appointed. This group was charged with developing "desired learning outcomes" and recommending "elements" of a state-wide assessment (Cornbleth, 1995, p. 177). In November 1994, almost three years later, a draft document was about to go to the state Board of Regents when Commissioner Sobol pulled it back. In a surprise turn, the committee was dismissed and an educational consultant (Tom Ward and Associates) was employed to revise the draft.

In June 1995, the Board of Regents authorized the dissemination of a draft framework as revised by Sobol's appointee. The Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Preliminary Draft Framework for Social Studies (Ward, 1995) was disseminated to educators across the state through mailings and state and local "roll-out" sessions. After a year of comment, the New York State Education Department staff revised the framework and presented it to the Regents for their approval. The final document, Learning Standards for Social Studies (New York State Education Department, 1996) was accepted in June 1996 with dissemination scheduled for the fall. Education Commissioner, Richard Mills, has several times announced that, with the new standards must come attention to the "problem of capacity," meaning teachers' capacity to enact changes in their instructional practices. To that end, he is pursuing two paths. One is seeking $300 million dollars in additional state funding for professional development. The second is reallocating present monies to better orchestrate the delivery of professional development services.

Though still a "draft," the 1995 state social studies framework was the subject of a wide array of professional development opportunities. Before looking at those opportunities, however, a quick survey of the framework is in order.

Surveying the Draft Social Studies Framework

The New York State social studies framework is divided into four principal sections over 48 pages. The first, labeled "The Setting," is a brief description (three pages) of the context in which the various state-level curriculum, instruction, and assessment frameworks were developed. State documents such as the New Compact for Learning are cited as key, but national reform efforts like Goals 2000 standards projects are also cited.

An overview of social studies as a school subject constitutes the second section of the framework. Entitled "Rationale, Trends, and Issues," this eight page section offers a rationale for studying social studies, a list of on-going issues, and eight "dimensions" of teaching and learning. The rationale emphasizes the traditional social studies goal of responsible citizenship. The issues are a list of conventional distinctions: history vs. the social sciences? factual knowledge vs. the process of learning? curricular
breadth or depth? The dimensions of teaching and learning—intellectual
skills, multidisciplinary approaches, depth and breadth, unity and diver-
sity, multiculturalism and multiple perspectives, patterns to organize data,
multiple learning environments and resources, and student-centered teach-
ing, learning, and assessment—are intended to "challenge what we teach,
how we teach, and how we assess student learning" (Ward, 1995, p. 7).

The bulk of the framework appears in the third section. In these 33
pages, the relationship among Standards (statements of broad goals), Per-
formance Indicators (statements specific to what students should know
and be able to do), and Performance Tasks (examples of learning activities
at three levels: elementary, intermediate, and commencement) is outlined.

Consider an example. Standard 1 states:

Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate
their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments,
and turning points in the history of the United States and New

Four Performance Indicators are listed. Indicator 1-B, for example, states
that students should "recognize the connections and interactions of people
and events across time from a variety of perspectives" (p. 21). The interme-
diate-level Performance Task for this indicator states:

Investigate key turning points in U.S. history and explain the
reasons these events or developments are important (e.g., Euro-
pean settlement, writing the Declaration of Independence and
the Constitution, the Civil War, industrialization, significant re-
form movements, and the Cold War); use a variety of sources to
view these developments from different perspectives and to
identify varying points of view of the people involved. (p. 21)

A second Performance Indicator (1-C) states that students should "discern
the roles and contributions of individuals and groups to social, political,
economic, cultural, and religious activities" (p. 21). An elementary-level
Performance Task for this indicator is:

Examine the roots of American culture, its development from
many different traditions, and the ways many people from a
variety of groups and backgrounds played a role in creating it.
(p. 21)

The last section of the framework is titled, "Assessment Principles
for Social Studies." This short, two-page section consists of two lists: "Gen-
eral Principles" of assessment and "Challenges of Change." Principles in-
clude the importance of the state role in "establishing and maintaining con-
sistency and high standards" (Ward, 1995, p. 47) and the need for "inter-
Opportunities Lost

disciplinary assessments that help students make higher cognitive connec-
tions" (p. 48). Challenges suggest concerns about the relationship between
state and local assessments, ensuring equity of opportunity for all students,
and identifying and helping students who need extra assistance in meet-
ing the standards (p. 48).

The Problem and Promise of Teacher Learning

Educational researchers largely agree on two points. One is that if all
students are to have access to high quality learning experiences, most teach-
ers will have to substantially change their extant pedagogical practices
(Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Shulman,
1987). Researchers also agree that these changes are unlikely to occur given
the scatter of staff development workshops teachers have traditionally ex-
perienced (Cohen & Barnes, 1993; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996;
Fullan, 1991). Agreement on the problem notwithstanding, considerable diversity
exists around the promise of changing teachers' practice. Some analysts
(Kozol, 1991; Hedges, Laine, & Greenwald, 1994) argue that substantive
change will not occur until inequities in educational resources are ad-
dressed. Others focus on curriculum. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (1987), for example,
argues that curriculum is "the most important controllable influence on
what our children know and don't know" (p. 20). Still others (Fullan, 1991;
Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1991) emphasize the importance of changing school
structures. These observers argue that a range of actions—providing time
for teachers to collaborate, loosening bureaucratic constraints, creating
school-wide goals, revising standardized assessments—are necessary be-
fore teachers can and will revise their current practices.

While not ignoring structural concerns, analysts increasingly suggest
that changing instructional practices is a function of teacher learning. Tak-
ing a cue from constructivist learning theory, the argument here is that
teachers must unlearn much of what they know about teaching at the same
time they are learning new ideas and approaches (Cohen, Talbert, &
McLaughlin, 1993; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Smylie, 1995).10

The teacher learning argument rests on two premises. First, while
resources, curriculum, school structures, and the like influence teachers' prac-
tices, these factors push teachers in no particular direction (Grant, 1996;
Hertert, 1996). Second, profound instructional changes will not occur until
teachers sense a legitimate challenge to their current practices and have
substantive opportunities to learn how to think and act differently (Grant,
1994; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Jennings, 1996). In an oft-
cited piece, Rowan (1990) observes that control strategies like curriculum
policies, textbook adoptions, and standardized testing may have a global
effect on teachers' practices. But because these efforts do not deal with the
core elements of teaching and learning, they rarely have any profound or
S. G. Grant sustained effect. Rowan's analysis seems relevant to the teacher learning argument in two ways. First, if teachers' practices need to change, then attention should center on real issues of teaching and learning. Second, if teachers are going to learn how to think and teach differently through professional development opportunities, then the nature of those opportunities—the content taught, the pedagogy employed—requires examination.

New York State Education Commissioner Richard Mills' comment about the "problem of capacity" implies a connection between instructional change and teacher learning. But this is no simple matter. One issue is the irony of educational reform which positions teachers as both the object and the instrument of change (Warren, 1989). Teachers are an object of reform because reformers typically assume that students' poor academic performance stems largely from teachers' current practices. Changing those practices, whether they be curricular or instructional, demands a change in teachers. The irony, of course, is that teachers must also be the instrument of any real change. Outsiders may help teachers transform their pedagogical practices, but they can not do it for them. If teaching practice is to change, it must come through the individual decisions and actions of thousands of teachers. In this sense, then, teachers and teacher learning are both the problem and promise of educational reform.

That said, a second issue is the problem and promise of professional development. The problems are well established. If professional development is to yield it's promise, it seems fair to ask what changes are apparent in the way current opportunities are presented. Using the New York State social studies framework as a case in point, I look at the range of professional development opportunities available; the content and pedagogy of those opportunities; and how teachers make sense of the content taught (i.e., the state framework) and the way it was presented (i.e., the learning opportunities).

Researchers agree that if professional development is to yield it's promise of helping teachers learn to think and act differently, traditional approaches will have to change. With the recent turn toward constructivist views, ideas about teaching and learning have changed radically (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993). If professional development presenters take these ideas seriously, we should see evidence of several factors, among them a "curriculum" based in real issues of and ideas about teaching and learning and a pedagogy that differs from traditional teacher-centered practice (Novick, 1996). I examine these factors in light of the sessions observed in the discussion section of this paper.

Opportunities Lost

Across the 16 sessions observed, presenters and participants alike agreed that professional development is key to enacting the New York State social studies framework. From Commissioner Mills to district superintendents to building principals to classroom teachers, a consistent call for
professional development emerged. The roll-out of a new curricular framework offers an opportunity to capture teachers' attention and professional development sessions offer occasions to learn. Analysis of the available sessions, however, suggests that the power of those opportunities was lost. Three themes—"many opportunities; few takers," "all that glitters...," and "how did you help me?"—support that conclusion.

**Many Opportunities; Few Takers**

Teachers had access to a range of professional development opportunities to learn about new approaches to teaching social studies in general and the State social studies framework in particular. Yet the number of opportunities teachers attended was quite small. Beyond their individual reading of the state policy, most of the teachers in this study report learning about the new framework through a limited number of school and district-level sources. If professional development sessions are to be occasions to learn, then the first sense of opportunities lost comes in the form of opportunities not taken.

The new state social studies framework was discussed at a wide range of professional development opportunities. The 16 sessions observed for this study varied in terms of the session type, presenter(s)' affiliation, audience, and focus. (See Table 1.)

**Table 1**

Professional Development Opportunities (May 1995-July 1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Type</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State roll-out/</td>
<td>SED staff; Commissioner</td>
<td>Administrators; teachers</td>
<td>State frameworks; state testing program</td>
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<td>general (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>State roll-out/</td>
<td>SED staff; local administrators</td>
<td>Teachers; administrators</td>
<td>History &amp; structure of NYS social studies framework</td>
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<td>social studies (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>State social studies</td>
<td>SED staff</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>History &amp; structure of NYS social studies framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>conference (1)</td>
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Professional development opportunities included a range of formats (i.e., roll-out sessions, inservices and workshops, department meetings) and presenters (e.g., the State Education Commissioner to local teachers). Sessions appealed to a range of audiences. Teachers were not always the primary audience, but a number of teachers attended each session and some sessions were targeted toward them. A range of topics also arose. The new social studies framework was prominent, but other issues (primarily assessment) emerged.

Beyond these opportunities, teachers could also learn about the New York State framework from several other sources. Educational reform has been a hot topic on the national level for some time. New York state is no different: A reform movement has been a continual presence since the late 1980s. Teachers interested in following these efforts could do so through many venues. Media reports are one source. Controversies around national-level history frameworks (National Center for History in the Schools, 1994) and state-level reports (e.g., A Curriculum of Inclusion and One Nation, Many People) regularly made news. A second source is state and national professional organizations (e.g., New York State Council for Social Studies, National Council for Social Studies). These groups closely follow reform efforts in their professional newsletters, journals, and conferences. Teacher unions like the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers also give significant attention to reforms in their publications and conferences. Another source is university coursework. Teachers in this sample have access to reform documents through teacher education courses at local universities. One last source is the Internet. There teachers can access the various reform documents and ancillary materials as well as participate in numerous discussions about teaching and learning social studies.

Despite a plateful of available opportunities, the teachers in this sample were picky eaters. Of the opportunities observed, teachers attended relatively few. One high school teacher reports attending five sessions: two state roll-out meetings, the district inservice and workshop, and a department meeting. The five other teachers interviewed at length report attending substantially fewer sessions. All went to the requisite school and district sessions. Voluntary sessions, however, were less well attended. Two teachers went to a state roll-out meeting; another took a university course. No teachers reported attending to media reports, professional and teacher organization efforts, or Internet possibilities.

The range of opportunities available and the patterns of teachers' participation suggests two points. The first is that professional development sessions are only potential opportunities. Availability is no guarantee of participation. Most of the sessions were voluntary and, given a choice, teachers did not attend, or at least not en masse. So if it is important that all teachers hear the same messages, this did not occur.
The second point follows from the first: Activity is no guarantee of coherence. Multiple opportunities existed, but they represented a scatter of foci. Each session was a complete unit, yet the sessions were not coordinated such that ideas could be built and expanded over time. In that sense, these opportunities seem some distance from the notion of an "infrastructure" or "web" of professional development (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996). They also seem little different from those teachers and others routinely scorn.

At a general roll-out session, Education Commissioner Mills addressed these points. He talked emphatically about the need to drive "low quality" professional developers "out of business," to create a "curriculum of change for adults," and to establish a "great league" of professional development providers. The sessions observed, however, suggests little has changed. And if timing is anything in educational reform, the fragmented efforts which developed around the new state social studies policy represent opportunities lost.

All That Glitters...

The professional development opportunities observed were different in many ways. Yet they shared some important similarities. As noted, almost all were one-shot events; the sessions were complete units rather than part of an on-going series of learning opportunities. There were other similarities as well. In most sessions, the content was thin and fragmented, sending a mix of messages. The instruction was pedantic. A variety of methods were used, but presenter-centered information-giving dominated. The roll-out of a new curricular framework might have been an occasion to capture teachers' attention and energies. The professional development sessions observed, however, suggests otherwise. As another example of opportunity lost, the second theme plays on the adage that all that glitters is not gold.

The Content: A Mix of Messages

If we pursue the notion that these professional development sessions represent learning opportunities, then the apparent content or "curriculum" of the sessions observed was the new state social studies framework. Like many teachers, however, the presenters frequently padded the curriculum, attempting to cover far more ground than might be reasonably expected. The result—a series of conflicting, mixed, and thinly developed messages about the importance of the framework and the nature of the change expected.

Conflicting messages. The framework authors assert that the standards define the "what of the curriculum, but not the how" (Ward, 1995, p. 2; emphasis in original). From this, one would expect the professional development presenters would emphasize changes in the subject matter of social studies. Some did. But that message was blurred by a mélange of messages about content, instruction, and assessment.
According to the authors, the new social studies framework is part of a broad effort to “change the educational system in New York State” (Ward, 1995, p. 1). More specifically, the framework is designed to “provide direction for schools and districts as they construct curricula” by outlining the “knowledge, skills, and understandings” that students should be able to demonstrate (p. 2). How students develop these knowledge, skills, and understandings is a local decision. The framework and standards address what students will learn. Local educators are to decide how they will do so.

Several professional development presenters made this point. At rollout sessions devoted to the new policy, state education department (hereafter SED) representatives echoed the claim that the framework is about the “what,” not the “how,” and that local districts have “province” over how the content will be taught. This message was not lost on the attendees. At one session, a high school principal commented, “We can take care of our own, if SED just gets us the stuff promised.”

Whether or not the framework should emphasize the “what” (i.e., subject matter) over the “how” (i.e., instruction, assessment), that message was broadcast during several of the observed sessions. Just as often, however, conflicting messages about the focus and importance of the framework surfaced.

One set of conflicting messages suggested that the framework was about instructional change. During a general state roll-out session, for example, a member of the state Board of Regents said that the standards would not result in any particular curricular change. Instead, she asserted, the frameworks and standards are about “a different way of preparing instruction.” “Teachers,” she added, “have to do things differently.” The notion of standards as a means of improving instruction was also advanced by an SED representative at the state social studies conference. Asked when new syllabi might be written, the presenter said, “There are a variety of scope and sequences out there. We were asked to provide a set of standards to drive instruction.”

A second set of conflicting messages developed around assessment. At each of the suburban district department meetings, for example, the social studies supervisor said that the framework had no implications for the current curriculum. Hearing this, one teacher asked, “So how will it (the framework) affect me? How will it change what I’m doing?” The supervisor responded, “It won’t.” Rather than represent curricular change (as the framework authors suggest), the supervisor said the policy represents a push for new assessments. Referring to the current state syllabi, she said that, in the past, SED has “focused on content.” The new framework, she said, “focuses on assessment.” Later, she said, frameworks “are not going to change the content...but they will change our assessments.”

A mix of messages. These conflicting messages blur the framework’s focus. Is it to influence the subject matter taught? the assessments given? the instruction planned? One way to understand this jumble is as a reflec-
tion of a larger set of issues about the relationships among curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Though they are not unique to New York, these issues play out in a mix of messages broadcast at the sessions observed.

One particularly complex set of messages emerged around the relationship between curriculum and assessment. An SED representative told the audience at a general roll-out session that the new curriculum frameworks would drive new state assessments. "Once we (SED) have settled on standards, then we can decide the assessments," he said, "Much depends on getting the standards right and then aligning the assessments to the standards."

Participants may have given this message credence—the presenter is a high ranking official responsible for both curriculum and testing. Yet he was the only one to make this claim. The more common message was that the frameworks' influence would be secondary to state tests. Time and again, references were made to the maxim that tests drive change.

Yet, it was not always clear what kind of change was implied. Sometimes it was curricular change. At a general roll-out session, a principal said, "tests drive curriculum." The SED presenter agreed. Tests, he said, will "help grow change in the system." The suburban district supervisor broadcast a similar message. "Change in content," she said, "will come if we change the tests." At other times, the message broadcast was that tests would drive instructional change. An urban district social studies supervisor observed, "If we change the assessments, we'll change instruction." An SED representative said, "New assessments will represent a change in instruction...Kids won't perform well until (teachers') instruction reflects this." Commissioner Mills added, "Instruction won't change until the tests change." Whether curricular or instructional, the implication was clear, if problematic: The draft social studies framework might encourage change, but real change will occur only if supported by testing.

Noting the mix of messages broadcast is important. Also important, however, are those messages that might have been aired, but were not. The first concerns content. Given the framework author's avowed aim of directing curricular change, there was surprisingly little talk about what should be changed. This question seemed to be on the teacher participants' minds, especially those teaching Global Studies. The various presenters, however, never went beyond the claim that the framework was about "what" and not "how." Not one of the presenters, for example, ever made any specific comments about what should or should not be taught and the only opportunities teachers had to discuss this issue was during small group meetings staged around individual standards. In short, participants unaware of the framework's stated intent to direct curricular change easily could have missed that point.

The second unaired message concerns instruction. The framework authors ignored instruction, suggesting that, as part of the "how," it would be left to local discretion. Instruction was mentioned, however, by a range
of presenters. But just mentioned. As with content, presenters offered a few bromides related to instruction, but nothing of substance. Participants were told of the need to “transform social studies teaching methods,” and that “teachers have to do things differently.” The most specific comment was an SED representative’s charge to “change from lecture-type teachers to facilitator-type teachers.” This point, like all the others, however, was made and then left undeveloped.

The Instruction: Presenter-Centered Information-Giving

A quick survey suggests some variety in the pedagogy evident during the professional development opportunities observed. For all the different methods, however, the bulk of the instruction was presenter-centered and emphasized information-giving. There were opportunities for participants to ask questions. But more often than not, the issues behind those questions were left unaddressed. If the presenters thought of their sessions as learning opportunities, their pedagogical approaches emphasized the transmission of information rather than a substantive interaction with ideas. A number of teachable moments occurred during these sessions. More often than not, however, they became opportunities lost.

Participants experienced a wide range of teaching methods across the sessions observed. Lecture/presentation (with hand-outs and/or overheads) dominated. But presenters also used other approaches. A video describing the national movement toward higher standards was featured at a general state roll-out session. The district assessment workshop began with a brainstorming activity. A panel discussion was held between two lectures at the university conference. Small group activities were employed during the state and district-level framework sessions. Question and answer periods, some quite lengthy, occurred during all sessions.

This variety of methods notwithstanding, the prevailing mode of instruction was presenter-centered information-giving. Most sessions found the featured speakers talking, talking about the information they had come to share, and dealing superficially with a range of issues. Participants had opportunities to ask questions and offer their views. But these questions and views did not shape the sessions.

Information-giving was the basic pedagogical approach in all but one of the learning opportunities observed. Only the suburban district workshop on assessment differed. There, the district social studies supervisor began with a few introductory remarks. The bulk of the session, however, featured small and whole group activities designed to construct scoring rubrics for district assessments. In all the other sessions observed, presenters gave large amounts of information. At the several roll-out sessions and at the state social studies conference, SED representatives talked about the development and structure of frameworks and assessments. At the district inservice, central office administrators talked about district policies and plans. At the university conference, academics talked about the national
and state standards movements. And at the various department meetings, the district supervisor talked about the state framework and the district response.

During each session, participants had more or less opportunity to raise questions and assert their views. One of the longest periods was during the general state roll-out session which featured Education Commissioner Mills. The Commissioner said he would keep his remarks to a minimum in order to allow the maximum amount of time for “discussion.” He did just that, speaking for 10 minutes and taking audience questions for over an hour. Substantial time for participant questions was also a feature of the department meetings. This did not appear to be by design, but as teacher questions and concerns about issues other than the framework developed, the district supervisor allowed them to surface. More common though were relatively short question periods (20 minutes or less) squeezed between presenters or left to the end of the session. This was especially true at the roll-out sessions.

Whether or not many questions were asked, the answers given shared two common characteristics. One is that they were generally direct. A subjective call, to be sure, but few of the responses seemed purposely evasive. Participants did not always like the answers offered. But no response was challenged as being deliberately slippery or ambiguous. Direct answers, however, are not necessarily substantive. The second characteristic of presenters’ answers, then, was that they frequently left unexplored the big issues behind the questions. Though the opening seemed to be there, time and again presenters passed on opportunities to deeply engage the participants’ concerns.

Consider two examples. The first comes from a general roll-out session. The presenter, an SED representative, talked for approximately an hour about the development and dissemination of new curriculum frameworks and state assessments. Twenty minutes were reserved for participant questions. Seemingly more interested in taking a broad range of questions than in pursuing any in depth, the presenter typically offered only a few remarks in response to each question. For example, in response to a question about the nature and role of curriculum frameworks, the presenter simply said that, in contrast with state syllabi, “people” generally seem “more at ease” with the frameworks. In any case, he added, the frameworks were “not going to go away.”

The presenter’s words sent a clear message: Local educators might as well get used to the idea of state curriculum frameworks. As an instance of direct instruction, this seems pretty effective. Yet the question might have been an opportunity to explore a range of issues around state and local curricular responsibility. Given the changes envisioned in the Compact and the occasion of the new frameworks, it makes sense that the participants would benefit from a substantive discussion. What seemed like a teachable moment quickly became a lost opportunity.
A second example of lost opportunities can be seen in one of the state roll-out sessions which focused on the draft social studies framework. The first hour and 20 minutes was dominated by an SED representative who talked about the history of the framework, its purposes and structure, and the development of new state tests. Teachers twice interrupted with questions. The first asked about eliminating the Regents test in Global Studies and having local districts develop their own curriculum and assessment programs. The presenter took the question, but she sidestepped the issue by listing large-scale changes in the state testing system. Later, another teacher asked if the standards were appropriate for students in early childhood programs. This time the presenter’s response was more direct, but no more illuminating: The standards need to apply to all students, she argued, “Remember, we’re trying to raise standards for all children, not just the top 4-8 percent.”

After a break, the co-presenter, an urban district social studies supervisor, led what she termed, a “more interactive piece.” For the next 15 minutes, the attendees participated in small group discussions around one of the framework standards. The last 10 minutes of the session were designated for group reports. Members of these groups raised a host of issues. Some concerned the relevance of the standards for elementary and early childhood students. Others wondered about the relationship between the standards and the state syllabi. Still others asked if and how the general ideas represented would be expressed on new state tests, especially Global Studies. One other set of concerns arose around whether or not the frameworks really represented a “change” and would motivate teachers to go beyond “what they’ve been doing all along.”

These issues speak to the heart of the state efforts to reform social studies teaching and learning. Yet they went undeveloped. As each group explained it’s reactions, the state and urban district presenters listened, took notes, and occasionally asked for clarification. But either by design or for lack of time, no discussion ensued. The participants were thanked for their “contributions” and the session was over.

As occasions to learn, the professional development sessions observed seem largely opportunities lost. In fact, most epitomize the very kind of content and instruction decried by teachers and researchers alike. These sessions were neither about well-developed ideas nor ambitious instruction, and they were delivered in forms—one-shot events, competing and mixed messages, pedantic pedagogy, and inattention to learner concerns—antithetical to the practices advocated in reforms. The rhetoric of New York State reform documents is about changing the educational system. The rollout of a new framework is an occasion to challenge teachers’ extant thinking and practice. On balance, however, the content and pedagogy of these sessions seems like an opportunity lost.
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How Did You Help Me?

From comments made during the professional development opportunities and interviews, it appears that teachers have little regard for the New York State social studies framework and few interpret it as a direct and immediate challenge to their extant practices. This does not mean that teachers are sanguine about their instruction. A number are thinking about and acting to change their teaching. The problem? They do not seem to think they are going to get much assistance. The theme of this section comes from a teacher whose frustration boiled over. Angry about feeling “out there flapping in the breeze,” he asked, “But how did you (policymakers and professional developers) help me?”

Teachers’ Reactions to the Framework

While generally the exception, some participants expressed positive comments about the new framework. An assistant high school principal gave the most enthusiastic endorsement. The social studies framework is “a great guide,” he said, “the best thing the state has produced in years.” Teachers’ assessments were more muted. A couple of teachers applauded the language of high standards for “all” students. Another said that the frequent emphasis on “turning points” in the standards made “sense.” One other teacher described the framework as “good.” She quickly added, however, “but not great.”

These comments stood out, for there was a striking lack of enthusiasm or praise for the state framework. Instead, teachers generally viewed the NYS framework with disdain. The most common observations were that the document was too “vague,” “abstract,” and filled with “buzzwords.” One teacher noted, “the framework is so vague, you can do anything you want to!” Another teacher, after reading the first standard, said, “What doesn’t fit with Standard 1? It’s so broad!” A third teacher reacted this way:

[The framework] sounds like a bunch of double-talk to me...It doesn’t amount to anything. I see no meat here. I see nothing I can get hold of. Now maybe [it] is...(sarcastically) maybe it’s “empowerment.” Education is great for these buzzwords.

One other teacher lamented, “I thought the framework and the standards would be so much more than they are.”

Disdain for the generality of the framework marked the majority of teachers’ responses. But there were others. Some teachers found language like “intellectual skills” interesting. They admitted, however, that they were unsure what it meant and what they should do in their classrooms. Others perceived the framework as largely irrelevant for early childhood and elementary-age students. Still others saw no immediate relevance at all. A
number of participants offered variations on one teacher’s comment: “It may be a good policy, but it won’t help us in our day-to-day lives.”

Given these views, it is not surprising that few teachers viewed the social studies framework as a direct and important challenge to their current practice. Several teachers agreed with the assertion that “this (the framework) is what I’ve been doing all along.” Others offered a slightly different interpretation, reading the framework as justification for whatever instruction they planned. As one teacher said, “This is great. I can do whatever I want.” Still other teachers seemed to think that until something more directive comes along, they will continue their current practices. For example, one teacher said that, since his students perform well on Regents tests now, he is not going to make any major changes in his teaching or content until he sees something with more “substance” than the framework. Another teacher explained that while he saw some benefit to the framework, he did not believe it would inspire much change in his colleagues. “It’s not going to motivate teachers to do anything different,” he said. One other teacher made a poignant comment connecting the social studies and mathematics policies. This teacher described a math colleague who is “all excited” about the new state math/science/technology framework. By contrast, she reads the social studies framework as “not much new.” The excitement her colleague in mathematics sees, “doesn’t come across in social studies...It just seems like the same old content.”

Most teachers saw little of immediate interest or challenge in the social studies framework. Nevertheless, some expressed concerns about the long-term implications of state efforts like the framework. One set of concerns centered on teachers’ instructional flexibility. New York teachers are accustomed to state curriculum directives. Most, however, hold dear their instructional autonomy. As one teacher said, “Just tell me what (curricular) direction you want me to move in...and (I will make it) a damn good course.” As noted, the framework makes no explicit mention of instructional change. Several teachers, however, expressed concern that their instructional “flexibility” was at risk. For example, suburban middle school teachers balked when the district supervisor told them they had to revise their portfolio and research projects to “demonstrate where you’re doing this (the framework standards) now.” Questioned closely, the supervisor maintained that they were doing little more than deciding “how will we tie the framework into what we’re already doing.” Teachers were having none of it however. At each of the sessions in which this idea was advanced, protests around “fitting in,” being “directed,” the implications of “mandates,” and efforts at “taking away our flexibility” filled the air.

Teachers expressed a second concern around assessing their students. Recall that the new framework said very little about assessment. Perceived implications for assessments (both state and local), however, were commonly expressed. Most of the attention at the state level focused on the Global Studies test. Questions arose during several sessions about the rel-
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Evolved of one test covering two years of instruction. The questions varied, but not the recommendation: Two tests, one for each year.

State assessments were a concern for many teachers. Other concerns had more of a local flavor. Suburban high school teachers, for example, raised questions after a workshop on performance assessments during the district inservice day. The session, led by a fourth-grade teacher, featured examples of different student tasks. One participant reported that this was "the most interesting part of the day." Others were less sanguine. The largely high school audience seemed frustrated on two counts. First, the difference between elementary and high school contexts was not recognized or examined. As one teacher said, "This has no meaning or application for high school teachers...They (session presenters) always stumble in translating this stuff from elementary to high school." A second frustration was more general. Teachers are being asked to incorporate more and more different kinds of assessments. Many feel, however, that their concerns about trying to add new (and time-consuming) assessments to an already overloaded instructional day are not being addressed. "We're being asked to use more performance assessments," said one teacher, "but no one is telling us to cut anything we're already doing."

Teachers' Reactions to Professional Development Opportunities

As the comments in the preceding section imply, if teachers were not impressed with the New York State social studies framework, they were even less impressed with the professional development sessions they attended. Teachers echoed complaints commonly heard about professional development.

Teachers said that sessions covered old ground, lacked relevance to their classroom lives, consisted of double-talk, and did not stick with topics long enough. A large number of comments dealt with the pedagogy of the presenters. Asked to describe a state roll-out session, one teacher dismissed it as "a guy with an overhead." Shaking his head, he continued, "Did they inform me of anything?...Maybe I don't understand what these gentlemen (sic) are saying, but I walked away not knowing any more than when I walked in." After an assistant superintendent in the suburban district read-aloud a four page single-spaced document (which teachers had in their hands), one teacher said, "If we taught like that, we'd be fired!" A teacher attending a state social studies conference session described it as a "bitch" session.

Wanting More, Expecting Less. It may be too early to tell if the New York State framework will hold much influence on teachers. State policymakers have announced that new course syllabi will be developed and that the state testing system will be revised in light of the framework and the more recent learning standards. As these additional efforts emerge, teachers may view the state framework as more important than they do now. But teachers are not necessarily waiting for state action. Several of
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those interviewed want to think about their teaching. The problem is that few expect to get much help or support.

Not all teachers expressed an interest in changing their teaching. Some, like a suburban fourth grade teacher, have been re-working their social studies pedagogy for the last several years. This teacher read the framework as confirmation of directions she had already decided to take. Another suburban elementary school teacher was more interested in the framework. Tempering her interest, however, were concerns about language arts and a new district literacy assessment. She said:

I’m comfortable with my social studies...right now...I’m not comfortable with the literacy assessment...Were you to have hit me three years ago, my focus would probably have been more on social studies.

These teachers notwithstanding, several of those interviewed expressed interest in rethinking parts of their instructional practice. One concern was subject matter. Global Studies teachers, in particular, said they were overwhelmed with the breadth of content they were expected to teach. Though some despaired that agreement would ever be reached on what to “cut,” all wondered how the content specified might be reduced. A high school U.S. history teacher offered a similar response. “I find it very difficult to make changes,” he said, “…because I’m rushing to get through the course.” Another set of concerns was instructional. One teacher said, “I think the frameworks...have to be talking about teaching differently than the old style of you being the center of the classroom and talking at the students.” Another teacher seemed resigned to the fact that his favorite style of teaching—lecture—is “going to have to change” especially in light of district pressures to adopt heterogeneous grouping. Not surprisingly, one last set of concerns dealt with assessment. State tests aside, each of the teachers in the suburban district is being pushed to consider new means of assessing students. Generally, teachers are being pressed to incorporate more authentic assessments into their daily instruction. More specific assessments are also being developed. Fourth-grade teachers are dealing with a mandated literacy assessment for which they use social studies content. Seventh and eighth-grade teachers are developing new scoring rubrics for their portfolio projects. And high school Global Studies teachers are working toward a variance by developing their own assessment which includes a participation project, research paper, and examinations at both the ninth and tenth grades.

In some sense, these teachers are lucky. The district supervisor appears to understand how complex new assessment projects can seem. To that end, she routinely schedules workshops where teachers can meet and discuss these efforts. Yet two related problems emerge. One is that the scope of these sessions is limited to the assessment project at hand. Teachers are
opportunities lost

Concerned about assessment, but they also have subject matter and instructional concerns. The second problem is that teachers generally do not feel as if their needs are well served by the professional development opportunities they attend.

One teacher expressed a general frustration with the professional development sessions he attended:

Don’t give me that sort of nebulous statement that “all kids can learn”... By what standard? What are you telling me? You’re not telling me anything and it’s kind of... you find yourself out there flapping in the breeze sometimes and then people look at you and say that wasn’t right. But how did you help me?

Others had more particular concerns. Two high school teachers who attended the district inservice session on performance assessment expressed frustration that the presenter, an elementary school teacher, had not made the information relevant to them. These teachers said that they would use performance assessments if they knew how. “They tell us there are better ways (of assessing),” said one, “but I don’t know how to reach out and do them.” One other teacher said that, among other things, she wanted to learn how to make her class more “student-centered.” She has made various attempts, but acknowledges that she needs help:

I try to throw in as many activities and projects, but I still feel that I am too heavily the center of it... We’re supposed to let the students be the center of it and we’re supposed to be like a coach, a mentor. We’re supposed to guide somebody and I don’t know how to do that.

Like the others, this teacher held little hope for assistance. She voiced a range of familiar issues: there is no continuity from session to session; new ideas are talked about, but never demonstrated; opportunities to try out new approaches (outside the classroom) are not available; there are no guides or mentors for teachers attempting to rework their instructional practices. She added:

I don’t think you can learn how to do it (teach in new ways) in five staff development days... Somebody needs to teach us how to do that. And it’s gonna take time... We don’t have the faintest idea how to do it.

Asked what kind of professional development would be helpful, this teacher, and all the others interviewed, hesitated. Sure about what she saw as problematic, she seemed less sure about what a real opportunity to “learn how to do it” would look like. She talked generally about administrators
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"forc[ing] us all to take a course that would really teach us" and "taking [teachers] away from their jobs for a year and training them how to do it." In the end, however, it seemed that she had as much difficulty imagining how someone might help her learn as she did imagining how she might transform her instruction.

While teachers may come to regard the new state social studies framework as important, at this point it seems unlikely. Not only did teachers see little to directly challenge their current practices, they generally viewed the document with disdain chiding the vague and unhelpful language. Teachers suspect that the framework (and other state policies) may have implications for their instructional flexibility and the assessments they give. But the relationship between the framework and those implications seems fuzzy at best. Teachers are also disdainful of the professional development sessions they attended. Citing factors like a lack of relevance, poor pedagogy, and little help exploring real issues of teaching, learning, and assessment, teachers appear to think they will get little assistance either from the framework or the available professional development opportunities. Teachers do seem to want help. Unfortunately, they do not know where and/or how to get it.

Discussion

Numerous explanations have been offered for why teachers' practices seem to be so resistant to change—structural constraints, poor academic preparation, inadequate resources. In this case of the New York State social studies framework, I offer another set of reasons centered on the opportunities teachers have to learn. The rhetoric of reform in New York state seems revolutionary. But if so, one must ask why these professional development opportunities appear so undistinguished.

The literature is replete with explanations for the dull nature of most professional development. Two factors seem particularly relevant in the case of the New York state social studies framework. One is the curriculum offered. Here, one might argue that the messages broadcast were so muddled and disjointed as to obviate any clear learning. First, the framework faced strong competition from a range of issues, most especially state testing. Though it was the ostensible focus of most sessions, the framework rarely emerged as the primary topic of conversation. Second, a spate of messages developed over what the framework represents. The expressed purpose is curricular. The framework that emerged from the sessions, however, is a crazy quilt of subject matter, instruction, and assessment.

But there is a bigger issue. Perhaps the most damning criticism of the professional development opportunities observed is that the ideas offered failed to engage the teachers as learners. For when teachers focused on the framework itself, they found little there. The few positive comments aside, most teachers viewed the policy as having little or no direct consequence
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for their teaching. The framework authors and the session presenters talked about changing education in New York State. Yet talk about "change" is no substitute for powerful ideas. Teachers seem willing to think about and make changes in their instruction. But as one teacher said, until he sees ideas that have more "substance" than those expressed in the framework, he sees no reason to make major adjustments. The competing and mixed messages broadcast around the framework probably did little to encourage teachers' interest. The shallow ideas offered in the framework, however, compounded the sense an opportunity lost.

If one explanation is curricular, a second is pedagogical. Here, one might argue that neither the presenters (the "teachers") nor the teachers (the "learners") understand the kind of teaching and learning necessary for adult learning. The presenters followed traditional teaching approaches—presenter-centered information-giving. Their instructional plans called for the presenters to talk, and to talk about the information they brought with them. This makes sense, in some ways, for session presenters were up against some of the same kinds of constraints that encourage classroom teachers to adopt transmission practices: limited time, too much information to cover, learners with diverse interests and needs. These constraints make ambitious classroom instruction difficult. Consider how much more difficult this is when one's learners number in the thousands and one's classroom extends across an entire state.

Another constraint also figures in: These professional developers have few models of wise practice to follow. Observers accurately cite the ills of professional development, but that is not the same as demonstrating a better course. More profitable approaches, such as professional networks and school-university collaborations are emerging (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Guskey, 1996; Lieberman, 1995; Reecer, 1995). These approaches may hold considerable promise, but they exist outside the traditional professional development structure. Models of ambitious instruction in the traditional context of professional development are harder to come by. The presenters described in this study undoubtedly know about the problems of their practice. They probably know about more engaging opportunities. But with few models to turn to, transforming conventional professional development is problematic.

If the presenters struggle to understand how to transform professional development, so too do teacher-as-learners. It sounds a little like blaming the victim, but teachers may have no greater insights into quality professional development than do presenters. One can fault policymakers for developing shallow policies and professional developers for offering competing and mixed messages. Yet the participants, especially the teachers in the audience, are not passive recipients. Teachers complained about the professional development opportunities available. Yet when asked to envision something better, none offered any specifics. But how could they? Teachers know what the problems are. Yet they are no more likely to have
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experienced exemplary professional development than the presenters. Thus if presenters are waiting for teachers to tell them what to do differently, they may have a long wait coming.

Is there any hope? From this analysis of opportunities lost, one might think not. That would be a misreading, however, of this study and the larger literature.

It will be no news to most observers that professional development in the form of traditional one-shot events is doomed (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996). It is discouraging to learn that that news did not prevent most of the sessions observed from taking precisely that approach. But even negative examples can be informative. In that vein, two implications seem clear. One is that form matters. It is by no accident that the most engaging forms of professional development have developed outside traditional venues. Professional development schools, professional networks of teachers, and the like may “work” for many reasons, but one should not discount the simple fact that they lie outside conventional approaches to teacher learning.¹⁵

If form matters, so too do ideas (Grant, 1995; Lieberman & Grodnick, in press; Weiss, 1990; Wilson et al., 1996). Teachers do not seem averse to thinking about and reworking their instruction if they sense a better way. They are averse, however, to policies and professional development that they perceive offers them nothing new or demanding or substantive.

Conclusion

Educational reform is in the air. National and state-level policies imply dramatic changes in teaching and learning. No one argues the centrality of teachers to this effort. Yet reformers give considerably more attention to what students need to know and do than to what their teachers will need to know and do to help them. Teachers do have access to professional development. In the case of the New York State social studies framework, however, the nature of the opportunities taken suggests little hope for profound change: competing issues undercut the framework’s importance, the curriculum of professional development opportunities is shallow, and the pedagogy of the sessions is pedantic and uninspiring. Transforming traditional professional development opportunities may be possible, but only if substantive ideas are central and more engaging forums are constructed.
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Notes

1 The author would like to acknowledge the thoughtful advice of Catherine Cornbleth, Mark Koester, Barry Shealy, Bob Stevenson, and Gina Trzyna.

2 Each standard then identifies a content area: US history, world history, geography, economics, government, and citizenship education.

3 Wilson, Peterson, Ball, and Cohen (1996) remind us that teachers are not alone in needing to unlearn and learn anew. Parents, school board members, administrators—even policymakers—have much to think about if reform-minded practices are to take root.

4 In June 1996, the state Board of Regents adopted a revised policy entitled, Learning Standards for Social Studies (New York State Department of Education, 1996). On the surface, it might seem odd to develop a paper around a draft framework when the revised version has just been released. Two conditions mitigate that issue. One is that the standards are virtually the same. The only difference is that the government and citizenship education standards in the framework have been collapsed in the learning standards. The second condition is even more important: Though it is not clear why, the Learning Standards have generated little professional development interest. In contrast to the array of professional development opportunities supporting the roll-out of the draft framework, there seems to be little state or district interest in promoting the learning standards.

5 Funding for the research around this paper was provided by the Professional Development Network, sponsored by the Graduate School of Education at the University at Buffalo. In addition to the author, data for this paper were gathered by the research team associated with the Fallingwater policy-practice study: Catherine Cornbleth, Julia Marusza, and Gina Trzyna. Additional research assistance was provided by Michelle Allen, Sharon Andrews, and Eric Schmitt.

6 The first committee, the Task Force on Minorities (1989), issued a report entitled, A Curriculum of Inclusion. The second committee was impaneled in 1990. Their report was One Nation, Many Peoples (Social Studies Review and Development Committee, 1991).

7 The other standards focus on world history, geography, economics, government, and citizenship education. In the version adopted by the Regents in June, the government and citizenship standards were combined.

8 The framework ends with three appendixes: The 1984 Regents Goals for Elementary, Middle, and Secondary School Students, a list of generic “Essential Skills and Dispositions,” and a statement drawn from state regulations on “Students with Disabilities.”

9 See Hanushek (1994) for the argument that resources, in and of themselves, are a poor indicator of good schooling.

10 My colleague, Barry Shealy, reminds me that, though the notion of “unlearning” is widely used in the professional literature, it nevertheless
ill-reflects current thinking on cognition which suggest prior knowledge shapes new knowledge development. Thus one can not really “unlearn.”

11 In the first column, the numbers in parentheses represent the number of sessions observed. In the third column, the primary audience is listed first.

The National Council for the Social Studies (1994) has even joined the fray, offering its own set of learning standards under the title, *Expectations of Excellence.*

12 The notion that framework would focus on content rather than instruction may strike many readers as odd. The students who rate their social studies classes as “boring,” presumably are responding as much to the instruction as to the subject matter (Downey & Levstik, 1991; Haladyna & Shaughnessy, 1985; Hope, 1996). Yet social studies reforms typically avoid taking on the difficult issues of pedagogy (Grant, 1995). See Stevenson (1990; 1992) for an elaboration of student perspectives on engaging curriculum and instruction.

13 Thornton (1991) observes the same phenomena: “Despite the central role of teachers in planning the intended curriculum, it appears that many teachers do not view themselves as key players in the determination of curriculum. Rather they characterize their gatekeeping as pertaining to instruction” (p. 241).

14 One interesting exception can be found in Reecer (1995). She describes two programs that utilize a most common venue—the teachers’ meeting—as a “forum in which [teachers] can talk about their problems and share their expertise” (p. 26). See also, Onosko and Stevenson (1991) for other examples of engaging professional development set in traditional contexts.

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Abstract
Charles Beard was arguably the most influential historian in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. He was also a key figure in the theoretical conceptualization of social studies education. The vision of social studies he recommended for schools, which he articulated most thoroughly during the 1930s while serving on the American Historical Associations’s Commission of the Social Studies, was influenced greatly by his notion of the nature of historical inquiry and understanding, but, more fundamentally still, by his long-standing, deep-seated disposition as a progressive reformer.

Introduction
“When I come to the end, my mind will still be beating its wings against the bars of thought’s prison.”

Charles Beard, c. 1940

Charles Beard was arguably the most influential historian in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. His reputation has so deteriorated during the second half, however, that in 1968, just twenty years after his death, Richard Hofstadter described Beard’s legacy as but “an imposing ruin in the landscape of American historiography” (Hofstadter 1968, p. 344). Some may disagree with this judgment, but many others would not (Breisach 1993, pp. 204-214; Higham 1983, pp. 216-219; Novick 1988, pp. 346-348). Indeed, most of the accomplishments which once supported Beard’s towering intellectual standing have come to be criticized or, worse still, ignored by leading historians and scholars. An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution (1913), for example, perhaps Beard’s most famous monographic study, is largely discredited today. Long considered a bold and enlightening analysis of the writing and ratification of the Constitution, its conclusions have been widely contested or simply abandoned since the 1950s or so (Brown 1956, passim; Foner 1990, pp. 25-49; Grob & Billias 1987, I, pp. 162-178; Hofstadter, pp. 207-245; McDonald 1990, p. 480).
1958, passim). Similarly diminished in professional esteem is The Rise of American Civilization (Beard & Beard 1927). For years this immensely popular, two-volume history of the United States was considered by many to be the monumental achievement of progressive historiography (Breisach, pp. 126-128, pp. 161-162; Grob & Billias, pp. 10-12). Today, however, its analytical approach is more likely to be dismissed as thin and inflexibly one-dimensional (Breisach, pp. 126-128, pp. 161-162; Grob & Billias, pp. 10-12; Hofstadter, pp. 298-304; Marcell 1974, pp. 258-321; Nore 1983, pp. 112-126). If referred to at all any more, it is so most often merely as representative of a particular period in the development of historical thought in the United States.

Maybe it is the fate of all historians, but especially those of the modern era, to have their ideas and conclusions rejected by succeeding generations of scholars. Written history is a revisionist enterprise, after all. As new sources of information become accessible and new methods of inquiry prove profitable, historians advance new analyses and new interpretations. This propensity for revision was once described rather colorfully by Albert Bushnell Hart, Beard’s contemporary and the only person other than Beard to serve as president of both the American Historical Association and the American Political Science Association. Historians, Hart remarked only partly in jest, are “more or less cannibals...[who] live by destroying each others’ conclusions” (Hart 1909, p. 235). Many familiar with historical scholarship through the years will smile knowingly at this characterization, but however accurate it may be in general, it nevertheless fails to explain Beard’s particular situation.

Forrest McDonald (1969, pp. 110-141) has advanced a more explicit explanation for Beard’s decline, but one which is also problematic in certain respects. Beard’s scholarship, McDonald argues, suffers from a flaw rooted more in its author’s personality or sense of purpose than anything characteristic of history as a field of study. Specifically, McDonald claims (p. 130) that Beard thought of himself “primarily...as a teacher...not as a historian,” and as such, considered his chief intellectual objectives to be those of opening closed minds and contesting accepted beliefs. The problem, McDonald maintains, is that Beard tended to compromise the strict, exacting boundaries of formal scholarship in pursuing these largely instructional and contrapuntal objective.

Beard undoubtedly intended much of his writing to challenge conventional thinking. He may also have intended it to agitate and provoke. But to assert that his scholarship was seriously undone by what McDonald describes (pp. 130-133) as the modern “teacher-historian’s most dangerous and insidious occupational peril,” the tendency “to confuse and intermix the function and methods of the teacher with those of the historian,” seems dubious, at best. In fact, it may just as well be argued that the roles of scholar and teacher are complementary as assumed that they are inherently irreconcilable. Moreover, even if one concedes McDonald’s characterization of Beard, the reasons he offers in explanation are vague and unpersuasive.
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He claims (pp. 139-141) that Beard had an uncertain “psyche,” and consequently never clearly defined his professional function or philosophy. While a degree of uncertainty of this sort may be true of some intellectuals, it is simply unconvincing to argue that Beard, among the most reflective of all historians, was somehow insufficiently reflective about his own aims and assumptions.

Richard Hofstadter (1968, pp. 167-346) has inquired more deeply than anyone to date into the question of Beard’s diminished reputation. His investigation, on which the judgment cited above is based, is subtle, perceptive, and somewhat sympathetic. In the end, though, it, too, is not without problems.

Hofstadter confides (p. 345) that much about Beard “remains appealing,” and that he has not witnessed with pleasure the waning of Beard’s intellectual standing. Nonetheless, he believes that it has been deserved. Beard was “never content with the role of the historian,” Hofstadter maintains (pp. 344-345), but “aspired to become a public force, and even more ... [a] public moralist.” To this end, he often “geared his work as a historian ... to his political interests and passions,” but his research, and the interpretative analyses he derived therefrom, were often tainted as a result. He strove with tireless energy to be the foremost explorer “in the search for a usable past,” Hofstadter concludes somewhat sadly (p. 345), but in doing so, tended to confuse the role of historian with those of “the gadfly, ... the pamphleteer, ... [and] the publicist.”

In a sense, Hofstadter and McDonald argue much the same point: that Beard’s scholarship suffered from his indefinite identity as a historian. But Hofstadter’s analysis is less strained and contrived. Still, it, too, fails to address the question of motivation satisfactorily, leaving implicit and unclear the reasons why Beard chose the role of moralist. Hofstadter describes (pp. 344-345) the decision as a “daring gamble” which ultimately backfired, but does not explain the factors which may have prompted it. Instead, in the end, he simply, if eloquently, laments Beard’s decision, and his professional life in general, as a noble but “gratuitous risk.”

It should be noted in defense of McDonald’s and Hofstadter’s interpretations that few of Beard’s personal and professional papers are available for study. His motives, as a result, are particularly difficult to discern. But even if his papers were available, such judgments would still involve considerable conjecture. Evidence about motives, like historical evidence in general, is rarely, if ever, self-explanatory. It must be selected, evaluated, ordered, and organized, and a historian’s sense of reality and the possibilities of human existence within a given context inevitably affects these interdependent processes. Doing history, in other words, as one practitioner once described the fundamental challenge (Hart p. 234), requires that historians “understand and expound the actions of men [sic] who did not [necessarily] understand themselves.” Motives, in short, are always elusive.
This is true of all historical judgments, however, no matter how well informed. Some, though, are more thoughtful and judicious than others, and as such, resonate with greater insight and validity. The judgment underlying this study of Beard's educational philosophy is that he is best understood as a progressive reformer. His stance as a public moralist and his style as a teacher in the largest of all possible classrooms—that of public opinion—were defined to a great extent by this still more fundamental sense of self. Throughout his adult life, Beard believed, as all reformers believe, that human agency could influence the development of social institutions, and that each individual has the capacity to envision and help implement worthy sets of social arrangements. He further believed that knowledge in general, but historical knowledge in particular, is the most valuable means by which such arrangements could be realized. Accordingly, he pursued the study of history, not exclusively of course, but deliberately and to a great extent, as an instrument of social reform.

Not unexpectedly, therefore, in the midst of the Great Depression of the 1930s, the most devastating domestic crisis of his lifetime, Beard engaged in an extensive consideration of the nature and purposes of historical inquiry and understanding. He addressed a wide range of philosophical issues and questions, especially during the first half of the decade (Beard 1931; 1932a; 1932b; 1934a; 1934b; 1935; Beard & Smith 1934), but among his principal objectives was that of clarifying the relationship he perceived between historical knowledge and effective social reform. At the same time, he also served on the American Historical Association's Commission on the Social Studies which, as he understood it, had been charged with the responsibility of defining "an educational approach to an understanding of the world today and of the forces with which youth must reckon when it attempts to shape the world of tomorrow" (Beard 1932a, p. v). His speculative inquiries into the nature of history and its meaning directly influenced the educational recommendations he proposed for the nation's schools. Thus, to understand these recommendations fully, it is necessary to investigate the roots of Beard's reformist inclinations and to analyze his evolving conception of history as a field of study. Against this background, his work on the Social Studies Commission may be brought into sharpest relief.

A Reformer's Education

"We all need ... above all to have continuously before ourselves visions of our own possibilities."

Charles Beard, 1901

Beard was born in Knightstown, Indiana on November 27th, 1874. His mother, Mary Payne Beard, had lived in the state all her life, as had her parents, but Beard's father, William Beard, had moved to Indiana just thir-
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ten years earlier, at the start of the Civil War. He had previously lived in North Carolina where his father, Beard’s paternal grandfather, had been raised a Quaker and had served for a time as a stationmaster on the underground railroad. It is not altogether surprising, therefore, that William Beard, just 21 years old in the spring of 1861 when young men in North Carolina were called upon to enlist in the state militia and to swear allegiance to the new Confederate government, chose instead to remain loyal to the United States and set out to find a new home somewhere in the states of the old Northwest Territory (M. Beard 1955, pp. 9-10; Hofstadter, p. 167; Nore, pp. 2-3).

Of all the people in Beard’s life, few had a deeper and more lasting influence on his general social outlook than his father. In fact, Beard once commented that his father “was named William Henry Harrison Beard, and you will understand better some of the differences in the approach of Frederick Jackson Turner and myself if I add that his father was named Andrew Jackson Turner” (Goldman 1954, p. 2; McDonald 1969, p. 111). While this remark was intended to illuminate differences in the two men’s approaches to the study of history, it is, in fact, more generally revealing.

Though not a native Indianan, William Beard felt very much at home in the state’s prevailing political culture of rock-ribbed Republicanism. He had arrived from North Carolina with little but a few books, the beginnings of a large family library, and had worked at whatever jobs he could find during the 1860s, among them, carpenter, clerk, laborer, and teacher. During the following decade, however, he amassed a sizable fortune through a series of shrewd real estate speculations, and in 1880, when Charles was six, moved with his young family to the small but growing town of Spiceland. There he quickly became a leading member of the largely middle class community, unabashedly proud of his considerable property and business holdings (Hofstadter, pp. 168-169; Nore, pp. 2-4). People would not wonder why “I emphasize economic questions so much,” Beard said some years later, had they “been present in the family parlor, when my father and his friends gathered to discuss public affairs” (Goldman, p. 2; McDonald 1969, p. 111).

Beard never forgot the solid middle-class values he learned as a youth. The spirit of progress and social reform that animated his life as an adult was not born of some soft, utopian vision of humanity and its possibilities, but of the hard, unvarnished view of people and their affairs that was the foundation of the Federalist-Whig-Republic philosophy of government. As Eric Goldman once said (p. 3), had Beard come of age twenty years earlier, during the 1870s not the 1890s, he might well have become a successful businessman—a happily successful businessman—much like his father.

Such was not the case, however, for Beard grew to maturity during the Progressive era, not the Gilded Age. He graduated from Spiceland Academy, a private, Quaker-affiliated high school, in 1891, then worked with his older brother, Clarence, for three years publishing a local newspaper
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(M. R. Beard, p. 14; Nore, pp. 6-7). Beard's father had purchased the paper for his sons, but took no part in running it, preferring that they take full responsibility and thereby gain valuable practical experience. This venture came to an end in 1894 when Clarence left home to work for a larger newspaper, and Charles left to attend DePauw University.

Like much of the rest of the country, Indiana was still suffering the effects of the economic panic of the previous year when Beard enrolled at DePauw. Sympathy ran high among many Indianans for "Coxey's army" which had recently marched on Washington demanding that the federal government provide relief for the jobless. Some historians see Coxey's campaign as symbolically marking the beginning of the extended and manifold period of Progressivism. Others disagree, marking the date a few years earlier or later; but agreement is widespread that the 1890s was a significant turning point in United States history, a decade during which the fundamental contours of what the country would become during the next fifty or so years began to emerge and take form (Foner, pp. 163-289; Grob & Billias, II, pp. 173-185, pp. 229-247).

Much the same is true of Beard. The roots of some of his most basic personal beliefs, especially his beliefs about the relationship between history and social reform, can be traced to the ten years he was a student in college and graduate school. This period culminated in 1904 when he earned a doctorate degree in history from Columbia University, but in certain respects, his years at DePauw were as important as those that followed. The faculty at DePauw, Beard said some 40 years later, "did more for me than I could ever tell" (Nore, pp. 8-9), but two professors, James Riley Weaver in political science and Andrew Stephenson in history, were especially influential (M. Beard, pp. 14-16; Nore, pp. 8-13).

Weaver had served as a consular officer in several European cities before taking a position at DePauw (M. Beard, p. 14; Curti 1949, pp. 263-264; Hofstadter, pp. 169-170; Nore, p. 11). Perhaps as a result of this firsthand political experience, he disliked the use of textbooks and rarely lectured in the courses he taught. Instead he developed an "individualized" method of instruction, as he referred to his pedagogic practice, in which students read widely among classical and contemporary authors, and then, through a process of question and discussion, developed their own conclusions about the central issues involved. Weaver never imposed his point of view, no matter how strongly felt his opinions might be, for he thought to do so would impede his goal of promoting independent judgment among his students (Curti, pp. 263-274).

Stephenson was very different. He had studied with Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins University, and like his mentor, championed the "Teutonic theory" of the origins of democratic institutions. He regularly expressed his opinions in class, about this and many other matters, both historical and current, and did so at times in the most forceful and challenging terms. Beard, it seems, was not reluctant to differ with Stephenson,
but was apparently convinced, at least at the time, of the soundness of the
Teutonic theory for he made it the central theme of his senior oration, “The
Story of a Race,” which he delivered on Washington’s Birthday, 1898 (Nore,
p. 8-10).

Despite differences in their styles, Weaver and Stephenson agreed on
one very important point: that the study of history was the basis of all
social inquiry (Curti, pp. 265-266; Nore, pp. 9-11). History, in their judg-
ment, was the ultimate source of data about social reality, and as such, the
foundation for the social sciences generally. Beard concurred, then, and for
the rest of his life. As editor of the college newspaper during his senior
year, he wrote that history, as “the basis of political science, oratory, and
literature,” should be required study for all students entering those de-
partments (Nore, p. 9). Nearly fifty years later, in his final public address,
he argued much the same point. If political science, economics, law, and
sociology were separated from historical study, he warned, they “would
become theoretical, superficial, and speculative, or what might be worse,
merely ‘practical,’ that is, subservient to vested interests and politicians”
(Beard 1948, pp. 220-222). Thus, throughout his adult life, Beard believed,
as he said on yet another occasion, that “[a]ll efforts to understand the
realities of the present, to guess the trends of the future, and to discover the
possibilities and limits of action require some penetration into the depths
of history” (Beard 1934b, p. 69).

While editor of the college newspaper, Beard expressed opinions about
many other matters as well. In fact, foreshadowing the catholicity of inter-
ests that would characterize his later life, he wrote about a wide range of
campus and non-campus issues: among them, that women should be ad-
mitted to Phi Beta Kappa; that religious revivals should be banned from
university property; that DePauw should advertise itself more assertively;
and, in 1898, during the Spanish-Cuban-American war, that students should
resist being swept away by war fever (Nore, p. 8). He also declared, in this
case expressing one of his most enduring intellectual convictions, that the
“true scholar does not seek truth for truth’s sake, but that he may pour it
out into life’s great current to uplift and inspire a burden-striken human-
ity” (Nore, p. 12).

The occasion which prompted this last opinion was most likely a se-
ries of field trips that Beard made to Chicago during his senior year at
DePauw (M. Beard, pp. 14-16; Goldman, p. 3; Hofstadter, pp. 170-171; Nore,
p. 12). There he encountered many things for which his comfortable life in
Spiceland had not prepared him. Most of all, he was shocked by the ineq-
uities he found so evident throughout the city, but especially in the work-
ing-class neighborhoods around the stockyards of the city’s teeming
southside. Something seemed terribly wrong, and his subsequent search
for explanations and possible solutions led him back to Chicago, to Hull
House among other places, where he listened to populist reformers of vari-
ous stripes and to proselytizers of the new social gospel. Although a regis-
tered Republican, he had also been stirred during the presidential campaign of 1896 by the oratory and ideas of William Jennings Bryan (M. Beard, pp. 14-15), especially Bryan’s impassioned defense of an independent course of economic action for the United States.

Upon graduating from DePauw in 1898, Beard volunteered for military service in the war with Spain, despite his earlier editorial advice to his classmates (Hofstadter, p. 171). His service was not needed, however, and he was never inducted. More importantly, his support for the war, always somewhat cautious, turned to criticism when the war’s objective changed from Cuban liberation to Philippine subjugation. He resigned from the Republican Party in protest of this new, imperialist policy (Hofstadter, p. 171), but by that time was in England studying at Oxford.

Beard never explained why he failed to follow the more well-trodden path to Germany for graduate study, but if his interests and activities while at Oxford offer clues, two factors were most likely key: Stephenson’s advice that Oxford was the best place to continue to study the development of democratic institutions (Nore, p. 10), and England’s reputation as a center for political-industrial reform (Marcell, p. 261). Whether or not these were the reasons Beard chose to go to Oxford, they did become the principal axes around which his life revolved while he remained there (1898-1902). Much of his academic work focused on the institutional effects of industrialism, and his major interest otherwise was the establishment of a school for industrial workers. He often pursued the two objectives together for he believed that they were historically and logically connected: modern industrial development necessitated social reforms such as the school he hoped to found (M. Beard, pp. 16-20; Hofstadter, pp. 171-179; Nore, pp. 14-27).

Seeking to integrate his academic and activist goals still further, he tried whenever possible while at Oxford, as he would for the rest of his life, to present the results of his academic study in sources that were available to popular as well as scholarly audiences. In this way, he hoped to influence public opinion in support of progressive reform (Novick, p. 253).

Although Beard soon became the chief organizer and spokesman for the new school for workers at Oxford, its original idea was not his, but Walter Vrooman’s, also a student from the United States. Vrooman was a self-described Christian Socialist who had been involved in a number of urban reform initiatives before leaving for England. He was an experienced and inspiring public speaker with many plans to improve the life of working class people, but few of the skills needed to effect his ideas. Beard, who was immediately taken by the prospects of a workers’ school, proved the perfect partner for the plan: someone with energy and managerial skills to match Vrooman’s vision and enthusiasm.

Financial backing was provided by Vrooman’s well-to-do wife, and Beard promptly set about making the necessary arrangements. He devised a curriculum emphasizing political economy and modern political and industrial history, set up daily course schedules, obtained the use of a build-
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ing with adequate space, secured the endorsement of the Oxford Trade Union Council, and hired instructors, himself included (M. Beard, p. 17; Hofstadter, pp. 174-175; Nore, pp. 15-16). Indeed, Beard accomplished so much so quickly that classes for the school’s inaugural semester began in February, 1899, just five months after he had arrived in England (Nore, p. 16).

He and Vrooman named the school Ruskin Hall, after John Ruskin, the famous English aesthete and social critic. Beard had read some of Ruskin’s essays while in college, but in England, Unto This Last, Ruskin’s impassioned if somewhat romantic critique of laissez-faire capitalism, was his ever-present companion (M. Beard, p. 17; Hofstadter, pp. 171-174). It was also the source of the school’s organizing philosophy. The “one great fact” of political economy, Ruskin wrote in the book’s concluding section, is that “THERE IS NO WEALTH BUT LIFE” (emphasis in the original). Accordingly, Ruskin explained (Clark 1964, pp. 273-274), “[t]hat country is richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings; [and] that man is richest, who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.” The educational implications of these principles seemed clear; it was essential, Beard thought, for students at Ruskin to be encouraged and, more important, prepared, “to return ... to their respective shops, factories, farms and mines, to raise rather than rise out of the mass of their fellow workers” (Nore, p. 17).

Once the school was running, Beard taught several courses. He also assumed directorship of Ruskin’s Extension Department. The latter responsibility required that he travel throughout the “black country” cities of England’s industrial heartland making speeches, usually at union meetings, in which he explained the school’s philosophy and programs, and sought to recruit as many workers as possible to enroll in its correspondence courses (M. Beard, pp. 19-20; Hofstadter, pp. 175-176; Nore, pp. 22-24). He also used the opportunity for research, collecting information for a series of essays and addresses that he eventually compiled in his first book, The Industrial Revolution (1900).

All of this activity brought Beard to the attention of the leaders of England’s newly founded Labor Party, some of whom saw him as a “comer” with leadership potential (M. Beard, p. 21; Hofstadter, p. 179). Beard had other plans, however, having decided to return to the United States. His schedule since arriving in England had been hectic, often interfering with his studies. He had accomplished much, but apparently wanted to dedicate himself more fully to academic work, at least for a time. His wife, Mary, moreover, had recently given birth to a daughter, and this, too, very likely, influenced his decision to return home. So, in March 1902, at the end of the winter semester at Ruskin, Beard, his wife, and their baby daughter, Miriam, sailed for New York (Nore, pp. 26-28). They arrived in April, and
shortly thereafter Beard enrolled at Columbia. Two years later he earned a doctorate degree in history, and was promptly hired as a lecturer in Columbia’s History Department (Nore, pp. 28-32).

History and Historical Thought

“In writing [history a historian]...makes choices, large or small, timid or bold, with respect to some conception of the nature of things.”
Charles Beard, 1933

Beard’s years at Columbia (1904-1917) were characteristically busy, especially at first (Hofstadter, p. 181; Nore, pp. 32-46). Besides teaching undergraduate and graduate courses in history and political science and writing extensively in both fields, he coached the college’s debating team, founded and coordinated its Intercollegiate Civic League, held various positions in the National Municipal League, served as a regular consultant to the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, and campaigned for several local politicians, among them Morris Hillquit, a personal friend and two-time Socialist Party candidate for Congress from New York City’s Lower East Side.

His accomplishments and energy so impressed his colleagues that in 1907, just three years after joining the faculty, he was chosen to fill a newly created chair in Politics and Government (Nore, pp. 28-35). He was further honored the following year when he was chosen to participate in a well-publicized lecture series by some of Columbia’s most prominent professors.

Beard’s lecture was titled “Politics” (1908), but he actually spoke about government, or more precisely, as he stated in his brief introduction (p. 5), about “the phenomena which condition the organization and operations” of government, not the exercise of government power per se. Coincidentally, he raised a number of issues which bore, in some cases quite directly, on his general understanding of history and historical thought. To start, for example, he assailed (p. 6) as “the most unsubstantial of all abstractions” the notion of people acting solely upon political motives. “We are coming to realize,” he explained, “that a science dealing with man [sic] has no special field of data all to itself” for a person “is not essentially different when he is depositing his ballot from what he is in the counting house or at the work bench. In place of a ‘natural’ man, an ‘economic’ man, a ‘religious’ man, or a ‘political’ man,” he said emphasizing the essential point, “we now [need to] observe the whole man.”

Pressing this critique still further, he declared (p. 9) that there was “no hope for real knowledge” about government, or any other social institution, “except in the painstaking examination of the materials that are left to us ... from the past.” Any theory of human existence, regardless how logically or persuasively formulated, was valuable, in his judgment, that
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is, potentially instructive, only to the extent that it corresponded with what was known about history. He thought it made little sense, for example (p. 26), to define dogmatically what a government should or should not do because what it did in fact depended "not upon any theory ... but upon the will of the group of persons actually in control at any one time." Knowledge of history, therefore, and not the pronouncements of speculative theorists, offered the best, indeed the only, opportunity, he believed, for "the ascertainment of truth," about government and all other social matters (p. 14).

He also believed (pp. 33-34) that one should consider the future as well as the past in establishing public policy. This was not a remarkable opinion, of course, since most policy is so oriented. What is worth noting, however, is that Beard thought of the past and the future as phases, not wholly distinct periods, in a grand historical continuum, what he often referred to as the "seamless web" of human history. More important still, he considered the past to be the best indication of a society's development in the future, at least in the short run, and in the long run, of its ultimate possibilities. He therefore thought that historical study was essential for the advancement of human progress.

He made one more point in this early address, but discussed it only briefly at the time. In retrospect, however, it stands out as a nascent expression of what would eventually become perhaps his most penetrating, and controversial, reflection about the nature of history. When "reasoning faculties are hardest at work," he warned (pp. 12-15), biases arising from "[one's] own life history" may well "distort the vision." Such distortions, he understood, posed fundamental problems for scholars and teachers alike. For years he struggled to explicate the complex questions involved, but never more intently than during the 1930s when he also served on the Social Studies Commission and made his most comprehensive recommendations about history education in schools.

By then, though, his analysis of the effects of personal historical circumstance on a historian's ability to comprehend and explain historical development was not only central to his understanding of history as a field of study, but also his understanding of history education and its values. His Presidential Address to the American Historical Association in 1933 in which he delved deeply into the issues involved in the complicated relationship between subject and object in historical inquiry is doubly significant, therefore. He titled this address "Written History as an Act of Faith" (1934a), and established both its theme and general tone at the outset, declaring that history was currently in a state of "crisis" (p. 221). To clarify the exact nature of that crisis, he first differentiated between three common notions of history: history as actuality, history as record, and history as thought. The first, he said (p. 219), referred to "all that [had ever] been done, said, felt, and thought by human beings"; the second to "the monuments, docu-
ments, and symbols which provide such knowledge as we have or can find respecting past actuality”; and the third to “thought about past actuality, instructed and delimited by history as record.” The crux of the crisis, he explained, was not history as actuality or record, but history as thought, in particular, “all the bewildering problems inherent in ... the relation of the thinker to the thing thought about” (pp. 219-220). Moreover, he believed (pp. 220-228) that neither of the two great philosophic conceptions of history advanced during the modern era resolved these problems satisfactorily.

The first conception, the Rankean or scientific conception of history, was largely derivative of the positivist model of the natural sciences. It affirmed that generalizable “truths” about history as actuality could be apprehended in much the same way as regularities in nature, that is, through strict empirical inquiry and an uncompromising spirit of objectivity. Beard considered this conception, at least as it applied to history, not only unattainable in practice, but an empty and misleading ideal as well. In the first place, he argued (p. 220), the selection and arrangement of historical facts, apart from whatever procedures were necessary for determining their accuracy, were complex intellectual operations dependent upon “choice, conviction and interpretation respecting values.” Facts, that is, did not select themselves or force themselves into any fixed pattern of arrangement; rather, they were selected and ordered by historians on the basis of some subjective criteria. History as thought, therefore, Beard concluded, was more an intellectual construct than an objective configuration of discovered or discoverable truths.

He further argued (pp. 220-221) that every historian was “a product of his age” whose work as a result reflected “the spirit of the times.” Leopold von Ranke, for example, for whom the scientific conception of history was named, was “a German conservative,” Beard noted, “writing after the storm and stress of the French Revolution ... He wanted peace, [as did the] ruling classes ... with which he was affiliated.” The history he wrote, while supposedly “undisturbed by the passions of the time, served best,” Beard wryly observed, “the cause of those who did not want to be disturbed.” Such tendencies, moreover, were not peculiar to von Ranke, for Beard maintained that all written history reflected “the thought of the author in his time and cultural setting.” He therefore regarded historical truth as neither absolute nor objective, but interpretive and potentially plural.

The second philosophic conception, the relativist conception of history, was an effort by some theorists to resolve the subject-object dilemma of historical thought by radically shifting the focus of analysis from the latter to the former. Whereas Beard believed that all historians were inevitably influenced by the spirit of their times, relativists by contrast, he said (p. 225), believed that “all written history [was] merely relative to ... [the historian’s] class, group, nation, race, or region.” Thus, they believed that whatever light was revealed through historical study reflected more on
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the historian than on the actuality of history. They thereby, tended to reduce historical knowledge to, Beard charged, "a passing shadow [or] an illusion."

Even more problematic was the apparent illogic at the core of the relativist position. As Beard pointed out (p. 225), if all historical conceptions were merely relative, then the conception of relativity itself was merely so. He therefore concluded that "the apostle of relativity [was] destined to be destroyed by the child of his own brain" for if all absolutes were rejected, then so, too, must the absolutism of relativity.

Ironically, though, Beard believed that the relativist position, if pushed to its logical conclusion, led directly to one absolute, at least, that of the all-encompassing totality of history as actuality. If all historical conclusions were relative to time and circumstance, he reasoned in one more tautological argument (p. 225), then at some point the historian must ask "[t]o what are these particular times and circumstances relative? And he must go on with receding sets of times and circumstances until he confronts an absolute: the totality of history as actuality which embraces all times and circumstances and all relativities."

To make sense of any part of that totality, however — and this was the key point of Beard’s overall argument — a historian had first to bring all historical occurrences, “past, present, and becoming,” under one broad, conceptual framework (p. 225). Absent such a framework, the meaning of any part of history as actuality, and more, that of any relationships among its parts, was largely unintelligible. Thus, Beard believed that a historian was in a situation similar to that described in the oft repeated allegory about a blindfolded person trying in vain to identify a particular part of an elephant’s body. No matter how closely studied, the part’s meaning was intelligible only in relationship to some understanding of the whole. So, too, with history. The meaning of any part of history was ultimately dependent upon some conception of its entirety. It was necessary, therefore, for a historian to formulate a conception of history’s overall movement and meaning as a precondition to all judgments about specific historical issues or questions. Otherwise, Beard maintained, the historian might just as well be blindfolded.

Only three such conceptions seemed possible to Beard (pp. 225-226): history as enduring chaos; history as an eternally revolving cycle; and history as an upward gradient moving, either straight or in spiral, toward an ideal order. Chaos admitted no conceivable pattern or meaning, of course, while history conceived of as a cycle or an upward gradient did so only, Beard acknowledged (p. 226), “by arbitrarily leaving out of account all the contradictions in the evidence.”

Therein lay his dilemma. Historical thought necessitated a frame of reference by which meaningful judgments about history as actuality could be made, but evidence for such a framework was not afforded by knowledge of that actuality, however detailed. Thus, Beard maintained (p. 226)
that all historians "perform[ed] an act of faith" as to history's overall order and meaning. Some did so through thoughtful deliberation thereby increasing the possibility of obtaining useful knowledge (pp. 226-227), while others were less reflective and consequently more open to the distorting influences of personal bias. No matter what the character of one's framework, however, whether "clear and frank or confused and half conscious," some such conception was "inexorably there in [every historian's] mind," Beard insisted (pp. 227-228), influencing every aspect of the complex processes of analyzing and interpreting historical actuality.

Beard's best guess based, he said (p. 228), "on a study of long trends and on a faith in the indomitable spirit of mankind," was that history was moving "forward ... [toward] a collectivist democracy." He knew that many would disagree with this view, some quite vigorously so, but thought that such disagreement was incidental to his fundamental point, for analogous to Descartes' famous dictum about freedom of speech, he maintained that one could not even begin to derive meaning from history as actuality without first making such an "act of faith." Without presuming some sense of meaning in the whole, the lack of conclusive supporting evidence notwithstanding, any part of that whole was of necessity rendered meaningless. One could collect facts forever about the American Revolution, for example, but without some overall conception of history's all-encompassing totality to serve as a contextual framework, one could not begin to interpret those facts in any purposeful way, to determine, that is, their relationships to each other and to the broader context of things that happened before and after.

This, then, was Beard's conception of history at the time he served on the Social Studies Commission. It arose from his efforts to avoid the intellectual pitfalls he perceived in the two prevailing conceptions. His double-barreled critique left him in something of a dilemma, however, as if caught like Ulysses between Scylla and Charybdis: the more he distanced himself from one conception, the more he seemed to approximate the other. Specifically, the more he challenged the rigid subject-object distinction of the scientific conception, the more he seemed forced to accept some notion of historical relativism with all its potential for intellectual nihilism.

His "act of faith" was an attempt to find a middle path, narrow perhaps but nevertheless navigable, between these two, untenable positions. Admittedly, it involved a subjective judgment about the movement and ultimate meaning of history as actuality, but it was not altogether arbitrary for every historian, he argued (pp. 227-228), was "bound by his craft" to examine, clarify, and elaborate "his own frame of reference ... by acquiring knowledge of greater areas ... of the vast movements of ideas and interests called world history." In the end, though, Beard believed (p. 226), the "correctness" of one's conception, no matter how thoroughly and thoughtfully researched, would be determined only by "the verdict of history yet to
come" for the future alone, he maintained, would reveal history's true general tendencies.

In this sense, Beard thought (p. 226) that historians were in a situation similar to that of social reformers for the "influence and immortality" of both would be judged by the same criteria: "the length and correctness of [their] forecasts." In addition, he thought the basis for the forecasts of both was also similar: an underlying conviction that something true could be known about the past and that such knowledge was revealing as well of the future. His conception of history meshed with his reformist disposition in a still more fundamental sense, however, for Beard further believed (Beard & Beard, 1927, pp. 443-444; Marcell, pp. 275-276) that the ideas people held, but especially their ideas about history which, for him, entailed a clear, definite sense of progress, affected the way they acted and thus the course of events. Indeed, of all the social theories ever advanced, he thought that of human progress through a process of deliberative reform was the single most determinative of social action, and that historians, as the chroniclers of such action and progress, were uniquely influential, if only indirectly, in the development of human affairs.

History education was critical in his judgment, therefore, for he maintained, as he wrote while serving on the Social Studies Commission (1934b, p. 68) that it was "out of history as actuality, described by history as knowledge and thought" that people became most fully informed of "the problems, opportunities, contingencies, and conditioning realities" that affected their lives everyday. Thus, all efforts to understand the present, to project trends into the future, and perhaps most important, to fathom the possibilities and limits of human endeavor required some understanding of history. Herein, he explained (p. 69), lay "the special connection between written history and the objectives and means of social instruction in schools."

History and Social Studies Education

"The choice of ends [in social studies education] involves both knowledge and thought — knowledge of what is possible and probable for the immediate future and thought about what is desirable."

Charles Beard, 1934

Beard thought three interrelated tasks were essential in defining a model program of social studies education: first, clarifying the "conditioning realities" within which schools functioned; second, specifying a set (or sets) of worthy educational objectives; and finally, drawing upon the conclusions thus derived, fashioning a plan of instruction which would advance the stated objectives within the limits imposed by the nature of school and classroom life. In general, then, the challenge as he saw it was to devise a social studies program which struck a reasonable balance between
idealistic ends and realistic means, between a visionary sense of the possible and a credible sense of what was actually achievable.

Addressing the tasks in order, Beard wrote in the opening section of *A Charter for the Social Sciences* (1932, p. 2), the first of the Social Studies Commission’s seventeen book-length reports, that three factors “conditioned ... [or] set a certain inevitable framework for determining” social studies education: “the spirit and letter of scholarship,” “the realities and ideas of society,” and “the nature and limitations of the teaching and learning process.” Since these three were determinative, at least in a general sense, he discussed each, and their relationships to each other, in some detail.

Not unexpectedly, considering his conception of history, Beard defined (1932, p. 6) the scope of social science scholarship as including everything that humankind had ever done. Such breadth of subject matter was the principal reason, he thought (pp. 17-18), that the social sciences had tended “in practice to break up into [separate] disciplines.” Sharp distinctions among them blurred into “uncertain borderland[s],” he further thought, however, since each actually studied aspects of the same thing—namely, society in development—and all as a result ultimately “merged in [common] interest.” This, though, he quickly added (pp. 20-21), did not mean that “a synthesis transcending the disciplines ... [had] been created,” nor that “such an achievement [were] possible.” He therefore thought a program of social studies education should be configured more as a mosaic than as a single, unified field of study.

Beard next addressed (pp. 21-52) those aspects of “the real world” which he thought were most immediately relevant. Particularly important in his judgment (pp. 27-30) was the changing nature of society itself. If social arrangements were forever fixed, he reasoned in strawman fashion, it would be possible to establish “duties, rights, and responsibilities with a fair degree of definiteness.” In a world of constant change, however, such crystalization would not only be unwise but also potentially dangerous, for it would inevitably leave students at some point in the future with little but a set of outdated, inapplicable precepts as their guide. Thus, he thought (pp. 32-38) any effort to define social studies subject matter in terms of fixed “dogmas and doctrines” would be wholly inconsistent with the dynamic realities of modern life.

Furthermore, he thought that the twin pressures of industrialism (pp. 30-34) and internationalism (pp. 48-52) were rapidly accelerating the rate of social change in the United States. Schools, as a result, he advised (p. 32), needed to develop a “capacity for adaption” among students. Accordingly, he called for (pp. 21-52) social studies instruction to be organized and implemented so as to foster intellectual values consistent with this broad, socio-cognitive goal, values such as ingenuity, rationality, planning, cooperation, discrimination, judiciousness, critical fairness, and imagination. Such values, he maintained (pp. 47-48), would enable individuals to participate ef-
effectively in society's decision-making processes, regardless of changing circumstances.

He turned next to the teaching and learning process. Two factors seemed clearly key: teachers and their students. To the former, he advised (pp. 90-92) regular self-reflection, especially with respect to the multiple factors underlying the central role they played in setting the instructional agenda. In social studies, this meant that teachers had to "secure for themselves a clear and realistic picture of modern society," because, Beard explained, to a degree far greater than that demanded of other school subjects, social studies instruction required teachers to demonstrate "insight into [modern] industrial order and its culture" and also "a capacity for dealing justly and courageously with current modes of living." Shortcomings in either respect, he warned, would likely undermine the instructional "realism" that was so integral to social studies' special citizenship responsibilities.

In commenting on students, Beard actually offered one more bit of advice to teachers, but in this instance, more generic than subject specific. No one, he noted (p. 92), quoting William James, "sees farther into a generalization than his own knowledge of details extends." Instruction, as a result, Beard cautioned, whether in social studies and any other school subject, had to be "geared into youthful experience," for otherwise, it would surely fail its mission, however that may be defined.

Instruction so geared, while necessary, was nevertheless not sufficient, however. Without a clear sense of mission, stated in terms of specific educational objectives, instruction, Beard understood, would certainly, and very quickly, degenerate into aimless incoherence. Specifying objectives and thereby establishing the goals and purposes that would define and direct instructional practice was critical, therefore, and in social studies, Beard thought that two sets of interrelated considerations were principally involved: the likely and, more important, desired direction of society's development in the future; and the understandings, skills, and attitudes that students would need to thrive in and, more important, help advance such social development. Thus, for Beard, the underlying or culminating objective of social studies education was enabling students to be effective agents of social reform and thereby contributors to the course of human progress.

Specifying objectives was also the point at which Beard's conception of social studies corresponded most closely with his philosophy of history. Implicit in the normative nature of educational objectives in general, and in social studies, the subject's special responsibility for societal as well as individual development, was a presumption of an ideal, yet potentially achievable, set of social arrangements to be pursued. Thus, establishing objectives for social studies involved "nothing less than an interpretation of history," according to Beard (1934b, pp. 162-163), for such objectives were ultimately based on some conception of the overall movement of historical actuality — from the past on into the future. Any specification of social
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studies objectives was "controlled fundamentally," therefore, he maintained (p. 183), "by the frame of social reference ... [inevitably] existing in the mind of the formulator."

Beard's controlling framework, the fundamental assumptions that gave meaning to the general trend of historical development he perceived and, more, sought to advance as a positive social good, pointed clearly, he said (pp. 154-156), to the conclusion that "collective [public] policy and action" was the means best suited "to cope ... with the ... problems of [modern] industrial society" (pp. 154-156). If social studies education were to be "brought into living relation" with this general trend, as he thought it must, its objectives had to be established accordingly. To this end, he proposed ten social goals which he believed (1932a, p. 79) characterized the trend toward collectivism. All, he maintained, were supported by a majority of the American people, as evidenced by "a distillation of [the nation's] history," and all together "must of necessity," therefore, "shape instruction in the social studies." He described these ten social goals as follows (pp. 79-81):

1) increased national planning in industry, business, agriculture, and government;

2) expansion of insurance systems to cover sickness, old age, unemployment, and disasters;

3) universal education from the earliest years of youth to the last years of old age;

4) improvements in transportation systems to facilitate commerce, travel, and intercourse throughout the country;

5) coordination of local, state, and national efforts to provide people with worthy living and working conditions;

6) development of local, state, and national parks and kindred facilities;

7) expansion of present facilities of preventive medicine and national safety;

8) deliberate encouragement, both public and private, of science, letters, and the arts;

9) expansion of a reasoned equality of opportunity for all men and women;
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10) and cooperation with other nations, ultimately to renounce war as an instrument of national policy and to work together toward the solution of national conflicts through peaceful means.

Having so defined the guiding goals for "the societal side" of social studies education, Beard next addressed the subject's other "fundamental benchmark," the students, around whom, he said (p. 92), all instruction must revolve. While social studies' controlling motive derived from an idealized vision of society, actual instructional practice, he explained (p. 94), had to center on students in whom its results must inhere. In reality, though, since no educational program could possibly anticipate all the important choices that students would have to make in the future, Beard thought social studies should emphasize the development of general analytical competencies and dispositions, thereby preparing students "to act wisely... in each situation in which a decision must be made." He referred (pp. 96-97) to this "fundamental purpose" of social studies—and schooling in general—as "the creation of rich, many-sided personalities," the chief characteristics of which he described (pp. 97-117) in considerable detail. Such persons, he said:

1) possess information (pp. 97-99), in particular about the conditioning elements, realities, forces, and ideas of the modern world;

2) are adept at attaining information (pp. 99-100);

3) are skilled in both analysis and synthesis of information (p. 100);

4) are skilled as well in the scientific method of inquiry and investigation (p. 101);

5) exhibit productive personal habits (pp. 101-102) such as cleanliness, industry, courtesy, promptness, accuracy, and effective cooperation;

6) demonstrate healthy social attitudes (pp. 102-106) such as respect for others, pride in achievement, zeal for truth, loyalty to ideals, a sense of responsibility, a desire to participate in the world's work, a love of country, and a faith in the power of people to improve themselves and their surroundings;
7) also demonstrate will power and courage (pp. 106-107), which together, he said, could accomplish results where higher talents without their dynamic drive often failed;

8) possess a vivid sense of imagination (pp. 107-108), without which improvements in social arrangements, material things, the arts, and spiritual relations would be impossible;

9) have a strong sense of aesthetic appreciation (pp. 108-109), without which life would be barren and barbaric, no matter how rich in material goods;

10) demonstrate leadership abilities (pp. 109-110), from which come the continuous renewal that gives freshness and vigor to civilization;

11) exhibit inventiveness and adaptability (pp. 111-112), both of which were indispensable to success in an increasingly technological age and were also essential qualities of a good citizen;

12) and finally (pp. 115-117), demonstrate a general spirit of civic virtue because, he believed, laws of themselves, no matter how thoughtfully drawn, could not assure the preservation of liberty or properly balance the competing loyalties and interests inherent in a pluralistic society.

These twelve characteristics were the basis for Beard's understanding of "the individual side" of social studies education. In fact, however, the two sides — individual and societal — were not distinct in his mind, but reciprocal and complementary. What must be kept in view, he explained (1934b, pp. 188-189), is that "the two aspects of the subject — the good life for the individual and the social arrangements which are compatible with this good life and calculated to promote it" — are actually "two parts ... [of a] higher unity." Together, Beard said, they present "a picture of things ... deemed inexorable" to which students have to adapt, but also, and more importantly, a picture of the "possibilities, opportunities, [and] choices" which could "modify the situation ... in relation to human ideals and aspirations." Thus, together, they defined the guiding sense of mission which, he thought, should determine and direct all aspects of social studies practice.

Just one task remained, therefore, that of proposing a plan of study which would advance the objectives so defined. Before doing so, however, Beard emphasized (pp. 190-191) once again his fundamental conviction...
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that “the unitary frame of reference,” and not the respective social sciences themselves which he referred to as “subsidiary,” should be the final, “controlling consideration” in determining what actually should be taught. Thus, the plan of study he proposed was intentionally open-ended, leaving as much room as possible for teachers to make whatever curricular adjustments were necessary to meet the needs of students and those of society at a given point in time. This, then, is the curricular plan he proposed (pp. 191-192):

1) geographic study, beginning with simple physical facts and rising to economic, political, and cultural geography;

2) economic study, beginning with simple physical facts connected with food, clothing and shelter, and rising to the thought-categories of economics and to the cultural setting of economy;

3) cultural sociology, beginning with the simpler institutions and practices and rising to the thought-categories of sociology and the cultural setting of such institutions and practices;

4) political science, beginning with simple facts of schoolroom, community, group, and local government and rising to state, national, and comparative government and the interrelations of governments and nations;

5) historical study, beginning with personal, local, and regional history and rising through national to world history.14

To this admittedly inexplicit outline, Beard offered (pp. 188-195) several points of explication, the most important of which dealt with the study of history. First, he said (p. 192) history, “properly conceived,” embraces all other social sciences, geography, economics, political science, and cultural sociology. History, in other words, in his judgment, was the crowning or synthesizing social discipline. It “illuminate[d] and re-enforce[d]” the others and added to them a “sense of development in time,” which thereby “transform[ed] them ... into dynamic, ... realistic subjects.” Second, he said (pp. 189-190) it was impossible to study the past without reference to the present, for the two were “insperable in fact” and “reciprocal in influence.”15 But even if it were possible to study one apart from the other, he thought it would be undesirable to do so, because such an approach would be inconsistent with — indeed contradictory of — social studies’ controlling
frame of reference, specifically its special responsibility for the advancement of human progress.

Summarizing (pp. 159-173) his overall argument, Beard once again stressed the fundamental point that the “formulation of objectives and curricula” in social studies was ultimately the product of “ethical considerations” rooted in the formulator’s frame of reference. It was not the result of empirical considerations stemming from the nature of the social sciences. While he readily acknowledged that these sciences were “indispensable ... [in] developing exact and accurate knowledge respecting all phases of human society and conduct,” he nevertheless thought that they were incapable of suggesting a program of instruction because the selection of material for study could be made only “with reference to some utility or value ... [respecting] the good, better, or best [social] ends that [were] possible of attainment.” Thus, in conclusion, he said “educational statecraft,” and not the thought-categories of the respective social sciences, “must decide [the] issue [of] setting ... objectives and curricula,” and must do so “based upon conceptions of desirable changes in the social order.”

In this sense, his conception of social studies education — and indeed of formal education generally — blended very smoothly both with his conception of social reform and of the nature of history and historical understanding. Reform, for Beard (Beard & Smith 1935, p. 15), whether grand or trifling, was an effort to reconcile reality and possibility, to reduce, that is, the discrepancy between the real and the ideal. History as record or knowledge held the potential to inform the former, but the latter was based solely on a personal judgment, equivalent in many respects to a historian’s act of faith. This conception of social reform, and more, of history’s role in the process, perfectly paralleled his conception of education. Whereas the means best suited to achieve a certain educational outcome might be determined, at least theoretically, through some sort of scientific inquiry, the ends or objectives to which such means should be directed were strictly a matter of judgment respecting values, and thus beyond all empirical inquiry or confirmation.

Conclusion: Social Studies for Social Reform

“So conceived, history...is a living guide to knowledge of our times and an aid in sharpening the abilities of the student for the discharge of duties, public and private.”

Charles Beard, 1937

Modern social studies education has its roots in the report of the Committee of Ten in 1893 (Hertzberg 1981; Whelan 1991, 1994, 1997). That report recommended two fundamental principles which together have characterized mainstream social studies practice ever since: first, that historical study should be social studies’ primary curricular focus; and second, that
some conception of worthy citizenship should be its chief rationale or purpose (National Education Association, Committee of Ten 1893, pp. 28-31, pp. 162-203)

These principles were re-emphasized, and made more explicit, in the final report of the Committee on Social Studies a generation later (1916, passim). The person quoted most often and at greatest length therein was James Harvey Robinson,16 Beard’s colleague at Columbia and close personal friend (Whelan, 1991). Robinson was best known at the time as the principal spokesperson for a progressive approach to historical study which he called “the new history.” In a collection of essays (1912) published under that title shortly before the Social Studies Committee began its work, Robinson explained the principal tenets of this new approach. Again, two ideas were key: that history should expand its investigative borders beyond the narrow, traditional confines of political matters and extraordinary, unrepresentative events (pp. 1-16); and that it should establish an intellectual alliance with the social sciences to facilitate such expansion of inquiry (pp. 24-25, pp. 99-100).

If these tenets were followed, Robinson thought that history’s educational potential would be greatly enhanced. He also understood, however, that the possibility of studying a wider, more inclusive range of human activity would make the inevitable curricular challenge of “picking and choosing” the topics and questions most worthy of study proportionately more difficult. He therefore proposed a standard for making such choices, advising that historians and history teachers concentrate on those aspects of the past that continued to enlighten the present (pp. 132-153). In this way, he thought historical study would better enable individuals “to understand [them]selves ... [and] the problems and prospects of humanity.”

Beard enthusiastically embraced Robinson’s ideas, but moved beyond them in several important respects. First, he described a definite vision of the future toward which he said history — at least the history of the United States — was tending, and more important, should continue to tend. Second, he specified a set of intellectual habits and abilities that people would need to help advance this vision of the future. He thereby set a certain direction for history education, proposing both the societal and individual objectives that he thought historical study in general, but especially in schools, should seek to promote. Thus, in effect, he proposed a clear definition of the nature of worthy citizenship which the Committee of Ten had long since recommended as social studies’ ultimate purpose, but had left ill-defined.

Beard’s vision of the future and his notion of worthy citizenship arose, moreover, from his conception of history, and not from an external or arbitrary set of values. Historical study was not merely a means of inquiry for Beard, but a discipline unique in its potential to suggest its own educational ends or objectives. As he explained in a speech to the Association of History Teachers of the Middle States and Maryland in 1931 (pp. 19-20),
historical study revealed as inherent and fundamental to human existence a concept of development deriving from "the conquering mind of ... man, subduing external nature and internal spirit to the purposes of continuing life." An inevitable corollary to development, he continued (p. 20), was "a sense of a direction" toward which humanity was "endlessly evolving." Thus, historians — and history teachers — held a special potential to prepare "individuals and nations for their fate, [thereby] emancipating as [they] illuminate[d]." The more positively they set to work in this regard, Beard urged in concluding his address (p. 21), "the sooner mankind [would] rise triumphant from the low realm of necessity to the grand kingdom of freedom," a condition, he said, in which everyone, from "the highest [to] the lowest," would "enjoy the fruits of action and the delights of love and admiration, taking in the whole circle of requited labor and immortal beauty."

One would have to search far indeed to find a more uplifting, optimistic vision of history and its power to inform and thereby reform the human condition. As such, it is a vision particularly well-suited to social studies' special citizenship purposes, a vision, as Beard said (Beard & Carr 1934, pp. 216-217), in which "knowledge and thought bearing on the tensions, conflicts, and problems of American society in its world setting" is selected, analyzed, and organized so as "to bring [that society] into closer conformity to [an] ideal" which is "more secure, more beautiful, [and] more decent."

Notes

1 Sales for The Rise of American Civilization were spectacular, reaching more than 130,000 for the first two editions (Beale 1954, pp. 255-263).

2 Beard, himself, would have challenged McDonald's thesis. In fact, in 1910, he addressed the question directly, arguing that the combination of research and teaching had made his life as a "university professor ... a happy one." Regular contact with students, Beard explained, had helped to sharpen "his powers of exposition, his vital interest in [politics], and ... his sense of relative values" (Beard 1910, pp. 269-270).

3 Many historians have written about Beard, but few have addressed the question of his declining reputation. Most have merely sought to critique his scholarship, either the corpus of his work or particular parts thereof. An extensive bibliography of such criticism is found in Nore's biography (pp. 297-313).

4 Beard destroyed most of his papers before he died (Hofstadter, p. 477). Apparently, he wanted his published works to be the principal source of research about his life.

5 Beard may well have been the most widely read professional historian of the 20th century. For an account of the phenomenal sales of his books, again see Beale (1954, pp. 255-263).

6 It is not clear why Beard's father did not serve in the Union army during the Civil War. His Quaker sympathies may have been a factor, and
he may have been reluctant to fight in a war against some of his relatives and former friends still living in the South.

7 Beard returned to the United States once during this time. In the summer and fall of 1899, he studied for a semester at Cornell University, and in the spring of 1900, married Mary Ritter in Indiana. Immediately thereafter, he went back to England with Mary and did not return to the United States until 1902 (Hofstadter, p. 175; Nore, p. 21).

8 Forty years later, in the midst of what he described as “the crisis in thought” that had “shaken ... [t]he Western world ... from center to periphery,” Beard said “it [would] do some good to take up again Unto This Last, and read it without anger or tears” (C. Beard 1936, pp. 370-372).

9 Beard was a remarkably productive writer while a professor at Columbia. In addition to frequent reviews and articles and a half dozen volumes of collected documents and readings, he wrote no fewer than eleven books either alone or in collaboration during these years (Hofstadter, p. 181; Nore, pp. 287-290).

10 Beard believed that some of the programs championed by the Socialist Party would, if adopted, improve the life of urban workers, but he never officially joined the Party (Nore, pp. 39-40).

11 As was standard practice at the time, Beard often used masculine nouns and pronouns as inclusive of women. Many more such references follow and are cited as such without using [sic] to indicate a mistake in the quotation.

12 Beard addressed this relationship on several other occasions as well around this time. See, for example, “That Noble Dream,” American Historical Review XLI (October, 1935): 74-87.

13 Beard was the principal author of A Charter for the Social Sciences (pp. x-xi) and The Nature of the Social Sciences (pp. ix-x), and co-author with George Counts of Conclusions and Recommendations, the Commission’s final report (Ducharme 1969, pp. 189-190). These were arguably the Commission’s three most important reports. The others, including Education in an Industrial Age, also co-authored by Beard and Counts, are listed and briefly described in Appendices B and C of Conclusions (pp. 149-170).

14 Beard appended (pp. 195-225) detailed lists of “the knowledge” that students might be expected to acquire in each of the five disciplines, but said (pp. 193-195) at best these should “be considered merely as exploratory offerings—not as multiplication tables for the social sciences or as subject matter content guaranteed to produce measurable results.”

15 Beard might well have included the future in making this point for his conception of history, as was implicit here and explicit elsewhere, involved all three temporal dimensions of human existence — past, present, and becoming.

16 Robinson, it should be noted, was the only person to serve on both the Committee of Ten and the Social Studies Committee.
References


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Introduction

In November, 1914, in the very first issue of The New Republic, the social critic Randolph Bourne (1977) recounts a visit to his old high school in which a conscientious but highly traditional teacher delivers a tedious lecture to his unresponsive students. Exasperated by the absence of student voices in the class, Bourne wonders how students can learn to express themselves and to develop sound thinking skills without the stimulation that spirited conversation fosters. Thinking quite simply can't be effectively done, Bourne insists, without talking, "for thinking is primarily a social faculty; it requires the stimulus of other minds to excite curiosity and arouse some emotion" (p. 187). As the teacher's harangue drags to a close and the class finally ends, Bourne notes: "Everything became human again. The brakes were off, and life, with all its fascinations of intrigue and amusement, was flowing...."
(p. 187). He concludes that what he observed might be called schooling, but it could never aptly be described as education.

In recent years a series of critics and observers have joined in Bourne's lament that schools are mindless, joyless places. They have particularly regretted the lack of discussion in American classrooms, and the tendency of teachers to inhibit rather than to promote student talk (Adler, 1982; Goodlad, 1984; Haroutunian-Gordon, 1991; McNeil, 1986; Silberman, 1970). Not only have critics bemoaned this failure as a sign that schools are uninterested in teaching students how to think, to develop an argument, or to listen respectfully, they see this problem as symptomatic of a society increasingly alienated from the most fundamental principles and practices of participatory democracy.

Open, thoughtful, and highly participatory conversation is a critical feature of democratic society. If the promise of democracy as a school for citizens is finally to be realized, then educators must provide frequent opportunities for students to exchange ideas in a variety of settings with diverse groups of participants. Discussion, deliberation, and individual and group decision making are not only at the heart of participatory democracy, they are an important source of learning and a key to self-development and continuous growth. Furthermore, the point made by Randolph Bourne should be heeded. School will never allow students to get a taste of the vitality of everyday conversation and the yeasty give and take of civic deliberation in the larger world until they enjoy frequent opportunities to talk to each other and their teachers. Discussion provides opportunities to articulate and clarify deeply held convictions and to modify those convictions in light of what is learned from others. It can promote mutual respect and engender concern for a common good that transcends immediate self-interest, while providing a forum for locating areas of agreement and for casting light on continuing differences.

Many thinkers have attempted to identify a behavior or characteristic that sets humans apart from other beings. Self-awareness, the ability to think, to generate language, and to empathize with the feelings of others have all been advanced as distinctively human. Conversation includes all of the above and may qualify as one of humanity's defining qualities. In his Discourse on Method, Descartes concedes that a machine could be built that might emit words and even make responses to a limited number of set phrases, but no machine or animal other than humans, he concludes, could anticipate, understand, and be responsive to the infinite variety and complexity of even the most mundane conversations (Adler, 1983). Discussion satisfies a great human need. In families, in schools, at workplaces, and as citizens, few activities bond people as powerfully as conversation.
Discussion, Dialogue, and Conversation

A few authors who agree about the potential of group talk have attempted to make distinctions among conversation, discussion, and dialogue. The philosopher Mathew Lipman (1991) argues that conversation seeks equilibrium, with each person in turn taking opportunities to speak and then listen, but where little or no movement occurs. Conversation, Lipman claims, is an exchange of thoughts and feelings in which genial cooperation prevails. Dialogue, on the other hand, he contends, aims at disequilibrium in which "each argument evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself" (p. 232). Dialogue for Lipman is an exploration or inquiry in which the participants view themselves as collaborators intent on resolving the problem or issue they face as expeditiously as possible.

Educational philosopher Nicholas Burbules (1993), while less inclined than Lipman to distinguish sharply between conversation and dialogue, suggests that conversation is more informal and less structured than dialogue, while dialogue focuses more on inquiry and increasing understanding and tends to be more exploratory and questioning than conversation. Like Burbules, David Bridges (1988b) claims that discussion is different from conversation and other forms of group talk by its "concern with the development of knowledge, understanding or judgement, among those taking part" (p. 17). Similarly, James Dillon (1994) calls conversation aimless, carefree and effortless, whereas discussion, in his view, is highly "disciplined and concerted talk" (p. 13) in which people come together to resolve some issue or problem that is important to them.

Other observers prefer the word "conversation," meaning something somewhat less formal and structured than what Lipman, Burbules, Bridges, and Dillon call dialogue or discussion. The neo-pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty (1979) thinks of philosophy itself as a stimulus to a great and ongoing conversation. For Rorty, keeping the conversation going is the most important thing. As long as the conversation lasts, he remarks, there is hope, not for discovering a philosophical foundation that will guide all future inquiry, but "simply hope for agreement, or, at least, exciting and fruitful disagreement" (p. 318). Conversation which brings people together, challenging them to use their imaginations to create new meanings and move toward greater human inclusiveness is, for Rorty, a kind of moral obligation. He asserts that conversation extends our sense of "'we' to people whom we have previously thought as 'they'" (1989, p. 192), and provides a forum for acting on our obligation to achieve solidarity with others.

Like Rorty, Michael Oakeshott (1962) talks about "the conversation of mankind," and is indifferent to distinctions made among con-
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Discussion, dialogue, and discussion. His conception of group talk is nevertheless rich. He describes it as an “unrehearsed intellectual adventure” (p. 198) in which as many participants as possible are invited to speak and acknowledge one another, and despite the many irreconcilable differences among them, to emerge from the experience broadened and enriched. For Oakeshott, too, conversation is a distinctively human activity in which what counts most is the simple capacity to participate in the conversation in the first place. The development of skill in conversation, he argues, involves discerning how each voice reflects a different set of human interests. Furthermore, as one learns to discern more voices, one becomes more sensitized to voices that are neglected or discounted, and what must be done to give them room to be heard. In Oakeshott’s view, conversation is one of the most important ways for human beings to make meaning, to construct a world view, and to provide a “meetingplace of various modes of imagining” (p. 206). While each person who contributes should have the serious intention of engaging others, the best conversations maintain a tension between seriousness and playfulness. “As with children, who are great conversationalists,” Oakeshott offers, “the playfulness is serious and the seriousness in the end is only play” (p. 202).

Although “discussion” is the word most frequently employed here in exploring the theory and practice of group talk, it stands for a blend or synthesis of the descriptions of discussion, dialogue, and conversation put forward by Lipman, Burbules, Bridges, Dillon, Rorty, and Oakeshott. Reciprocity and movement, exchange and inquiry, cooperation and collaboration, formality and informality, all are incorporated in this conception of discussion. Much can be said for discussion which is merely an exchange of views and that does not oblige the participants to critique one another’s opinions. Simply to understand more fully the thoughts and feelings of another increases our capacity to empathize and renews our appreciation for the variety of human experience. Additionally, discussion which primarily entertains also has much merit and should be acknowledged as an important part of human experience and education. However, in general I define discussion as a serious and sometimes playful effort by a group of two or more to share views and engage in mutual and reciprocal critique in order to reach greater understanding about the topic or topics under consideration, to enhance self-knowledge, and to foster appreciation for the diversity of opinion that invariably emerges when people exchange viewpoints openly and honestly. Discussion is an important way for people to affiliate with one another, to develop the sympathies and skills that make participatory democracy possible. It is, as Dillon (1994) has said, “a good way for us to be together” (p. 112), where personal stories about triumphs and troubles can be shared and where our capacity for empathizing with others is stretched. In telling these
stories, different forms of speech can be employed to stimulate and move others, to emote and express strong feelings, and even just to celebrate the joys of coming together.

Critical Discussion

Whether labeled discussion, dialogue, or conversation, the liveliest interactions are critical—when the participants are committed to questioning and exploring even the most widely accepted ideas and beliefs. Critical discussion or conversation implies an openness to rethinking cherished assumptions, and to subjecting those assumptions to a relentless round of questioning, argument and counter-argument. One of the defining characteristics of this kind of critical discussion is a willingness on the part of the participants to enter the conversation with open minds, flexible enough to adjust their views in light of persuasive, well supported arguments, and confident enough to retain their original opinions when rebuttals fall short. Although agreement may in many cases be desirable, it is not by any means a necessity. Indeed, continued disagreement may be a productive outcome of conversation, particularly if some explanation for those differences can be found. Further, an airing of differences can stimulate additional discussion and offer an opportunity to clarify one's own view in relation to another’s.

The German thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) is especially illuminating when he describes the qualities of this kind of critical conversation. For Gadamer, “To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented” (p. 367). In other words, the discussants should refrain from fault-finding and from behavior that in any way diminishes one another. They should, in fact, endeavor through their exchange to strengthen each other’s arguments. The skillful questioner in the conversation, presumably a role each participant consciously practices, raises issues that prevent suppression of minority views and provide support for venturing risky or unpopular opinions. In the best of conversations, Gadamer offers, the participants lose themselves in the process of understanding that subject matter from many different angles. Because no one person controls its direction, “a genuine conversation,” he adds, “is never the one that we wanted to conduct” (p. 383). Instead of trying to dominate or prevail over others, participants exert themselves in contributing to mutual understanding. This process of coming to an understanding does not require agreement among the participants, but it does demand a genuine sharing of different points of view so that at least to some extent the perspective of each member of the conversation is affected. As Gadamer concludes in Truth and Method, “To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a
matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (p. 379).

The critical theorist Jurgen Habermas is sympathetic to much of what Gadamer claims for discussion, but has criticized him as well for being overly idealistic and for failing to confront the ways in which modern, bureaucratic societies can distort and even block effective communication. Habermas has countered with what he calls “the ideal speech situation” in which participants in a discussion commit themselves to conversational standards of comprehensibility, truth, sincerity, and rightness, in order to address and at least partially overcome the distortions to which speech is prone. But as Burbules (1993) points out, Habermas’s notion of the ideal speech situation is not meant to be descriptive of actual conversational encounters, nor is it intended to be an ideal to strive for. Rather, “this ideal provides a critical lens through which distortions to communication can be identified and criticized” (p. 75).

Henry Giroux (1987) offers a view of critical discussion which is informed by some of Habermas’s insights. Rejecting the social reproduction model in which the primary function of education is to impart the bodies of knowledge favored by an intellectual and cultural elite, Giroux proposes that teachers become transformative intellectuals who engage and empower their students to probe the contradictions and injustices of the larger society. The assumption here is that classrooms are the site where students and teachers converge to make meaning by “interrogating different languages or ideological discourses as they are developed in an assortment of texts” (p. 119). Part of the function of discussion in this conceptualization is in disclosing the ways in which different traditions silence voices, and to explore these traditions critically in an effort to understand how they have functioned to keep entire groups out of the conversation. Furthermore, this kind of critical discussion provides students with opportunities to see how the choices they make can perpetuate injustice and silencing on the one hand, and on the other, contribute to growth and even emancipation.

When critical discussion is personalized, one is reminded of C. Wright Mills’ (1959) interest in the connection between personal experience and public problems. By providing a forum for exchanging autobiographies, critical discussants can more clearly discern the relationship between personal troubles and pressing social problems, and how an appreciation of personal difficulties can lead to new strategies for counteracting the most dehumanizing tendencies of modern society. Discussion, in this sense, not only provides people with opportunities to share their experiences and express concern for one another, it can lead to more effective and humane action.
Stephen Preskill

Democracy as a Way of Life

The assumptions or core beliefs participants must share to carry on this kind of critical, democratic discussion warrant close examination. John Dewey succinctly outlines many of these core beliefs in his 1939 address—"Creative Democracy-The Task Before Us." As perhaps the foremost philosopher of democracy in the twentieth century, Dewey argued throughout his career that democracy is far more than just a form of government or a set of political processes, but rather "primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (1916, p. 86). It is an imperative of democracy in this rich, full sense that all adults help to shape the values that guide public life, both for the sake of "the general social welfare and the full development of human beings as individuals" (1991, p. 218). Within a democracy, Dewey (1927) stated repeatedly, conditions must exist which promote engagement among persons from a wide variety of backgrounds, interest groups, and subcommunities. This breadth of shared experience not only enhances one's sense of identification with others, he argued, but also contributes to making each participant an "individually distinctive member of a community" (p. 154). Democracy in this strong sense implies an ongoing process of giving and taking, of constantly expanding one’s horizons. It furthermore involves a recurring cycle of thinking, conversing, doing, and reflecting, which contributes to the growth of the community as well as each of its members.

As Dewey suggests in "Creative Democracy" (1955) this conception of democracy is based upon a "working faith in the possibilities of human nature" (p. 311). When the proper conditions are furnished, human beings display a capacity for careful deliberation, thoughtful judgment and informed action that both results from and contributes to "free inquiry, free assembly and free communication" (p. 312). Even more simply and fundamentally, Dewey asserts that the heart of democracy "is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner to discuss back and forth what is read in uncensored news of the day, and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments to converse freely with one another" (p. 312). Conflict and difference of opinion are inherent and welcomed in the democratic process. The "expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons," he writes, "but is also a means of enriching one’s own life-experience" (p. 313). Still, to hold perversely to one’s established views or to refuse discussion on some sensitive topic clogs the channels of communication. For both the individual and the larger community there should be no fixed and settled truths, no subject which cannot be probed more deeply. Participants in an ongoing critical discussion must embrace the democratic faith that "the task of democracy is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and
which all contribute” (p. 315). This represents democracy’s moral ideal. At its core stands the sort of free and open communication most fully realized in discussion, particularly discussion that emerges from the felt problems and challenges of everyday life.

Growth and Self-Development

The ultimate test of democracy, from Dewey’s (1920) point of view, is the extent to which its political and social arrangements contribute “to the all-around growth of every member of society” (p. 186). The same could be said about the ultimate test of education. One of the most important implications of Dewey’s theory of education is that the purposes of education and democracy are not separate but part of the same continuous process of stimulating and promoting growth. Both democracy and education, in their ideal forms, provide people with opportunities to exercise their cognitive and affective capacities and motivate them to pursue their development as individuals and as members of communities. Given this understanding, it is difficult to say where education ends and where democracy begins. In the ideal state, education and democracy are continuous and mutually inclusive. They are both committed to the promotion of human flourishing, and are both dependent upon open communication, the airing of many diverse opinions, and the responsiveness on the part of all to every other participant’s voice.

Closely aligned with Dewey is the view more recently pronounced by political philosophers like Carol Gould (1988) and William Sullivan (1985). Although their intent is to develop new theories of participatory democracy and are not explicitly interested in education, they define democracy as that form of governance which makes possible the pursuit of individual self-development and growth. While Sullivan has not developed any precise definition of self-development or growth, Gould defines it as an expanding capacity to learn, form and nurture relationships with others, acquire new skills and abilities, and pursue long-term personal and collective projects (p. 47). Like Dewey, she sees self-development as one of the distinguishing characteristics of being human. There is a reluctance, however, in both Dewey and Gould to delineate too precisely what is meant by growth out of respect for the agency of learners to determine for themselves the form that their development will take. Still, as defined by Gould, growth is not restricted to cognitive abilities. Rather it is dependent upon the cultivation of a whole range of intellectual, social and affective capacities which underscore the importance of developing well-roundedness without prescribing too prohibitively any particular view of “the good life.” There are nevertheless restrictions, or in Amy Gutmann’s (1985) words, “a limited range of good lives” which may be legitimately pro-
moted and from which one might choose (pp. 42-43). This is necessar-
ily so because in order for a democracy to work, discrimination must
not be countenanced, consideration of the widest possible range of
conceptions of the good life must be tolerated, and a minimum of time
must be devoted to the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. Steven
Rockefeller’s (1992) perspective on this point is especially helpful:

The democratic way means respect for and openness to all
cultures, but it also challenges all cultures to abandon those
intellectual and moral values that are inconsistent with the
ideals of freedom, equality, and the ongoing cooperative ex-
perimental search for truth and well being (p. 92).

Nevertheless, within these limits, the possible directions that might
be taken in pursuing self-development are numerous.

Although careful not to prescribe too much and thus limit op-
tions for pursuing growth, Gould (1988) contends that the absence of
certain constraining conditions and the presence of key enabling cir-
cumstances facilitate the promotion of growth. Constraining conditions
include such things as violence, coercion, and domination; enabling
circumstances include equal access to economic, social and educational
resources and constructive social relations. Although education can-
not eliminate constraining conditions, nor provide all necessary en-
abling conditions, democratic classrooms can model the circumstances
that promote human flourishing and assist students in learning how
to engage in democratic practices that can be subsequently extended
to settings outside the classroom (p. 109). Nevertheless, Gould’s cave-
ats about how constrained and unenabled some people are relative to
others is an important reminder of how difficult it is to carry on discus-
sions in classrooms that are fair and give everyone an equal voice.
This is an ideal worth striving for, but it is never fully achieved. Some
would even claim that because society is so unequal and racist, discus-
sion is not only unfair it may even exacerbate existing inequalities
(Ellsworth, 1989). Although this possibility always exists, the alterna-
tive is silence and accepting an inequitable status quo. Therefore, those
committed to democracy and mutual growth must take special efforts
to avoid silencing and must use a variety of alternative methods to
make discussion as fair and inclusive as possible.

When people are constructively engaged in a process of self-de-
velopment, they enjoy the freedom, resources, and skills to achieve
ends for themselves that they deem desirable, and are able to do so in
a manner that does not interfere with their own or others’ efforts to
grow. Indeed, one’s pursuit of self-development is dependent upon
two democratic principles: 1)equality—that each person be rendered
the same respect and enjoy the same access to resources; and 2)reci-
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procity—that each person extend cooperation and support to all others in helping them to grow as individuals and as members of communities. Discussion remains one of the best ways to practice these principles and to test whether, in fact, they are being faithfully carried out.

Growth and the Quest for Democratic Education

Growth, then, implies many things. It includes both a willingness and an ability to go on learning, a capacity to think critically and to imagine alternatives to the status quo, and the freedom and initiative to pursue long-term projects that are both personal and collective. It also entails a sense of personal efficacy and self-esteem, and an increasing willingness to recognize and respond to the needs of others. Mutual respect is one of the conditions necessary to foster growth, but access to educational and economic resources is also crucial. Finally, although groups and communities may also grow, growth as a concept refers primarily to the development of individuals. However, individuals do not develop autonomously from others but are heavily dependent upon participation in groups that nurture, stimulate, and enlighten their members. Discussion is one of the ways that groups help individuals to define themselves, to mark differences and similarities with others and to explore the limits of knowledge and understanding. It should be recognized, however, that all groups are comprised of distinct and unique individuals. Even in the most cohesive of groups, there may exist a healthy tension between the group’s solidarity and the ongoing growth of the individual members. This tension must be respected. As philosopher J. Glenn Gray (1968) says, individuals are:

always straining at the bonds of every group, tending to break them asunder in order to search for more satisfying associations. Without the group the individual cannot be...but his quest for community does not stop as long as he continues to grow; his rest in existing communities is forever temporary (p. 59).

From the point of view of the teacher who agrees that growth is the underlying goal of all education, the question becomes: What can I do to provide experiences in the classroom that will result in learners wanting to have similar experiences in the future? How can I create a continuum of experience that will stimulate and strengthen the learner’s desire to go on learning? In general, democratic education which relies heavily on discussion is one way to unleash human capacities for growth. Democratic classrooms liberate students from the constraints
that often inhibit self-development, while also giving them new ca-
capacities to continue learning on their own.

Democratic classrooms also provide a forum for individuals to
identify with a community of learners, to share in some of the pur-
poses and goals of the group, to harmonize with others, even as they
strike an occasional discordant note. One of the agreed upon goals of
the democratic group is to respect the experience, knowledge, and ideas
of others, and to do everything possible to promote the self-devel-
opment of all, including oneself. This does not entail subordinating one's
individuality to serve the group's interests, but it does require that each
person leave room for all others to express themselves and to have an
impact on the group's thinking.

What follows in educational terms is that when students are
grouped together in classrooms and are given a chance to pool their
ideas and share perspectives and have a voice in forming the group's
identity, then classrooms provide a healthy setting for facilitating
growth. Some have claimed that if we could afford it, the most effec-
tive educational system would be one based on the Rousseauan model,
with each student assigned his own tutor, isolated from everyone else.
In this way, it is claimed, the student would get the full attention of the
teacher and the teacher would be able to tailor instruction exactly to
the student's needs. But teaching democratically, in a critical sense, is a
process of capitalizing on the talent, experience and sheer brain power
that resides in groups. Democracy assumes that everyone has some-
thing important to contribute, and that all members of the group view
other members in the same way. Belief in participatory democracy com-
mits us to the view that, on the whole, groups are wiser than individu-
als. As Parker Palmer (1993) says, "all of us thinking together are smarter
than any one of us thinking alone..." (p. 94). This is not to say, how-
ever, that individual expertise should be rejected, or that teachers should
never lecture or teach didactically. In fact, Bridges (1988a) has argued
that even a lecture can be dialogical when it draws on a diverse set of
perspectives. It does mean, however, that when teachers fail to take
advantage of what a whole group of students can provide for one an-
other, they squander valuable educational opportunities. From the
perspective of teaching democratically, failure to create situations where
students can teach one another is just plain wrong. Recognition and
respect for others' experiences, knowledge, purposes and goals are
essential parts of democratic living, but these things cannot be culti-
vated when frequent opportunities for interaction are absent.

Democratic classrooms are places where there is a general com-
mitment to learning as much as possible from everyone else. In democ-
ocratic classrooms participants are at least as committed to hearing out
and understanding others as they are to expressing their own views.
Ideally, they see their own well being as contingent upon the well be-
The members of a democratic classroom form a community in that they share some common goals and purposes, but each individual within the classroom community also continues to stand out as distinct and different from all others as well. This duality—sharing in the group's projects while simultaneously pursuing individual goals—is an enduring characteristic of democratic classrooms. Although democracy should provide individuals with the freedom and capacity to grow through the means of social relations, it is also, in a deeper sense, a willingness to share in the goals and purposes of others, to find solidarity with others, both for the sake of the group as well as for the sake of one's best self. In this way, democratic teaching honors self-development, group development, and the distinctive selves that emerge from the crucible of constructive and mutually respectful social interaction.

Closely aligned with these views about democracy, Paulo Freire (1973) has written perceptively about the place of dialogue and discussion in democratic education. It is only through dialogue and in the absence of all forms of domination, Freire asserts, that mutual growth can be achieved. Something quite similar to what Gadamer (1989) articulates is the basis for the student-teacher relationship that emerges from genuine dialogical encounters in Freire's theory. Opposing dialogue to the highly traditional and didactic banking model of education, Freire writes:

Through dialogue the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student and students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow (p. 67).

Implied in this conception of dialogue is a commitment on the part of all participants to promoting the welfare of all others. Also implied is the requirement that participants must encounter one another with humility. Arrogance leads to insincerity, elitism, dogmatism, and enmity. It makes an encounter of sharing impossible. When all those who gather together to converse are humble, deeply aware of their incomplete knowledge and understanding, and eager to learn from others, they take the first step toward joining together in a community of learners in which all are teachers and all are students.

Like Dewey, Freire asserts that dialogue depends upon a shared faith in the power and capacity of all people to make a difference. Freire recognizes how the larger society's social relations and oppressive practices constrain this power and capacity, but he contends that each
person’s ability to make a contribution toward transforming the world is enhanced, not inhibited, through an ongoing effort to speak, listen, and create meaning in concert with others.

But transformation is impossible unless dialogue has a critical edge, focusing on the posing of problems and the analysing of the constraints that society puts on the realization of our full humanity. Critical conversationalists view “reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity” (p. 71). Their view of the past allows them to see history as a realm of possibility, not as a burden that forecloses the future. Indeed, they claim the very process of engaging in dialogue and discussion is an historical process of becoming more fully human. In this view, critical discussion, in which thinking, talk, and action are integrally related, is a way of collectively contributing to a remaking of the world.

Confronting the Barriers to Democratic Education

My own tendency is to be very optimistic about the possibilities for democratic education in today’s schools; however, there are daunting obstacles standing in the way of realizing the full potential of democratic schooling through discussion. Here are just a few that must be grappled with.

The Coverage Imperative

Anyone who has spent any time in schools knows how overwhelming this imperative is. There are textbooks to exhaust, state mandates to meet, achievement tests to administer. All of these expectations and requirements steal time away from the patient, deliberative, and not easily evaluated discussions that I am contending are such a necessary basis for individual and collective growth. Although students’ increasing capacity to learn through discussion can be informally measured, there are no tests that can assess this. Discussion must ultimately be justified as a good that students and teachers alike can value both for its intrinsic satisfactions and for the ways in which it influences how productively we interact with one another in everyday life.

The Structure of the School Day

Discussion takes time and time is something that is at a premium in most schools. The typical arrangement in most secondary schools in which students move from one class to the next every 40 to 50 minutes is an enemy of thoughtful discussion. Attempts to restructure the day so that there is more time for activities like discussion is a crucial step in the right direction. But time must also be set aside for teachers to dialogue with one another and to create the same culture of discussion
and deliberation with colleagues that is being advocated for teachers and students in classrooms. This is not easily done, but creative teachers and administrators like Deborah Meier (1995) have figured out ways to give their staffs more time to reflect and to share experiences and perspectives. Nevertheless, the issue of time, both to teach and learn more reflectively and deliberately in classrooms and to give teachers more opportunities to dialogue with their peers, remains an especially challenging one, not easily overcome (Cunat, 1996).

The Emphasis on Management and Control

There is probably nothing teachers fear as much as losing control. This fear is inculcated and perpetuated by school administrators who believe control is not only a means but also the end of good education (McNeil, 1986). Teachers must not let this emphasis overwhelm them. Teachers and their students need opportunities to learn how to participate in thoughtful and disciplined discussions that invite a wide range of diverse views, that are often passionate and even contentious, but that remain respectful and purposeful. This means, however, that there will be many missteps, many times when an exchange of views careens out of control, but not so order and decorum are lost forever. Rather, the struggle to learn through discussion is always in process and like any other activity demands constant practice in order to improve performance. Convincing administrators and others, however, that temporary loss of control is a necessary concomitant of thoughtful teaching is no easy matter.

Teacher as Sole Authority, Student as Passive Object

As Shah (1996) points out in a recent essay, when texts and curriculum guides are used in the prescribed way, "interactions between teacher and students [are] one-dimensional, surface-level, relatively passive...[with] no controversy, no driving questions, no passion...and no feeling of being part of a democracy" (p. 51). There is a tendency in American education to view the classroom as almost a non-human affair, in which facts are passed on Gradgrind-like from teacher to student. This tendency and expectation creates a culture in schools that is antagonistic to dialogue and mutual understanding. However, as Shah shows with his own class, by questioning the text and the required curriculum guides, by covering the mandated material and then allotting time to problematize its basic assumptions, students can be encouraged to interrupt these cultural patterns and create a space for a challenging and respectful exchange of ideas.
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Contradictions in the Larger Society

Lipservice is frequently given to the role education must play in revitalizing civic participation in the larger society, yet, on the whole, participation, discussion and deliberation are not generally valued, nor are they widely practiced. Convincing students that discussion is an important way to learn and a necessary preparation for democratic living stymies even the most persuasive educator given the infrequent opportunities to engage in discussion outside of school and the spectre of powerlessness that haunts the everyday citizen. Still there are marvelous and exciting exceptions, from Myles Horton’s Highlander School (1990) to Ralph Nader’s Public Citizen (Isaac, 1992), that students can study and profit from and that they can use as a basis for connecting classroom deliberations to decisive action in local communities.

Functions of Democratic Discussion in Democratic Classrooms

To sum up what has been said so far, discussion, democracy, and education are inextricably linked. They mutually support one another, with the realization of any one of these being impossible without the presence of the others. Each has as its object the individual and collective growth of persons, and each has an important social or relational component. As important as discussion is for educating students thoroughly, however, it is not easily carried out, particularly because so many schools are based on pedagogical and cultural assumptions that impede the give and take of dialogical learning. In general, though, democratic discussion in educational settings gives students opportunities to:

- articulate and clarify their viewpoints
- modify these viewpoints in light of what transpires in discussion
- gain new understanding and knowledge about the subject under discussion
- increase self knowledge
- reach consensus with others
- develop new appreciation for continuing differences and diverse perspectives
- satisfy the need for experiencing a sense of community
- solve problems that are beyond individual capacity
- learn more about how other people in the group think and feel
- acquire some of the habits and behaviors that make participatory democracy possible
• grow less self-centered, more sensitive toward others, and more committed to the common good
• increase breadth and well-roundedness
• participate in activities that may, in some small way, transform the world.

Dispositions of Democratic Discussion and the Struggle to Practice Them

If democratic classrooms, with discussion at their center, are going to be successful in assisting learners in accomplishing the above objectives, then it is helpful if classroom members can learn and practice certain dispositions that facilitate respectful classroom discourse. In my own teaching, I encourage students to practice these dispositions, either by distributing something like the following list or by modeling these dispositions in the course of teaching my classes. My efforts at getting students to approximate these dispositional ideals have been mixed at best, but I remain convinced that they are a useful device to raise the consciousness of students and to help them to see how they might use them in their own teaching. There are many such dispositions worth considering. Here are a few that are particularly important for me. They include hospitality, participation and efficacy, mindfulness, mutuality, deliberation, appreciation, hope and autonomy.

Hospitality

Parker Palmer (1993) writes about hospitality as one of the foundations for good dialogue in his book *To Know as We are Known*. By it he means an atmosphere in which people genuinely care for one another and for the ideas and issues they have joined together to discuss. When hospitality prevails there is a conviviality and congeniality that invites people to take risks and to reveal strongly held opinions. I try to create a hospitable atmosphere in my classes by devoting a good part of the first class or two to giving students opportunities to talk and write autobiographically and by encouraging them to share something important about themselves (while trying hard not to be too intrusive). It is essential, by the way, that I do everything that I ask the students to do. I therefore also spend some class time relating my autobiography. Additionally, I devote one of the initial classes to a presentation of some of my own views on key educational issues and follow this presentation with a critique of these views. In this way, I hope to show that every view is subject to a critique but that it can be done in a way that respects and honors the other person’s ideas.

Hospitality also implies a mutual receptivity to new ideas and perspectives and a willingness to question even the most widely accepted assumptions. As Palmer is quick to point out, there is nothing
soft about hospitality. It does not mean that standards are lowered or that renewed concern for one another is taken as an end in itself. Hospitality does not make learning easier or less burdensome, but it does "make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought" (p. 74). Taking hospitality seriously thus also means maintaining a serious but lighthearted tone in the classroom and employing self-deprecating humor occasionally when the tension becomes too great. However, I would be the first to admit that discussion in my classes occasionally becomes quite heated. This is partly because of a personal tendency to defend my own view quite passionately, and partly because the atmosphere in my classroom invites an openness that breeds a great deal of contention.

Participation and Efficacy

In any strong democratic community everyone is encouraged to participate in significant ways on as wide a range of issues as possible. In other words, democratic discussions work best when a large number of students participate, when they do so on many different occasions and with respect to many different issues, and when what they contribute adds depth and subtlety to the substance of the discussion (Cohen, 1971). When a wide variety of learners express themselves, other participants are challenged to consider and digest a diverse range of views, resulting in a richer and more memorable learning experience for all. This doesn't necessarily mean that everyone speaks up during the whole class discussion, though it is desirable if many do so. What it does mean is that everyone finds ways to participate in actual discussion, as well as through such alternative media as written assignments and journal entries, informal exchanges during breaks, electronic mail, and even personal communications with the instructor. Such participation should make a contribution to the deliberations of the group, and in some way influence their thinking about the issues under discussion. This places a burden on the instructor, as well as other participants, to seek out the opinions of quiet members and to insure that these opinions are communicated to the group as a whole in a manner that respects their privacy.

I am very conscious of the students in my classes who are consistently quiet and I sometimes speak to them privately to find what I can do to help them participate more actively. Sometimes they say that they prefer to remain silent participants and are otherwise satisfied with the class. Such students, however, often become much more actively engaged when class breaks up into small groups. My discovery that many students just are not comfortable speaking in front of a large group has led me to organize small group interactions for my students
much more often than in the past. At other times I have found that another student’s dominance during discussion is the problem, or that my sometimes overwhelming enthusiasm and zealouosity prevents some students from joining in. In such cases, I must make a greater effort to curb my own eagerness to make a point in order to leave room for others to express themselves. More problematic and sensitive are those situations in which one or two students are dominating the discussion. In mild cases, I have been able to direct the discussion away from these loquacious participants. In more severe situations, I have found it necessary to take students aside and to explain that their participation, though welcome, has prevented less aggressive students from making contributions.

Inseparable from participation is the notion of efficacy—the sense experienced by learners that their participation matters, that it is having an impact on others. Political philosopher Carol Pateman (1970) has written eloquently about this with respect to industrial democracy, but it is just as important in classrooms. The incentive to participate diminishes when what one says or contributes is ignored or leaves no discernible impact. Everyone in democratic classrooms, but especially the instructor, must work at encouraging widespread participation and finding spaces during class time for contributions to receive more than just perfunctory responses from the rest of the class. For me this has meant that I must, in some cases, ask follow-up questions, at other times, rephrase what has been said, and in still other situations show clearly and assertively how the contribution is related to other ideas already presented. Not only is efficacy important in motivating future participation, it is related to the imperatives to show respect for others, to foster each person’s self-development, and to help the group to grow by promoting both continuity and integration (Dewey, 1938).

Mindfulness

In The Good Society, Bellah et al. (1991) argue that “Democracy means paying attention.” This is no small feat, however, for, as the authors say, really paying attention calls “on all of our resources of intelligence, feeling and moral sensitivity” (p. 254). As in Gadamer’s notion of dialogue, paying attention in this vigorous manner causes us to lose ourselves, to become completely absorbed in hearing out what someone else has to say. Mindfulness not only entails paying attention to individuals, it also involves being aware of the whole, of who has spoken and who has not, and of doing what one can to steer the discussion in a direction that will be fruitful for as many people as possible. Drawing again on the insights of Bellah and associates, mindfulness is being attentive to what is most significant in a discussion and doing what one can to underscore that significance. In general, mindfulness is a crucial component of any really good discussion. Without
learners who are willing to listen carefully and patiently to what others have to say, discussion cannot proceed beyond the most superficial level. Again, the instructor must model a high level of attentiveness in order to convey the importance of mindfulness.

When I lead discussions and invite the participation of others I actively and visibly strain to hear and to understand what is being said. I often ask follow-up questions as well, not just to make sure that I understand what is being said but also to affirm that all my attention and energy is focused on what a particular student has just expressed.

Closely related to mindfulness is civility. There are basic courtesies that must be observed by all participants in democratic classrooms if democracy is going to fulfill its educational potential. These courtesies include speaking in a moderate tone, avoiding sarcasm and all expressions of contempt, deferring to those who have exercised few opportunities to speak, and practicing humility. Bullying anyone by speaking in a loud or menacing tone is counterproductive to democratic education. The inequalities that already exist in any classroom are exacerbated, the productive exchange of ideas is greatly inhibited, and out-of-control emotions end up obscuring the real issues. Similarly, employing sarcasm or engaging in personal attack brings constructive discussion and debate to an abrupt halt and offers nothing illuminating or affirming to the conversation. Deferring to others is another courtesy that alert and thoughtful participants frequently show their classmates. Political theorist Bruce Kingwell (1995) argues that when we share public space, we must curb, at least to an extent, our compulsion to convey our own moral vision in order to make room for others to receive a full hearing. He calls this action “tact,” and it means not saying all the things we would wish to say if we were not part of a particular group—allowing the maintenance of healthy social interactions to take precedence over our personal desires to express ourselves fully and vociferously. Tact doesn’t mean compromising principles, or remaining quiet at all times. A tactful person may even do a fair amount of talking. But it does mean that the person with tact will pay close attention to what others have said and not said and may base a decision to speak on whether reticent participants have already taken an opportunity to express themselves. Tact means doing what is necessary to keep the conversation going in constructive and fruitful directions. It often means remaining silent, though occasionally it may entail speaking out in order to draw others in, to acknowledge and show appreciation for what others have said, or to offer a transitional comment that may move the discussion in a healthy new direction.

I have found Kingwell’s discussion of tact particularly helpful in my own teaching. I have had a tendency in the past to insist on saying all the things I want to say, without regard for the group as a whole or the needs of individual participants. This is partly the result of a kind
of pedagogical compulsiveness to give the students their money’s worth, but it is also a consequence of viewing my own ideas as superior to and more urgent than the ideas of my students. I have come to realize that group cohesiveness and the give and take of good discussion are usually more important than any particular thing that I feel compelled to contribute.

Related to tact, finally, is humility. It is simply the willingness to admit that one’s knowledge and experience is limited and incomplete and to act on that fact. It includes the acknowledgement that others in the group have ideas to express and comments to make that will teach something new or fundamentally change someone’s mind about something significant. It is the willingness to see any other person in the group as a potential teacher. Humility also implies an inclination to admit mistakes and errors in judgment. Palmer (1993) reminds us that acknowledging our own ignorance is simply the first step toward the pursuit of truth. Humility, in this case, helps us to recall that learning is always an uncertain, even uneasy quest. As Palmer says, when we have the courage to confront the tentativeness of all true education, then we can keep the learning “space open, rather than packing it with pretense” (p. 72).

Mutuality

Mutuality and reciprocity mean roughly the same thing in this context: that it is in our mutual interest to care as much about others’ self-development as our own and that we owe one another all of the support and resources we can muster to insure that all may pursue their individual growth. To put it another way, our own flourishing depends in a number of important senses on the flourishing of all others. Gould (1988) refers to mutuality, or full reciprocity, as a relation in which (a) each learner recognizes all others as free and self-developing; (b) each seeks to assist all others on the basis of what is most likely to promote their self-development; and (c) each views the growth of all others as an important educational objective. Such a commitment to everyone’s self-development not only generates a spirit of good will and generosity, it also enhances trust and openness. People become more willing to take risks and to speak frankly because the outcome is seen as more likely to be mutually beneficial. When we devote ourselves to others’ learning as much as our own, the atmosphere of trust and openness that is created encourages active engagement with the material to be learned and instills in students the confidence to be both teacher and student. Instead of passive recipients of the instructor’s wisdom, students alternate between the role of teacher and student, sometimes explaining and conveying information and at other times actively absorbing and interpreting what others have to share. To allow the traditional dividing line between teacher and student to be-
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come blurred in this way requires both the teacher and the students to view their enterprise as a truly collaborative one. While not easily accomplished, such collaborations allow a very inhibiting dichotomy to be cast aside to make way for spaces in which the responsibility for teaching and learning is held in common. Creating such a climate, incidentally, does not absolve teachers of their ongoing responsibilities to facilitate the growth of the students. But when we acknowledge and respect one another as teacher and learner, then we greatly increase our own chances of having these feelings reciprocated. We create a situation in which our efforts genuinely to respect and acknowledge our classmates’ ideas, opinions, needs, and directions for self-development are returned, which also spurs our own growth, increases group identification, and boosts self-respect.

One of the ways in which I have tried to create the conditions for this kind of mutuality is by setting aside time for students to give presentations on a topic of interest or for which they have considerable expertise. Such an assignment interrupts the usual classroom hierarchy between the teacher and student. It allows all students to become the instructor, however briefly, and it gives everyone an opportunity to share something about which they feel passionately. Of course, the instructor can only do so much to affect the quality of these presentations. They can be a lively addition to class, or, if the quality is poor, they can have an adverse effect on education. In general, though, I have found them to be an opportunity to draw from the class’s diversity and talent, and to enhance a sense of community.

I have also used a “circle of voices” technique, in which each student is invited to speak about some aspect of the course content without interruption from others. It creates a situation which is a little more structured and a little less threatening than usual and permits virtually all voices to be heard and affirmed. I have invariably found it to be a surprising, stimulating and moving experience to hear out, in a relatively brief period of time, everyone’s perspective on a particular issue.

**Deliberation**

Deliberation refers to a willingness on the part of all classroom participants to discuss issues as fully as possible, to offer arguments and counterarguments that are supported by evidence, data, and logic, and to hold strongly to these arguments unless there are good reasons not to do so. To put it another way, democratic classrooms should be highly contentious forums where different points of view are forcibly (though civilly) advanced by as many different participants as possible and abandoned by them only in light of convincing arguments or compelling evidence. The implication is that participants in democratic classrooms accept the idea that you enter discussion with the possibil-
ity that the ensuing exchange of views may modify your original opinion. Political scientist James Fishkin (1995) has pointed out we often think that when equality and respect prevail, democracy has been attained. He is quick to warn, however, that unless there is a general commitment to deliberative practices which result in reflective and informed judgments, democracy is robbed of its authority and moral meaning. In Fishkin’s view, deliberation implies collaboratively addressing a topic or problem as carefully and thoroughly as possible, so that a full range of all of the different views in the group are presented and defended. What Fishkin describes is similar to Habermas’s ideal speech situation in which all discussants are equally able to make and present arguments, all possible arguments are given a full and equal airing, and sufficient time is equally given to all participants to question and critique each of the arguments presented, so that, in the end, the issue is resolved in light of “the force of the better argument” (p. 40). As its name implies, this is an ideal impossible to achieve in practice, but as already suggested it is one standard by which to measure and critique efforts to conduct democratic discussions. It has also been suggested that deliberation should result in a “rationally motivated consensus” (Gastil, 1993, p. 25). This may also be a worthy goal, but it may be just as desirable if deliberation results in continuing differences being better understood and more readily tolerated. Deliberation also frequently includes a process of evaluating how effectively the problem has been resolved. It thus entails a commitment to rethink, reexamine, or reformulate issues or problems in light of new experience or a helpful new line of thought.

In my own teaching, I have found the ideal of deliberation to be especially elusive. My desire to approximate other ideals, like many of the ones previously mentioned, frequently gets in the way of creating a truly deliberative classroom. Specifically, I mean that my interest in carving out a safe and hospitable space for people to speak, a place where they can feel affirmed and acknowledged, is itself so difficult that the standard of deliberation often must wait for later. Consequently, the semester is usually half over as students in my classes begin to hold one another accountable for clear and well substantiated arguments. My experience may be unique but in this regard it is fairly consistent. I have been forced to conclude that the kind of teaching I am trying to do probably requires an entire academic year of regular meetings, rather than the fairly standard single semester. I am willing to concede that I must do more to hold my students to a higher deliberative standard earlier on in the semester, but I remain concerned that to impose this standard too early is a risk. It may get in the way of establishing the trust and mutual respect that is such an important foundation for honest and engaged discussion. Margery Osborne’s (1992) initial dilemma in trying to teach through conversation, although ulti-
mately resolved quite effectively, is strikingly similar to my own. She writes: “The first few meetings of the class are, for me, filled with tension between creating a place where ideas can be safely aired and questioned and creating a place where we can push, confront, and challenge one another’s ideas” (p. 108).

**Appreciation**

Burbules (1993) mentions appreciation briefly as one of a number of important “emotional” factors in dialogue (p. 39). It is an important and rarely acknowledged aspect of discussion, not unlike Palmer’s notion of hospitality. Few of us take enough opportunities in everyday life to express appreciation to one another, for a thoughtful comment, an insightful idea, a wise observation. Because democratic classrooms stress respect, mutuality, and civility, a logical extension of these notions is finding space and time to express to one another our appreciation. When a helpful observation clarifies a key point or an intriguing comment excites further curiosity about an important idea, the disposition of appreciation inclines us to express openly and honestly our feelings. Like many of the attitudes already introduced, appreciation brings people closer together and raises the level of trust. But even more important, openly expressing our appreciation for one another engenders a kind of joyous collaboration that is characteristic of the most productive and most democratic of communities.

If I have a strength as an instructor it is in finding ways to express and model appreciation for others. My enthusiasm for the possibilities allowed by dialogue is so great that when it goes well, when people openly exchange their ideas in a respectful, clear and thoughtful manner, I usually cannot resist the impulse to let people know it. I think this builds trust and community and motivates others to participate in a similar fashion. Of course, such expressions of appreciation can be overdone and can be sentimentalized. When this happens, standards for strong exchanges are lowered and a situation can result in which almost any comment is acceptable, leading to the meandering classroom conversation with which many of us are all too familiar.

**Hope**

Without hope of reaching a new understanding of others, gaining a helpful perspective on a particularly knotty problem, or clarifying the roots of an ongoing conflict, there is little reason to go on talking, learning, and teaching. Hope sustains us when we encounter seemingly insurmountable problems, or when the amount of time needed to work through a particularly challenging issue grows longer and longer. Hope provides us with a sense that all of the time and effort and work will benefit us in the long run, even if only in a small way. Freire (1995) goes so far as to say that he does “not understand human
Hope and faith are cardinal principles underlying and supporting my pedagogy. Despite the recurring and never fully resolved problems of building trust and allowing everyone's voice to be heard and maintaining high deliberative standards, I cling to the possibility that together we can work things out and make our dialogic encounters incisive and meaningful and satisfying. My attempts to do this with my students are always incomplete, always in process, but for the most part the plusses greatly outweigh the negatives, reinforcing my faith that even the most diverse groups of students can have productive dialogue across differences.

Autonomy

In a sense this final point brings us back full circle. If democratic classrooms seek to promote the growth and self-development of individuals, then people who retain the courage and strength and resolve to hold to an opinion not widely shared by others should be given their due. Autonomy denotes a state of being separate and aloof from others, and it is ordinarily not a desirable state where collaboration, cooperation, and joint deliberation are so important. In general, autonomy is desirable as a temporary state, as a kind of "provisional resting place," (Barber, 1994) where an individual can claim that this is what I believe in and stand for at a particular point in time. But that same individual should also be willing to subject those convictions to continuous re-evaluation and possible revision, with the understanding that these convictions may, in Barber's words, be "repossessed" entirely intact as well. Without individuals willing to take strong stands and to argue assertively for them, democracy is diminished, and the opportunities for growth and self-development, partly dependent upon the clash of contending wills, are greatly weakened. In valuing autonomy we are reminded of the tension between identifying and collaborating with the group and pursuing our own individual goals. Both are valuable and neither can be neglected, but developing the strong sense of self needed to stand alone occasionally cannot be underestimated (Barber, 1984, 190-91; Hook, 1946).
Critical discussion puts much emphasis on the value of critique and the questioning of our most basic assumptions, but as Richard Bernstein (1992) has said, we must ask again and again, "critique in the name of what?" (p. 318). As valuable as critique is, we must be ready to explain where we hope this critique will take us and to do so in a way that forces us to confront the moral and political underpinnings of our beliefs. There is no permanent foundation supporting these beliefs; they are "tentative, fallible, open to further questioning" (p. 319). But the responsibility to take a stand, however temporary it may be, remains one of the bases for all democratic and moral deliberation.

Engaged Pluralism and the Struggle for Democracy

One way to sum up much of what has already been said is to consider what Bernstein (1988) has called "engaged pluralism." To see why this is true a lengthy quote follows from Bernstein's description of the requirements of an engaged, pluralistic stance:

One accepts the fallibility of all inquiry... One accepts the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations. One rejects the quest for certainty, the craving for absolutes, and the idea of a totality in which all differences are finally reconciled. But such a pluralism demands an openness to what is different and other, a willingness to risk one's pre-judgments, seeking for common ground without any guarantees that it will be found. It demands—and it is a strenuous demand—that one tries to be responsive to the claims of the other (p. 37).

Summarized here are many of the foundational assumptions of democratic discussion. These include the tentativeness of all knowledge, the infinite variety of perspectives and understandings that people bring to discussion, the endless nature of inquiry and the refusal to accept a definitive answer, a genuine receptivity to other views, a striving for agreement that may be impossible to achieve, and the patience to hear out all possible opinions.

What all of this suggests is that democratic discussion is excruciatingly difficult, and that our efforts to realize its promise will always fall short of our hopes. Engaged pluralism calls on us to value and seek out multiplicity—of perspective, interpretation, and background. It spurs us to consider divergent viewpoints and sympathetically to pursue commonalities, with a clear-eyed understanding that agreement and common ground may be illusory. Engaged pluralism puts a claim on us to keep talking and willingly to encounter others with radically different perspectives in a continuing effort to reexamine our own com-
mitments and to risk the erosion of our most deeply held beliefs. Im-
plied here, as well, is the warning to avoid the trap of complacency.
There is always more to be done to make discussion open, fair, diverse,
and mutually illuminating.

As Barber (1984) has pointed out, discussion is always at risk as
long as hierarchies and power differentials overshadow what transpires.
Only when "no voice is privileged, no position advantaged, no au-
thority other than the process itself acknowledged" (p. 183), can a truly
rich exchange of ideas occur. Yet, as many critical pedagogues have
warned, it is impossible to eliminate hierarchy altogether, and it would
be naive to think otherwise. The undemocratic traditions and prac-
tices of the larger society will always intrude upon even the most demo-
cratic classroom. Teachers and students who are committed to demo-
cratic education must acknowledge this fact and do what they can to
combat it.

For Giroux (1987) the teacher has an especially heavy responsi-
bility in allowing "different student voices to be heard and legitimated"
(p. 119). Social relations in the dialogic classroom must be structured
to resist the injustices and denial of difference characteristic of the world
outside the classroom. Difference and plurality, for critical pedagogues
like Giroux, are not merely affirmed and celebrated, but are rooted in a
"particular form of human community that encourages and dignifies
plurality" (p. 119). This process of dignifying plurality and of forming
community comes about in part through an assertion of the centrality
of difference, as well as through "efforts to identify and recall moments
of human suffering and the need to overcome the conditions that per-
petuate such suffering" (p. 120). As with Freire, history is not just an
opportunity to acknowledge and understand explanations for subor-
dination and injustice, it grounds discussion by helping to bring to
fruition new structures and new possibilities for changing the world.
For Giroux, critical discussion depends upon giving voice to partici-
pants' social, racial, and gender-situated experience, and of finding
spaces where they can come together freely and openly "to struggle
together within social relations that strengthen rather than weaken
possibilities for active citizenship" (1988, p. 201).

Still, the problem remains: How can we dialogue with people
different from ourselves, genuinely respect those differences, and yet
fairly and mutually critique those differences as well? Elizabeth
Ellsworth (1989) doubts that this is possible given the oppression and
racism that continues to beset society. She writes:

Dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the cul-
ture at large because at this historical moment, power rela-
tions between raced, classed, and gendered students and
teachers are unjust. The injustice of these relations and the
way in which injustices distort communication cannot be overcome in a classroom, no matter how committed the teacher and students are... (p. 316)

One of the lessons of Ellsworth's argument is that educators have not sufficiently confronted the difficulty, the staggering challenge of teaching democratically in an undemocratic society. Nor have they grappled adequately with the potential for discussion to silence some students and to put them at a disadvantage educationally. We have too frequently nodded benignly when our classrooms seemed to be alive with the chatter of student voices while allowing to go unexamined the voices that were absent or the sensitive issues that were being ignored. One of the keys, though, to Ellsworth's argument is not that we should stop talking to one another altogether, but that we should not rely on "dialogue in its conventional sense." We need to find alternative ways to talk to one another that "hear students into speech" (Palmer, 1990, pp. 14-15), and that force us to deal with the anger and despair that stormily roils just beneath the surface of our conventional exchanges of opinions. Even when we do this, however, we must learn to accept that our efforts to open up discussion, counteract injustice, and liberate students will always be partial and incomplete (Gallagher, 1992). However partial and incomplete, the progress that is made and the learning that takes place can still make a real difference in our own and our students' lives.

In the end, discussion remains an indispensable part of democratic education. It teaches us, provides us with an opportunity to serve and to connect with others, and tests our ability to think through collaboratively the most difficult of problems. Perhaps, most of all, however, it challenges us to consider the different and the other and to ponder the fragility of our identities and our ideals. Who we are and what we believe is necessarily imperiled as long as we continue to encounter others with openness, honesty, respect and humility. The hazards and difficulties of discussion should not be underestimated, but neither should the delights and the rewards. At its best, discussion greatly expands our horizons and exposes us to whole new worlds of thought and imagining. It improves our thinking, sharpens our awareness, increases our sensitivity, and heightens our appreciation for ambiguity and complexity. Critical discussion is an ongoing effort to make sense of the chaos of our existence, and yet "also to be true to the natural incoherence of experience" (Elbow, 1986, p. x). Despite the struggle and the prospects of only partial success, it is one of the things that makes life worth living.
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DIALOGUE

Another Opportunity Lost?: Maybe Professional Development Experiences Aren't Supposed to Teach Teachers Anything About the New York State Social Studies Framework

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Having been involved in evaluations of teacher professional development experiences for many years now, I found much of what S. G. Grant has to say in "Opportunities Lost" to ring true. I am not surprised an incoherent potpourri of professional development activities are offered, nor am I surprised few teachers avail themselves of these activities, nor am I surprised the presentations are lecture-based, informational sessions, nor am I surprised teachers do not find the sessions very helpful, nor am I surprised teachers are not able to construct a vision of what would be helpful. All of these things I have seen repeatedly in evaluating professional development in a wide range of subject matters and across all grade levels.

What I am a little surprised by is the lost opportunity to critically examine the meaning of professional development activities which ostensibly provide occasions for New York teachers to learn about the state's social studies framework. Lurking beneath Grant's description of these professional development activities is the assumption that the intent of creating and staging these activities is "really" to provide an opportunity for teachers to learn about the new framework and to learn about how their teaching needs to change to accommodate this new framework. Without necessarily asserting there is a diabolical plot afoot, a more cynical view than the one adopted by Grant is that the intentions are, in fact, not "real", but political.

Grant's presentation suggests the New York State Social Studies Framework is clearly a document which deals with curricular issues ("The expressed purpose is curricular."). The "what of the curriculum, but not the how." The framework is described as a coherent document focusing on content, it is no longer a political document still being contested in policy and practice arenas. Adopting this high consensus assumption, of course, the professional development activities look like a "melange of messages about content, instruction, and assessment." It seems to me Grant's data supports a very different assumption—the framework is an intensely political document which is being debated in the contexts he describes as professional development activities. A different reading of the data presented suggests professional developers are engaged in contestation over what the framework is (is it about
subject matter?; is it about how to teach?; is it about how to assess students?; is it about changing the structure of schooling?) rather than in presenting a clear policy along with the how-to's to implement that policy. What is being “rolled-out” is not a finished product, but the policy making process itself.

This contestation is not to be confused with a desire for genuine deliberation about what the Social Studies Framework is and ought to be. It is not my assumption these professional development activities are seen by the presenters or teachers as a context for discussion, negotiation, and/or compromise about what the policy and its implementation will be. Rather, I see these as forums in which the presenters promulgate their own version of what the framework ought to be about (which is why certain presenters focus disproportionately on testing, but more about this later), formulations which in general teachers resist, either by not participating or engaging in passive resistance. Teachers, collectively, know the best way to ride out any educational reform storm is to stand firm and let the waves wash over you. If you have to budge a little because the waves are really high that’s OK, but don’t be completely swept away by the tide. The mixed messages are not therefore a result of bad professional development, they are a result of the public working through of what the Social Studies Framework ought to be, in form and substance.

State level education officials know it is hard, maybe impossible, for them to change teaching directly. They have only indirect means to changing teaching, and the primary indirect means of change is assessment. It is well understood (in New York, and elsewhere) that forms of assessment can and do control the curriculum (Madaus, 1988). The New York State Regent’s Exams are the best historical example of this and more recently the implementation of elementary science performance tests take advantage of the power of testing to create specific classroom experiences. Often, the end justifies the means and if increased performance of a particular type in a given subject area is desirable, then creating assessments which force the production of that performance are perfectly justifiable (Mathison, 1991). Fundamentally, this logic predominates in New York and is relevant to the new social studies framework.

One explanation for the lack of seriousness and efficacy of the professional development activities described by Grant is that they are not intended to be serious. No one expects this to be the means by which change will occur. Rather, the ultimate changes in assessment will be the means by which teachers will be encouraged to teach certain things in certain ways. This may explain why there is so much discussion of assessment in the professional development activities described by Grant. There is little need to talk about subject matter content, but forewarning teachers and schools about changes in as-
assessment clearly communicates how any changes will be implemented.

Further, it isn’t necessary to have good professional development experiences on authentic assessment or performance assessment because teachers will be expected to respond to new assessments created at the state level. There is no need for them to learn anything new about assessment outside of the parameters of the particular New York state assessments. My research on the effects of the fourth grade science performance test illustrates fourth grade teachers learned within one test administration what the actual performance tasks were and adjusted their curriculum to accommodate these specific performance tasks. They did not need, for example, to learn about how to create educational experiences that would support learning the notion of classification—they just had to give kids practice sorting beans of different sizes, colours and shapes, because that was the task students would be expected to perform on the state test.

My interpretation of these professional development experiences as primarily political, rather than pedagogical, may be too cynical. The issues are more complex, however, than presented by Grant, where the problem is constructed as a failure to provide good professional development. Surely, the professional development activities he describes are not good based on our understanding of what constitutes good professional development (Guskey & Huberman, 1996; Mathison, 1992; Mathison & Ross, 1992). However, well planned, coherent, pedagogically innovative, useful professional development activities are not likely to grow out of a policy shaping environment which is still highly contested and which typically uses external controls to create change.

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MISCONSTRUING CONSTRUCTIVISM AND STATE REGULATION OF TEACHING
(UNLEARNING WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT EDUCATIONAL REFORMS)

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In “Opportunities Lost: Teachers Learning About the New York State Social Studies Framework,” S.G. Grant’s uncritical acceptance of prevailing assumptions about knowing and learning—and separate treatment of policy and content—hampers an otherwise well-intentioned effort to provide insight into professional development opportunities. The article’s premise that “teacher learning” is the fulcrum of successful educational reform diverts attention from the political and educational dynamics that prevent meaningful change from occurring. Ironically, by misconstruing constructivism, Grant loses an opportunity to provide the type of social analysis needed to help extricate teacher educators from their complicity in the State’s regulation of teaching.

Grant provides a clear account of the diffuse and incoherent messages of local and state professional development sessions; he sensitively acknowledges that teachers are concurrently the target and the agents of change of this school reform effort; and he accurately conveys that the larger educational and policy context within which teachers operate is confusing and often contradictory. Grant discouragingly concludes that traditional professional development opportunities can only be transformed “if substantive ideas are central and more engaging forums are constructed.” (p. 30) He encouragingly suggests that constructivist views have “radically changed” ideas about teaching and learning, and promises a similar application for professional development efforts. But disappointingly Grant offers nothing radical about teaching, learning, or constructivist thinking.

A Word About Constructivism...

The idea that individuals construct concepts, ideas, and knowledge is not a new idea for educators or philosophers. The recent emphasis on the social construction of knowledge—a convergence of the thinking of sociologists, philosophers, and historians of science with the work of cognitive theorists—is the radical departure of contemporary constructivist thinking and distinguishes it from the narrower emphasis on mental representation of traditional educational psychology (Coben, 1993).

Phillips (1995) explains that “an enormous number of authors, spanning a broad philosophical or theoretical spectrum...can be considered in some sense as being constructivists” including von Glasersfeld, Kant, Kuhn, and Dewey (p. 6). Piaget, who was concerned
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primarily with epistemological issues (and not with learning theory),
examined how the child constructs ideas about reality. Piaget assumed
a social basis for cognition, but much of his available work in English
was interpreted through the theoretical lens of mental representation
and subsequently applied by educators to support the technical rati-
onal structures of American schooling, e.g., using Piaget's normative
constructs to describe the growth of thinking as immutable curricular
stages (Egan, 1983).

The construction of ideas, good or bad, is inextricably linked to
social conditions, and it is this radical epistemological premise which
puts constructivism in contrast with the prevailing ideas that undergird
our traditional approaches to teaching, learning, and professional de-
development. Von Glasersfeld introduced the term "trivial
constructivism" to refer to the educational fashion of adopting the la-
bel "constructivism" without a concomitant change in epistemologi-
cal orientation. Two characteristics of Grant's treatment of teacher learn-
ing cohere to a trivial view of constructivism. First, the act of learning
is treated in isolation from the learner's (in this case, the teacher's)
social environment. Second, the act of teaching and learning is essen-
tially equated to replacing "wrong" ideas with "correct" information.
Respectively, these two beliefs decontextualize and reify teacher knowl-
edge, making it a more pliable subject for state regulation (Popkewitz,

Separating The Learner And Environment

The real issue for the success of educational reforms, according
to Grant, is to change the instructional practices of teachers. Changing
these practices, he asserts, "is a function of teacher learning." Unabash-
edly, Grant obviates the significance of the social context of teacher
learning. While acknowledging that teachers' thinking is influenced
(emphasis mine) by social structures such as demographics, resources,
curriculum constraints, and time constraints, he diminishes their im-
portance by arguing that social factors "push teachers in no particular
direction" (p. 8).

Grant's assessment of the impact and directedness of social learn-
ing is troublesome and inconsistent with constructivism. From a social
constructivist viewpoint, a teacher learns from available resources the
kind of work it is possible to do; learns from sanctioned curricular ideas
what conceptual emphasis to place through pedagogical practices; and
learns through structural texts (e.g., time allowed, organizational pri-
orities, interaction possibilities, etc.) the behaviors valued in a particu-
lar occupation. And both our research and personal experiences in
teacher education show us that despite what one has "learned", as
reasonable, thinking, human beings, teachers move in particular di-
rections because of structural sanctions; it is this tacit understanding
by administrators, managers, and political officials that makes pos-
sible the social control of teaching. Teacher learning cannot usefully be observed and analyzed separately from the social and structural conditions in which it takes place. This is especially the case for professional development efforts in New York State.

On The Issue of “Unlearning”...

Constructivism makes no philosophical claim about the existence of an ultimate objective reality (von Glasersfeld, 1989). This can be a disconcerting (and an especially contentious) thought for those of us socialized in a particular religious, scientific, or humanistic point of view. For social constructivists, objectivity and the search for viable, tentative truths (small “t”) rests on the ground of reaching intersubjective agreement among the members of a social community. As Garrison (1995) points out, knowledge may be enduring but not immutable. Language facility, conversational opportunities, social interaction, negotiation skills, and one’s understanding of different cultures and ways of knowing are important aspects in who belongs—and how one participates—in different social communities. For example, academic disciplines represent knowledge games (serious ones) for which rules of agreement and disagreement in the creation of knowledge are adhered to by the members of particular scholarly communities. Likewise, there are a variety of ways of “worldmaking” (Goodman, 1978). From a social constructivist perspective, “truth” is a multiple variable.

What this implies for professional development is that teacher educators should not be concerned with forcing teachers to “unlearn” what they already know, think, and practice in their teaching. Rather, a teacher’s understanding of curriculum and teaching needs to be accepted as legitimate knowledge that has arisen as a reasonable response to a set of historical circumstances. Professional development opportunities could be spaces where teachers engage in directed conversation and negotiation over pedagogical issues and where content is not falsely separated from instructional methodologies—a capricious technique of the New York State reforms for limiting the influence of teachers’ thinking on classroom instruction.

Grant mistakenly represents “unlearning” as a currently viable constructivist idea. “Misconception” or “alternative conception” theories have been a path of cognitive research under the constructivist umbrella, but criticism of its overly rationalistic assumptions and unimpressive research results have given it a short half-life. Researchers have found that changing a learner’s concept involves far more than merely replacing one mental representation with what is believed by the researcher (and the researcher’s community) to be a better representation (Cobern, 1993). Ignoring social, environmental, and nonrational components of teaching and learning places teacher edu-
Grant’s assertion that teachers will not change their instructional practices until they “sense a legitimate challenge to their current practices and have substantive opportunities to learn how to think and act differently” resonates with behavioristic overtones and is reminiscent of literature propagated by the USDA regarding agricultural practices in third world countries. Practices and techniques that have worked for centuries in providing a self-sustaining economic system, holistically tied to a particular quality of life, have been intruded upon by the “scientific developments” of the western world. Unchallenged are the goals of Western agribusiness, aimed at benefiting the “experts” in the industrialized world, and propagating the value of “efficiency” as defined by profit maximization, not improvement of life in local cultures. I am not suggesting malicious intent on Grant’s part. As educators, however, we need to be careful that unexamined assumptions of the theories we construct for improving social practices do not lead us into fostering “symbolic violence” on the very people we intend to assist. And, as social studies educators, we need to ask, in the case of New York State reforms, if our educational end is to maximize performance by students? If so, measured by whom? For what reason?

A Tentative Social Analysis

Grant benignly assumes the sessions he attended were intended for the improvement of teaching. He concludes through his observations that the educational reform effort in New York State, especially regarding teacher education, is disjointed, incoherent, often aimless, and a great source of lost opportunities. But while Grant describes these as “lost opportunities” because of their mixed messages and insubstantial content, they may be functioning as socially intended—to assist in the state regulation of teaching and learning. In The Political Sociology of Educational Reform, Popkewitz (1991) shows how the tendency in education to reify, decontextualize, and technocratize ideas limits what and how teacher thinking occurs. These elements appear in Grant’s description of the educational reform process in New York State.

First, the State Education Department disbands a committee of educators and hired a private consulting group to write the curriculum guideline proposals. This was after the process had worked through a number of permutations over issues related to the creation of a multicultural curriculum. The New York State curriculum process has been lengthy and riven with ideological and political tensions, yet professional development sessions are limited to technical pedagogical and assessment issues.

Second, the State Education Department asserts that the teachers’ will now have a different role for enacting curriculum than previously. But the State will retain the onerous—and controlling—task of
deciding what to teach. Teachers need only be concerned with how to teach, reifying a false distinction between content and instructional methods. Again, it should be noted that although the New York State reform is labeled the New Compact, official State policy separates discussions (and therefore decisions) about the ends and means of education.

Third, social studies reforms are promoted as requiring major conceptual changes for students and by implication, for teachers. The strategy put into place by the State Education Department provides a technocratic form for professional development opportunities. The New Compact carries a rhetoric of empowerment about placing the power in hands of local citizens and teachers, but the structuring of professional development sessions dissipates and scatters teachers' efforts. The apathetic and dazed responses of teachers and teacher educators manifests the latent function of educational reforms. Teachers may be doing what sensible people should do, i.e., pay scant and fleeting attention to the inservicing of these reforms ("here we go again"). With this view in mind, opportunities are not lost in the State's regulation of teaching and learning.

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A LOST OPPORTUNITY NEED NOT MEAN A LOST CAUSE:
A REJOINDER TO MATHISON AND FLEURY

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In their responses, Sandra Mathison and Stephen C. Fleury raise a number of legitimate points. Mathison reminds us that policies like the New York State social studies framework are political in nature and that high stakes assessments can command inordinate attention. Fleury observes that context matters and that constructivism itself is a construct open to various interpretation. Mathison worries her view “may be too cynical.” She should, and so should Fleury. Cynicism about policy and policymaking is a slippery slope and there’s not much at the bottom. I think we—teachers, academics, and yes, even policymakers—can do better: A lost opportunity need not mean a lost cause.

As a good New Englander, I learned two things about criticizing others. One is, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” The other is, “If you have to say something, try to make it helpful.” Since the first bit would render most academics mute (a situation most policymakers, and not a few teachers, would find salutary), I generally opt for the second. To wit: If we are going to criticize the NYS State Education Department (SED), then let’s criticize them on grounds that they can do something about (like improving their content and pedagogical decisions) rather than something they can’t (like the political nature of policy). As a former high school teacher, state education department policymaker, and now as a university academic, let me make three points apropos of Mathison’s and Fleury’s responses.

The first point is that, of course, the NYS social studies framework is political. Mathison faults my paper for not making more of the framework as an instantiation of an on-going political debate. I’m not sure why. First, I set my study in the highly charged political context of state and national standards-setting. Second, in a recent Social Education piece (Grant, 1997), I argue that one way to read the NYS framework is as an appeasement of the political right. Finally, I can’t imagine that there is a policymaker, academic, or teacher in the U.S. who doesn’t know that policymaking at any level is inherently political. This does not prevent any of these actors from complaining about “politics” (especially when on the losing side of a debate, vote, or argument). Nevertheless, I can imagine a policymaker, confronted with the charge that his/her work is “political,” looking askance and saying, “Yes, and what else is new?”

My second point concerns the notion of explaining teachers’ responses to reforms. Fleury argues broadly that an array of social forces
influence teachers' decisions. From a narrower frame, Mathison argues the long-held, but weakly supported (Cohen & Barnes, 1993), claim that tests drive (take your pick) instruction/curriculum/change. As a kind of social force, tests do matter. But how they matter is not always clear. Consider two points. First, tests, like any text, are open to various interpretation such that how one teacher or group of teachers makes sense of a test may vary widely from that of another individual and/or group. Second, tests are simply one part of a blizzard of competing influences on teachers' thinking and practice. These influences buffet teachers from all directions. But teachers are not pennants, flying only in whatever direction the strongest wind blows. Instead, teachers' decisions reflect a dynamic interaction of personal, organizational, and policy factors (Grant, 1996) and that interaction is both time and context-specific. That Fleury and Mathison raise the issue of influences on teachers' practices is noteworthy. But these forces are not as coherent and unidirectional as these observers suggest.

The last point I want to make is that I think we need a different conception of the relationship between curriculum policy and classroom practice. For years, many policymakers conceptualized policymaking as a discrete and linear process—first, policymakers "made" policy, then teachers "implemented" policy (hopefully) as intended. For almost as long, many academics conceptualized policymaking in terms of control—policymakers attempting to deskill and straitjacket teachers with a variety of policy dictates. While both views continue to have advocates, neither has proven very helpful. The simple fact is that the relationship between teaching and policy is much more complex than most policymakers and academics realized (Rowan, 1990). Some newer conceptions of policy and practice, like systemic reform, also have proven problematic (Clune, 1993; Grant, Peterson, & Shojgrogen-Downer, 1996; Hertert, 1996). So, with a number of observers (Cohen, McLaughlin, & Talbert, 1993; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Jennings, 1996; Smylie, 1995), I propose a different conception: a focus on teacher learning. Since this conception was the heart of my paper, I won't reproduce the argument here. Instead, I'll simply reiterate the central point: Teachers want ideas about all phases of their work—curriculum, instruction, assessment—and they want substantive experiences where they can learn about them.

My paper suggests that those responsible for professional development throughout the system blew an opportunity around the NYS social studies framework. Mathison and Fleury want to condemn the New York SED for attempting to regulate and control teachers and teaching. It's just not that simple. The deeply-rooted conditions of schooling that make ambitious teaching difficult also undercut real opportunities for teacher learning. My hope is that by conceptualizing
the policy process generally as an occasion of teaching and learning
and by critiquing the efforts of professional developers specifically
around the NYS social studies policy, we can all develop a more com-
plex, but ultimately more useful way of thinking about changing the
classroom lives of children. In that light, then, a lost opportunity need
not represent a lost cause.

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tion at the State University of New York at Buffalo, 14260.
What and whose history has been taught in U. S. public schools over the past century? How might the history of history in the schools inform current deliberations about what should be taught? What in particular might be learned about racial/ethnic/cultural inclusion, that is, incorporating the histories and cultures, the experiences and perspectives of the peoples who make up the United States? These are the questions that frame my retro-prospective inquiry and this essay.

A significant if disturbing finding has been the limited evidence available regarding what and whose history has been taught. Even data about the recommendations of national committees and organizations and the requirements of states and school districts remains largely at the level of course titles, only occasionally accompanied by brief, narrative descriptions or lists of topics. Although textbook analyses are more abundant, textbooks are not synonymous with curriculum-in-use, and the analyses typically focus on the treatment of a single group or event. Even Frances Fitzgerald's oft-cited America Revised (1979) is sketchy at best.

More seems to have been written about teaching history and about whether or not more history should be taught (e. g., Whelan, 1992; Reaction and Response, 1992) than about what history has been or should be taught. Puzzled, I wondered if the history to be taught has for so long been taken for granted that questions of knowledge selection are recent ones, born of expanding scholarship and social change. Given renewed attention to questions of national unity and common culture, including nostalgic looks backward to a time when the U. S. was less fragmented and Americans were Americans, I wondered how that unity and commonality had been achieved.

I began my inquiry by reviewing past issues of TRSE. Between my own collection and the university library's, I was able to locate just about all of them. I then went to well-known sources such as Hazel Hertzberg's work (e. g., 1981), and I asked colleagues who have written about history teaching to recommend additional sources. And of course I networked from the references of the sources I did find and leaned on my own experience over the past 30-plus years, including a two-year field study of the images of America conveyed in 5th, 8th, and 11th grade U. S. history classes (Cornbleth, 1996a). The data directly
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relevant to my questions remain limited. Nevertheless, it is possible to piece together partial responses and to sketch some apparent trends.

Two major trends over the past century of history-social studies in the schools seem clear: (1) the general broadening, or expanding scope, of the history to be taught, learned, and tested; and (2) within U. S. history, movement from lack of explicit attention to many of the peoples and cultures who make up the U. S. (i.e., exclusion) to marginal inclusion by means of segregating "others" in separate units, courses, months, and textbook special features. Such segregation also is evident in world cultures and global studies courses organized regionally as area studies.

Broader Scope

The scope of school history has expanded in at least two ways over the past century. One is broadening to include not only European and U. S. history but also the history of much of the rest of the world. Ancient (largely western) and classical (Greek and Roman) history and a patriotic American history along the lines of George Bancroft's post-Civil War texts appear to have dominated late 19th century instruction (Dynneson & Gross, 1995; Nelson, 1980; Robinson, 1980). Following the turn of the century, the recommendations of the AHA (American Historical Association) Committee of Seven (1899) appeared influential for some two-three decades, in part because they were widely adopted as college entrance requirements (Robinson, 1980). All secondary students, these historians believed, should study (1) ancient, medieval, and modern European history, (2) English history, and (3) American history and civil government. European ascendancy also can be seen in the recommendations of the 1916 NEA (National Education Association) Committee on the Social Studies which called for European history and geography in grade 7 and European history again in grade 10. U. S. history was to be taught in grades 8 and 11 while civics and American government or "problems of democracy" were to be offered in grades 9 and 12 respectively.

By the 1960s and 1970s, European history had been broadened to world history with a European or western emphasis. Two world wars appear to have been major factors in this expansion (Mehaffey, 1987; Nelson, 1986) as well as in shifting emphasis from ancient to modern times, as had been recommended earlier (e.g., by the Committee of 10 in 1893). In the textbooks in use in the Texas and Connecticut districts in which I taught in the mid to late 1960s, for example, Europe was the lead actor. Other parts of the world appeared primarily as they were relevant to activities in Europe or to the actions of European nations elsewhere. Africa appeared early on (Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations) and then did not reappear until the later 18th to early 19th centuries when the continent became the object of European imperialism.

By the 1980s, world cultures courses appear to have been established in most states and school districts, organized on a regional or area studies basis. Cross-cutting, topical or thematic organization of world
history or world cultures was uncommon. In its 1987 syllabus revision, New York created a two-year global studies sequence with Europe as just one of the world regions to be studied. The change generated considerable opposition from established teachers of European history, many of whom were unprepared to deal with the rest of the world in its own right as well as resentful of the downgrading of their specialty to less than a year-long course. New York is now said to be moving toward presumably worldwide world history, following the model of the World History Standards (National Center for History in the Schools, 1994, 1996), with more emphasis on chronology and less on regionalism. Whether this means a re-emphasis on western civilization, a return to European history, or an integrated study of peoples, cultures, and nation-states—or something else altogether—remains to be seen.

The diminishing exclusivity of U. S. history to be considered in the next section can be seen as analogous to the movement to make world history worldwide. Both trends, however, can be seen as maintaining racial/ethnic/cultural boundaries by separating or segregating studies of areas of the world or groups of Americans.

The second way in which the scope of school history has expanded is from a narrow conception of history with a focus on political, diplomatic, and military history to a broader conception that includes social-cultural and economic-scientific-technological history as well. Political and military history were emphasized in turn of the century textbooks, reflecting and shaping an apparent consensus about curriculum knowledge for nation-building (Nelson, 1980). Such political history tends to emphasize the acts of individual leaders and provides, in effect, elite history. Among the recommendations of the 1916 report of the NEA Committee on the Social Studies was a broader scope for school history, including "common men and common things" (pp. 50-52, cited in Whelan, 1997), what is now referred to as social history. The expansion of historical scholarship, first in the post World War I era and again since the 1960s, has made possible the broadening of school history beyond political-diplomatic-military bounds to incorporate other aspects of life (e.g., Levine, 1996). Among the newer areas of historical research are social and economic processes and conditions, the experiences of ordinary people (e.g., workers as well as "captains of industry"), and the cultures and perspectives of groups previously neglected (primarily people of color and women).

The short-lived appearance of social studies electives and mini-courses in the 1970s provided a stage for the new histories as well as specialized study in traditional areas. This was the period, for example, of more widespread offering of optional, black and ethnic studies courses (see, e.g., Gross, 1977). Whether and how "social history" takes hold in the schools, in required courses, deserves close attention.

The broadening scope of school history to include either more of the world and its peoples or more than political history with a focus on
leaders has not been smooth or uninterrupted. Struggles over the scope of school history continue as illustrated in recent debates over social studies curriculum policy and practice in New York, California, and elsewhere (Combleth & Waugh, 1995). In his thoughtful historical account of college curricula, *The Opening of the American Mind*, Levine (1996) notes that while acceptance of change is part of the historical canon, acceptable change is limited:

"the moment change goes beyond merely the meanings of well-agreed-upon standard events and begins to revolve around the question of which events and which people should constitute the focus of historical study in the first place, then the existence of a canon becomes manifest and...fierce resistance to its alteration is often evident." (pp. 96-97)

From Exclusion to Segregation to ... Evidence of the integration of the peoples and cultures who make up the U. S. in the national history taught in elementary and secondary schools is scant and might easily be dismissed as anecdotal (e. g., a teacher or two here, a textbook there). Instead, what seems to have occurred is movement from purposeful exclusion (not simply inadvertent omission) to marginal inclusion. Purposeful exclusion during the 19th and early 20th centuries has been well documented by Appleby (1992) among others. The appearance of cultural commonality and national unity has been achieved largely by imposition (i. e., Americanization, assimilation) and neglect of the diversity that has characterized the U. S. from its beginnings.

Marginal inclusion has taken the form of additions to regular texts or programs. Examples include a lesson on women's experiences at the end of a unit, a civil rights or labor unit, acknowledgment of black history month (more often with posters of individual heroes and contributions than with historical inquiry), optional ethnic studies courses, and a textbook feature on Japanese internment. A classroom example is provided by a middle school U. S. history teacher in a recent field study (Combleth, 1996a, p. 14) who ended a class session on the Spanish American War by asking students to read part of p. 59 from the “green book” provided by the school district to infuse African and African American information into the curriculum. This segment mentioned African American roles in the Spanish American and other U. S. wars. Neither the green book nor the interaction that followed provided much information beyond the student comment that “nobody cared what the Blacks did to help” and the teacher's response, “it certainly seems that way."

Similar to the European domination of world history courses, other than Anglo-European groups usually have been ignored in U. S. history except when they are relevant to the actions or experiences of Anglo-Europeans. Garcia's (1980) analysis of textbook treatment of Native Americans, for example, documents “disjointed and incomplete treatment” (p. 152) despite overall improvement in the manner
of representation. Native Americans all but disappear for close to a century, from the late 1700s until the late 1800s, and then again until the civil rights movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It is significant that episodic add-ons or asides as such do not directly modify the historical narrative. They in effect segregate most people of color and women from the main text. They also can be lopped off rather easily when time and interest are in short supply. The result is, at best, a form of parallelism that maintains the traditional, elite and individualist view of the nation's history. If integration or synthesis is too daunting, at the least connections might be made between the margins and the center as well as among related events such as continuing nativism and anti-immigrant legislation. In the first instance, connections support unity (as well as illustrate tensions); in the second, connections offer perspective on the present.

Rather than continue debates about European versus whomever (name a group), it seems more constructive to ask "What is the American experience?" "Who are we?" "What is American about U.S. history, society, literature...?" Pursuing such questions shifts the emphasis from origins to interactions and is inherently inclusive and integrative rather than exclusive and hierarchical. It encourages a "braided history" (Cornbleth, 1996b) that incorporates multiple histories, cultures, experiences, and perspectives. It might even encourage a reciprocal history along the lines sketched in The Great Speckled Bird (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995), one that examines mutual interactions and influences. What is American, for example, about contemporary U.S. popular culture? Examining various aspects of popular culture will illustrate the participation (not simply the contributions) of and the borrowing-sharing-merging (not just similarities and differences) among several racial/ethnic/cultural groups. Ditto for examining "the American experience" of "westward movement" and the Vietnam War via the actions and perspectives of the full range of participants. Braided history looks to points of contact, connection, and overlap for coherence. Reciprocal history looks to iteration and mutual influence.

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Birds of a feather may flock together because of familiarity, habit, and/or instinct. Too often, people are kept apart by those who benefit from separation. Instead, I hope that we can move on, preferably together and in harmony—not necessarily in unison—continuing the direction of the trends noted here, toward more inclusive and coherent U.S. and world history curricula.

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Reframing the Question: Social Education and the Nature Of Social Knowledge

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The most critical questions of our time, I believe, relate to the nature of knowledge, to what forms of knowledge are available to us as humans. Dewey touched on this issue in The Quest for Certainty (1929), and Richard Bernstein (1983) has described the ongoing debate between proponents of objectivism and relativism. Certainly, what is currently referred to as the culture wars is filled with references to the dangers of relativism, and conversely, to the inability to obtain human knowledge free from context or perspective. We can see this played out in the debates over the literary cannon, critical science studies, critical legal studies, quantitative versus qualitative research, and continental versus analytic forms of philosophy. In social education, this debate has been most intense with regard to arguments over national standards (particularly the History Standards), multicultural education, and approaches to teaching about values or character education. Behind all the debates over the "traditions", methods, standards, and citizenship, lie deeper questions regarding the sort of knowledge available to humans to make sense out of such issues.

Put in its most simplified form, the argument goes something like this: either we have access to some kind of universal, ahistorical forms of knowledge to serve as standards for human action or we face the nihilism of "anything goes", i.e., a world in which we have no principled way to argue against or prefer one form of behavior over another. In contrast, I would argue that to put the question this way is to begin with a false dichotomy, an intellectual cul de sac that cripples our ability to think. Human knowledge need not be universal to serve as a basis for human action. Indeed, contextual knowledge has served us very well throughout human history, whereas assuming we have had access to universal forms of knowledge has often provided a rationale for the worst forms of human behavior. To make this claim is not to deny the very real danger to human society posed by nihilism. However, we have no basis for reducing all contextual knowledge to nihilism. I will also try to show that the forms of either/or thinking I am criticizing have been integral to all political ideologies. Thus, such thinking cannot be attributed only to fundamentalists, conservatives, or positivists. I draw on my own experience to illustrate the point.

By coincidence, I entered the doctoral program at Rutgers University in 1972, the year Theory and Research in Social Education was founded. Until that time, I had been quite comfortable to understand so-
Social education as a combination of what might be called the "History/Social Science Tradition" (although I had no sense of this "tradition" as a tradition), and a Deweyan focus on the centrality of problem solving. I was searching for a more critical approach to social education, and my advisor, Jack Nelson suggested that I examine the work of the social reconstructionist, Harold Rugg. I found Rugg's work of great interest and started to study reconstructionism in depth, including the work of Rugg, George Counts, and Ted Brameld. It was also my good fortune to meet and interview Brameld who was a visiting professor at Rutgers at the time.

The reconstructionists provided an approach to education that focused on social and cultural transformation (read counter-socialization) that I found most persuasive. They argued that education, by its very nature, was never a neutral enterprise. More often than not, education functioned to maintain the interests of those powerful groups that dominated society. Thus, rather than a vehicle for the promotion of a democratic culture in the sense that Jefferson envisioned, education had become hostage to anti-democratic interests. We needed instead an educational program designed to produce the dispositions, practices, and institutions required for a democratic society. To accomplish this worthwhile end, it was appropriate to use all necessary means, including indoctrination when appropriate. As George Counts noted, since education always sought to impose certain views on students, the use of indoctrination for more democratic aims was quite reasonable. We are not born with a democratic disposition, argued Counts, it is something that must be instilled for the survival of our democratic culture, and what better institution to work toward this noble end than public education? In this regard, he did not seem too far from Jefferson's view.

The reconstructionists also forced me to rethink my positive assessment of John Dewey. Dewey became a critic of the reconstructionists, in part, because they advocated indoctrination. Dewey admitted that the schools did indeed indoctrinate and that this fact was unfortunate. But the solution was not to employ the methods of indoctrination while reversing its course. What he offered instead was the method of intelligence (reflective inquiry), the cultivation of the students' powers to think critically. I soon began to suspect that Dewey himself was part of the current problem with schooling. His commitment to such a neutral, instrumentalist approach was not only likely to be ineffective but provided an intellectual rationale for ignoring the radical reforms required for meaningful social change. Dewey appeared to be blind to the value of counter-socialization.

But just as I began to feel comfortable with this position, things began to unravel. I had not thought too critically about who would decide the agenda for counter-socialization. After all, educational agendas were clearly being set all the time in the current (read corrupt and anti-democratic) system. What was worse, the ideologues who dominated current approaches to school-
ing had the gall to claim "they" were being neutral. Even the most cursory examination of social education texts, materials, curriculum guidelines, and classroom practices would reveal programs deliberately designed to maintain the status quo. Uncritical views of American history, the free enterprise economic system, and Western civilization dominated the curriculum. Many oppressed groups and different cultures were either ignored or denigrated. Any social studies teacher who reflected on what she was taught about Africa, Asia, India, Native Americans, and so on would note the obvious gaps in our learning. And it was hard to believe such gaps were mere oversights. The reconstructionists, champions of democratic values, seemed to have a strong argument for how social education should be implemented. Still, the question "who" will decide the curriculum to transform the social order became more troubling as time went on.

Two major (and interrelated) intellectual developments have unraveled the universalist assumptions of the reconstructionist counter-socialization argument. First, what we have come to call multiculturalism, has questioned how any group (including radical educators) can have the authority or competence to speak for the "oppressed." Native Americans, African Americans, women, the poor, gays and lesbians, and various ethnic groups have all formed perspectivist or standpoint theories from which to assess their respective claims and ways of understanding the world. Such claims were hardly noticed by the reconstructionists who assumed they held a social vision appropriate for all and were busy constructing "blueprints" for the new social order that would orient the curriculum. In this sense, ironically, the reconstructionists were similar to their conservative opponents, although acting for very different ends. The only problem with such universal visions is that they always turn out not to be universal at all but merely parochial views that have been confused with universalism. Unfortunately, those holding what they take to be universal viewpoints typically have enormous difficulty grasping the cultural limitations of their claims.

Second, for more than a century, scholars have been raising serious questions about the very possibility of objectivism and universal forms of knowledge. Conservative critics have called our attention to what they see as the dangerous influences of postmodern and poststructuralist thought with its attendant perspectivism, relativism, and social construction of knowledge orientations. But in truth, arguments for perspectivism, relativism, and the social construction of knowledge had been developing for over a century in the works of Hegel, Neitzsche, Dewey, Peirce, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, Geertz, Kuhn and others, long before we became aware of postmodern / poststructural thinkers like Derrida, Foucault, and Rorty. The main point is that the assumptions held by the reconstructionists regarding objectivism and universalist forms of knowledge were not even tenable at the time they were
made and have become even more problematic since. There is no simple way to fully articulate this argument in the space available. But in brief, all of our knowledge as humans is realized within some particular context and historically conditioned. We could not make any sense of the world without our historical traditions and ways of knowing, but as much as such traditions are essential and enabling, they are always and simultaneously a constraint on how we come to understand and what we can know. In other words, there is no way to step outside of context or history, no way to gain access to a "god-like" vantage point that would transcend history and culture. Much to my chagrin, Dewey had been more right (and radical) than I had first understood.

A note of caution is in order. My emerging criticism of counter-socialization and universalist forms of knowledge should not be understood as a wholesale rejection of the valuable insights of reconstructionism or its closely related approaches such as critical pedagogy. Education is not neutral and, as far as we can tell, it does largely function to maintain rather than challenge the status quo. The reconstructionists played a key role in helping us understand the nature and depth of this problem and the need for critical forms of education to resist the various processes of domination. The difficulty lies in the sort of solution they recommend, i.e., counter-socialization. Reconstructionists, as well as many critical educators in the neo-Marxist tradition have often reduced the process of educational reform to a struggle between groups representing the right values in opposition to other groups representing anti-democratic values. In such instances, radicals, just like their conservative opponents, claim access to foundational values and thus, to universal form of knowledge to orient their educational projects. But such a priori and transcendental claims cannot be sustained, as much as we might wish they could.

Similar claims have been at the heart of missionary and fundamentalist movements throughout history. We seem to have no trouble seeing this when we are criticizing "cultists", or various fundamentalist religious group (witness the controversy over "creation science"). However, we are often blind to such transcendental claims in our own work. Note that many critics on the left have been as disturbed as their conservative opposites by the relativist influences of poststructuralism or neopragmatism. If we do not have access to some foundational standards, they wonder, on what basis can we argue the need for democratic cultural transformation? Odd couples such as Andrea Dworkin and Jesse Helms come to mind, but there have been others.

Yet moving away from objectivist, counter-socialization approaches to curriculum does not entail giving up critical or oppositional forms of teaching. In fact, once we come to appreciate the radically contextual, historicized, and tentative nature of knowledge, we are obliged to be on guard against all forms of dogmatism. Counter-socialization is wrongheaded not only because it is based on faulty philosophical assumptions, but more im-
portant, because it tends to under-
mine the educational interests of our
students. To develop the practical
competence necessary to function
effectively in the world, students
need to experience genuine prob-
lematic situations in which there are
neither predetermined solutions nor
prescribed methods for determining
the best course of action. Obviously,
we are all born into cultures with
strong value orientations (a demo-
 cratic culture in the case of the
United States), and these values will
always play a role in our deliber-
ations. But each generation must re-
examine and reclaim these values as
their own. If not, they tend to be-
come imposed standards that can-
not be questioned and that ulti-
mately function to constrain human
thought and imagination.

Unfortunately, the current em-
phasis in social education seems to
be moving in an opposite direction.
The prevailing concern seems to be
that we are losing respect for our
core values and objective methods
for determining knowledge of the
world. One can note a parallel move-
ment going on in science education
regarding the critical science de-
bates. Much (certainly not all) of the
motivation for national social stud-
ies standards has involved univer-
sal knowledge assumptions. Often
such assumptions have been related
to a renewed emphasis on the struc-
ture and knowledge of the disci-
plines, but there has also been a
strong resurgence of the cultural
transmission focus for social educa-
tion as exemplified in the work of
William Bennett, Lynn Cheney and
others. The recent controversy over
the national history standards is a
case in point as conservative critics
forced a major revision of the history
standards as first published. One of
the important effects of the critique
of the history standards was to shift
the focus of the debate away from
an examination of the relative mer-
its of interdisciplinary verses disci-
plinary approaches to social educa-
tion to a discussion of what are the
proper ways to represent the disci-
plines in the curriculum. The re-
newed emphases and acceptance of
an approach to character education
based on an assumed set of core val-
ues is another instance of such think-
ing, as is the so-called "culture wars"
backlash against multiculturalism
and relativism.

Having watched closely the
struggle for social education over
the past twenty-five years, it is not
clear to me how things will turn out.
History is filled with examples of
human intransigency in the face of
new knowledge. The powerful have
rarely, if ever, walked away from
their power on the basis of persua-
sive philosophical arguments. Recall
that Washington freed his slaves in
his will and Jefferson never freed his.
However, we have reason to be
hopeful. My hunch is that we will
continue to move in a more plural-
ist and multicultural direction, be-
cause the weight of history (culture,
demographics, and philosophy) is
moving in this direction.

Although Dewey was often
blind to the worst dimensions of rac-
ism, sexism, and some other forms
of oppression, he did suggest an
approach to social education that
might address such problems in a
democratic culture. In particular,
Dewey made a persuasive argument
that we can provide good and defensible reasons for our social actions without succumbing to the illusory quest for certainty. Indeed, we can provide excellent reasons for acting in some ways as opposed to others. Absent better alternatives, we should follow the fruits of our best thinking. That our reasons do not derive from some foundational or, objectivist form of knowledge makes them no less important or practical within the context in which we find ourselves. In fact, it is the belief in and quest for certain knowledge that has been a major source of human suffering. If social education in the future could come to accept the limitations of human knowledge, that in itself would amount to a real gain for humankind.

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I stepped in front of my first social studies class in August, 1960, confident that I knew what my students needed to know and what, as their teacher, I needed to do. Ironically, as the years have passed I have become less sure on both counts.

In 1964 I left public school teaching and joined the faculty of Indiana University, where, from a university base, I engaged in activities very similar to those of my colleagues who were state social studies coordinators. Soon I was involved in conducting National Defense Education Act and National Science Foundation summer workshops for teachers. I helped schools pilot many of the curriculum materials pouring out of the federally funded “New Social Studies” projects. National Council for the Social Studies annual meetings were hotbeds of argument over how to reform social studies. I remember a debate between Byron Massialas and Edwin Fenton at an NCSS annual meeting where there was so much interest in the issue of problem-based social studies inquiry versus discipline-based inquiry that we filled a large auditorium with a standing room only crowd. Those were exciting times. Social studies had become an important cog in preparing the nation to face the new Soviet threat and we were in the respected company of science and math. By the turn of the decade Howard Mehlinger and I had obtained Ford Foundation funding to train social studies field agents, the educational equivalent of agricultural extension agents (Marker & Mehlinger, 1972).

Wayne Ross refers to these times as “...the heady days of the New Social Studies” and indeed they were (Ross, 1997, p. 6).

I mention this because now, as I am about to retire, I see that my entire professional life was greatly influenced by the climate that prevailed when I began my career in the 1960s. The debate which pitted discipline-based knowledge against interdisciplinary, problem-centered citizenship education, a debate which Brophy (1997) characterizes as ongoing and dysfunctional, was already in full swing. Having Shirley Engle as the director of my dissertation, while I was also involved in discipline-based NDEA and NSF institutes placed me in the middle of those debates and preparing field agents to “make it happen” at the local level gave me reasons to be interested in the realities of school change and how new ideas and materials diffuse, are adopted, and are eventually discarded (Marker, 1980). This is
an interest of mine that continues
today, another illustration of how
I was marked by the times of my
"professional childhood" even
though much has since changed.

As one of the founding
members of CUFA I have watched
that organization change with the
times. A quick scan of the tables
of contents of Theory and Research
in Social Education and of the pro-
grams of CUFA annual meeting
over the years documents how
that organization has reflected
changes in the larger environment.
Like all movements, the New So-
cial Studies had its day in the lime-
light, to be followed by interna-
tional (later global) education and
a host of other special interest ar-
areas, then "back to the basics," then
ethnic/multiethnic, and multi cul-
tural education, the standards
movement, moral education, au-
thentic assessment, and now the
impact of technology, especially
the Internet and multimedia. I'm
sure I have omitted several impor-
tant trends, fads, or movements,
but the fact remains that whatever
seems terribly important to us at
the moment will eventually be re-
placed by yet another compelling
issue for the profession.

Meanwhile some things
seem to never change. As Jack
Nelson (Nelson, 1997) reminds us,
CUFA had barely begun before
some of its members were advo-
cating breaking away from NCSS,
which was characterized as anti-
research, too political, too domi-
nated by an "old guard", too con-
servative, too practice oriented,
not reform minded enough, etc.
Such calls for CUFA to drop its
affiliation with NCSS have often
come from CUFA members who
themselves had not held leader-
ship roles in NCSS. There were
notable exceptions, but it seemed
at the time that much of the un-
happiness with NCSS stemmed
from three sources. One of these
friction points related to economic
issues; NCSS charged us too
much for the address labels for the
journal, did not keep the members-
ship list as current as we wished,
controlled the CUFA budget, etc.

Second, I think that some
CUFA members felt genuinely
unappreciated. My recollection of
the late 1960s and early 1970s con-
irms Nelson's statement that
"...the college group excessively
dominates NCSS, far-beyond their
level of membership" (Nelson,
1997, p. 170). From the perspective
of the classroom teachers in NCSS
it must surely have appeared that
college and university faculty con-
trolled the organization, but to
those in CUFA, who were doing
much of the work of NCSS, it
seemed that many of their efforts
were being misunderstood and
going unrecognized.

Finally, and this more in ret-
rospect, I think some of the discon-
tent with NCSS stemmed from the
fact that the classroom teacher
members of NCSS were not inter-
ested in what CUFA thought was
important and/or ignored much
of the advice they were being
given regarding what should be
the content and pedagogy of so-
cial studies. CUFA members
wanted to debate the philosophi-
cal assumptions of various social
studies models while the teachers
wanted to know how to get kids who could not read interested in studying about the Great Depression. CUFA members enjoyed debates about abstract philosophies and the definition of the social studies, but teachers sought help with their immediate problems; this dualism of interest and values persists.

The lack of interest in much of what CUFA members did, and thus the seeming unwillingness to publish research and philosophical discussions in *Social Education* was probably the major reason that the CUFA membership decided to launch their own journal. A restructuring which limited college and university representatives to an allotted number of seats on the NCSS board and rotated presidential candidacy seems to have reduced the sense that NCSS is dominated by people from the colleges and universities. Thus two of the three sources of conflict have been reduced or eliminated. What remains is the issue of recognized leadership or influence regarding what goes on in schools. *TRSE* has devoted space to this topic, but generally this has not been an easy issue for the CUFA membership to address.

During the almost frantic and well funded days of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the New Social Studies movement brought social studies educators, subject-matter specialists, and K-12 teachers together around a common cause, and for the moment, reduced some of the tensions among those groups. But the back-to-basics debate reignited the conflict and the recent controversy over content standards further highlighted those differences. Over the years debates over the differences between these groups have been prominent in CUFA meetings and in *TRSE*. But an analysis of the extent to which college and university faculty have actually influenced the field has been a more difficult topic to discuss. Howard Mehlinger formally raised the issue in a chapter in the 80th National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook (Mehlinger, 1981). James Leming documented the differences between CUFA members and social studies teachers (Leming, 1989, 1992a) and *TRSE* provided space for the debate (Leming, 1992b; Parker, 1992; Wade, 1993), but Mehlinger and Leming failed to win much appreciation for asking whether the “Emperor was wearing any clothes?” Warranted or not, such an issue is potentially threatening to the membership of CUFA, and yet this question of leadership of the profession probably represents the locus of much of the continuing tension between CUFA and NCSS. The recent debate over whether CUFA should boycott the NCSS Annual Meeting, which is scheduled for California in 1998, is further evidence of how differently CUFA and NCSS view the world. Meanwhile, whether CUFA can, does, or should provide the leadership of social studies receives little attention.

CUFA and those who were instrumental in its formation have much for which they can be
proud. TRSE has avoided becoming doctrinaire and has become a highly respected scholarly journal. CUFA membership remains robust and CUFA meetings provide a setting where members can present and debate issues of mutual interest.

Like me over thirty years ago, those entering the social studies education field today will themselves be creatures of their time and will no doubt be discussing issues such as post-modernism, deconstructionism, and qualitative research, and authentic assessment long after these are replaced by other issues. Whether CUFA is made up of “leaders without followers” or the most influential leaders in the field remains to be determined even though, for the present, that question seems to have dropped off the list of “hot topics.”

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As editor of TRSE, Wayne Ross has decided to mark the 25th anniversary of the journal with some retrospective comments about the journal, and I think it is both appropriate and timely. The question is, why am I commenting, when it should be done by veteran researchers and practitioners in the field? Like it or not, that questionable veneration has crept up on me. I joined CUFA while a graduate student at Stanford University in 1972 and received the first issue of TRSE the next year. For the first seven years of the journal it carried the following description on its cover, “a journal to stimulate and communicate systematic thinking and research in social education.”

If TRSE was reflecting its membership, historical research in the field of social studies education was not seen as reflective of the above mentioned goal. For those of us interested in such pursuit we often felt like “oddballs,” not just outside the mainstream of social studies education research, but pursuing research that was unnecessary and impractical. Until 1977 no work reflective of historical research appeared in TRSE. In Volume 5, Number 3, two articles were published by Editor Lee Ehman, one by Nadia Bagenstos and one by me, both, interestingly, focusing on aspects of the social studies achievements and career of Harold Rugg. These articles were met with resounding silence and failed to stimulate others to research and publish such work in the pages of TRSE, though an occasional section of TRSE, “Dissertations in Progress” did hold the promise of future work in this vein. In Volume 5, Number 1, two other historical dissertations were listed, both from Stanford University (doctoral students often are a great influence on the research topics of their fellow students at an institution), and though one was never completed, the other, that of Paul Robinson, was a prescient analysis of the formations of the field of social studies.

The most powerful recognition to that time of historical research as vital to the field of social studies was Editor Tom Popkewitz’s decision to have a special issue on the history of social studies in 1980 (Volume 8, Number 3), which included six articles that set a standard for future historical research in social studies. Michael Lybarger, Oliver Keels, Wells Singleton, Jim Barth and Sam Shermis, Paul Robinson, and I examined various aspects of the foundations of social studies in that volume and the acceptance of historical research grew more common. The next year Bill Stanley published a two part article based on his dissertation which examined the radical reconstructionist rationale for social education. Stanley relied on both historical and philosophical tenets in his analysis, further broadening the...
Still, historical research was not commonplace in the pages of TRSE, though by 1983, ten years after its founding, TRSE no longer seemed to be an inappropriate outlet for such work. As in all academic fields, there is often a significant lag time in which new students would read the work of the field and make decisions to pursue their own work and finally publish such work. The period from 1977 to 1986 seemed to be that period of transitional acceptance because beginning in 1986 there has been a significant increase in historical research reported in TRSE. Not coincidentally there has been a decided shift in that same period of time from almost exclusively quantitative research to largely qualitative research (in various forms) that have been published in the pages of TRSE.

Beginning with Jim Akenson and Harvey Neufeldt's examination of the social studies component of the southern literacy campaign of 1915-1930, volumes 14 and 15 contained no fewer than five articles that relied on historical research as their methodology. Besides Akenson, who published another article as sole author, Leo LeRiche, George Mehaffy and I all had pieces in these volumes of TRSE. One might say that a new era of research and publication seemed to have taken hold in TRSE and, commensurately, in the area of social studies education research.

In the last ten years that statement seems to have been borne out. From 1987 to 1996 there have been at least a dozen articles that have been historical in scope. The topics have varied, but most commonly addressed are social studies curriculum models, individuals who have shaped the field, case studies and movements that have been significant in social studies. There is no longer anything unusual about the publication of historical research in TRSE; in fact having an entire volume of four issues without such would be atypical.

As I often say to my graduate students, "So what?" What does this all mean? I think that the examination of issues and methodologies over the past 25 years indicates a maturation of the field regarding research, particularly in foundational aspects of the field. There are caveats, however. As early as 1986 Jack Fraenkel expressed some of these cautions in the pages of TRSE, regarding all types of research and historical research was no exception. Just because something is historical in scope does not necessarily make it significant to the field. A case must be made for what warrants such work. Historical research is not just descriptive; there is analysis that must be done and presented in light of both the historical past and the historical present. How does the work continue to help us explain our own choices for schools and society? Unless one can present answers to these questions and use both primary, archival documentation and other critical sources to do so, the strength of the research and of historical method is weakened. Recently there have been a number of examples of poorly done historical
research in social studies as the researchers fall victim to the admonitions that Fraenkel identified. In a way it is heartening; historical research in our field is strong enough to maintain its presence in spite of some poorly conceived or executed work.

Despite criticisms of social studies which have recurred since the field was first formed, research in the field seems to be both robust and broad based. Historical research will continue to be a vital part of that mix. Jere Brophy's recent comments in TRSE (Volume 25, Number 1) illustrate how respected researchers come to realize the importance of foundational (or at least historical) aspects of the field in order to fully appreciate the current (or recurrent) issues that are addressed in social studies education. I would assume that in the next 25 years, TRSE will include further reporting of individuals who have shaped the field in the later parts of the 20th century, more insights into the historical/philosophical bases of social studies curricula and practices as well as broader historical views of social education both in and out of school. In 2022 some other observer will be forced to recognize that he or she has watched a field grow richer and gone from neophyte to grizzled professor in an instant. Luckily the field is not as maudlin as some of the observers.

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BOOK REVIEWS

ON HISTORICIZING RECENT NATIONAL HISTORY CURRICULUM STANDARDS DEBATES


Review by BRUCE A. VANSLEDRIGHT, University of Maryland at College Park, MD 20742.

Late last year, Edward Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt’s (1996) *History Wars: The "Enola Gay" and Other Battles for the American Past* appeared in bookstores. This volume lives up to its title, providing firsthand commentary on several recent “wars” waged over control of American memory. In social studies, such wars have been relatively common, but less vitriolic and public. Occasionally, the battles have spilled over onto terrain visible across the country, much the way the “Enola Gay” exhibit at the Smithsonian brought widespread controversy and media attention. An example fresh in our minds, no doubt, was the struggle over the national United States history curriculum standards.

In the Fall, 1996 issue of *Theory and Research in Social Education,* a number of symposium commentators (myself among them) weighed in on the skirmish over those standards (and the history curriculum vis-à-vis public policy in general). *Social Education* also provided a point-of-view last year in which contributors considered similar issues (see Cohen, 1996; Saxe, 1996; Whelan, 1996).

The “history wars” clearly have been fought on many fronts with varying results. Things presently seem to be in a lull. Perhaps sides are regrouping for the next engagement; wounds are being dressed; strategies contemplated. This may be a good time to pause, reflect, and study, especially for social studies educators interested in the scrimmages over the history curriculum and the prospects of national standards.

Reflection, however, can sometimes become too introspective, digressing into proverbial navel gazing. I am referring here to the temptation to look only within our borders and to the history-curriculum-standards battles common to North America. Isolationism, history teaches, is not uncommon in wartime. Looking only within is myopic in this case, however, because peering across the oceans on either side of North America makes it clear that other educators have been through curriculum disputes and national-standards debacles before us. They have lessons to offer. This is the principal subject matter of the first volume in the series titled the
Take the case of Denmark, for example, which is cogently detailed by analyst Henrik Nielson (1995) in Chapter 7 of the Handbook. Nielson begins:

A centralized system in education may have the effect of seriously reducing teachers’ professionalism and responsibility, and imposing a curriculum which soon becomes obsolete and irrelevant to pupils... A centralized system may also give pupils the impression that history is something given, a pack of knowledge that can be passed on... This, of course, is a serious misconception; history changes all the time and is the result of a continuing interaction between the present and the past. Such concerns were part of the rationale behind the new Danish national curriculum... introduced in 1988. (p. 158)

Nielson then details the contours of this Danish curriculum, a system at once both centralized and decentralized. How have the Danish managed to achieve this arrangement? The key, according to Nielson, is the allocation of authority over the assessment process and the conversational community it fosters among history teachers.

On the one hand, Danish Ministry of Education officials have identified broad-based “aims” and “content” specifications as the centralized portion of the history curriculum (pp. 161-162). On the other hand, however, they have left assessment in the hands of teachers, essentially decentralizing control. History teachers must develop examination questions for students. Each student receives one question drawn from a topic on the syllabi making up the history course sequence. The student must “pass” the question in order to graduate. In a given school, each student intending to graduate must receive his/her own unique question and teachers must construct enough to go around. Therefore, history teachers from other schools are assigned the task of acting as “external examiners” or moderators. This procedure is designed to insure a level of accountability to the aims and content. Nielson notes, “[m]ost teachers act as moderators, which means that there is very extensive exchange of ideas about teaching approaches and also materials” (p.159).

Although the system has a centrally defined set of aims and content, it nonetheless offers “localization” through assessment practices designed to avoid deprofessionalizing teachers. This balancing act even appears to promote significant professional development, as history teachers from around the country consort with one another on how to write history questions. Nielson does not provide any empirical data drawn from teachers or others to substantiate his claims, however.

The Danish system could bear further scrutiny by policy makers as well as an empirical test by researchers. It may prove worthy of emulation.
in the United States if the move toward national history standards continues. Whether it would work or not in a country as large and diverse as the United States remains an open question, but the conversation it could promote among teachers seems worthy of extended consideration. Individual state education authorities might wish to ponder this as a possible model to test.

Denmark’s approach appears to be rather unique. Other European and Asian countries, often driven by conservative ideological considerations, have been more concerned with fully centralized control of the history/social studies curriculum, rather than a balance between local and national authority. The case in Great Britain may be the most important example because of its relatively long history of variations on the national curriculum theme.

Peter Lee (1995), in his chapter “History and the National Curriculum in England” describes in lucid detail issues and concerns emanating from the Thatcher government’s Education Reform Act of 1988. There effectively has been a national history curriculum in England for some time, controlled for the most part by university educators, local education authorities (LEA), and the Inspectorate of Education. In some measure, however, control has been relatively decentralized. The Thatcher conservatives sought to change this by insisting on a centralized National Curriculum. Lee writes:

The National Curriculum (based on the 1988 Reform Act) fitted into a pattern of educational change intended to bring about “disciplines of the market” to education, to destroy what the Conservative Party saw as a damaging “progressive” culture in schools and educational training institutions, and to improve standards of ‘basic’ education.... (p. 73)

The Conservative Party further pursued centralized control by moving the authority for the education of prospective teachers from institutions of higher education to schools themselves. The school culture, the Party reasoned, would encourage the promotion of rigorous historical knowledge acquisition and traditional methods of instruction. It would also greatly lessen the influence of “progressive” educators found in universities and in the educational Inspectorate, the latter being merely an extension of the former, according to Thatcherite conservatives.

Lee argues that the conservatives in England were reacting largely to the influence of the Schools Council Project History 13-16 which, for almost a decade prior to 1988, had used its research results to remake the school history curriculum into one characterized by disciplinary rigor comparable to courses in physics and chemistry. Educators at the universities and the Inspectorate and some history teachers in the schools who had been influenced by the Project, became interested in having students wrestle with issues of historical evidence, argument, claim, and validity. These issues
arose “from the practical problem of giving pupils worthwhile tasks which prompted them to think, without immediately throwing that thinking back in their faces on the ground that it conflicted with the facts... In practice there was a shift of emphasis on true historical statements to emphasis on valid historical arguments” (Lee, 1995, pp. 76-77). These changes also helped to overturn the earlier assumption that younger children simply could not be taught to reason about evidentiary issues, because they were concrete thinkers not yet capable of the abstract thought required by such a history curriculum emphasis.

In 1986, the conservatives, alarmed that students who were studying issues of evidence and valid historical claim, might graduate without knowledge of certain periods of their country’s history, mounted their first attack on the Project’s influence. The initial conservative tactic was to reintroduce a model of history learning that emphasized the acquisition of historical knowledge. Lee notes “[t]he scene was set for a major dispute over history in the National Curriculum, often characterized in the press...by its ahistorical, politically stereotyped, adversarial, and above all amateurish nature” (p.77). The conservative effort was met by a significant backlash. Undaunted, the conservatives pushed to codify their position. The result was the Education Reform Act of 1988.

Unlike the case in Denmark, the conservatives in England accomplished their educational coup d’etat by specifying assessment attainment targets in considerable detail and holding the Inspectorate and LEAs accountable to them by law. Lee uses the remainder of the chapter to describe the National history curriculum itself and the these attainment targets. He and his CHATA Project colleagues (see for example Ashby & Lee, 1996) have been studying the progress of teachers’ understanding of the targets and students’ success attaining them. He is often critical of what the conservative approach asks of teachers and students. His comments bear close examination in the United States because of what they reveal about the potential for success (or lack thereof) in centralizing history education assessment practices. North American conservatives and policy makers interested in educational accountability would do well to study the results of the CHATA research and heed Lee’s cautions about centralized assessments.

Other potential lessons abound in this volume. Most center on attempts to remake history curricula in light of sweeping political changes encountered in countries around the world, in particular nations embracing democratic practices, several for the first time. Chapters about efforts in these nations include those that deal with the old European Eastern Bloc countries such as Estonia and East Germany (e.g., Ahonen, 1995). Here the concerns involve asking about which stories are to be told, how to handle the ways in which communist regimes rewrote the histories of these countries, what to do with outdated curriculum materials (textbooks particu-
Cuthbertson and Grundlingh (1995) devote their chapter to problems encountered in the wake of democratic changes in South Africa. Efforts there to remake the history curriculum are encumbered by the desire to borrow from Western curriculum models that Cuthbertson and Grundlingh claim distort the discourse on history education by applying Western curriculum principles and concepts unsuited to the history and culture of South Africans. They state, "[t]here is a real problem in the uncritical and mechanical transfer of a discourse which emanates from relatively stable and democratic western countries to the turbulent South African setting" (p.11). They question the unreflective use by curriculum reformers of such terms as historical objectivity and neutrality, nation-building and group identity, and multiculturalism as they relate not only to South African history curricula but to the history of the nation as a whole.

Additional chapters chronicle more or less (often less) successful centralized curriculum reform efforts in Australia, China, and Spain, and the problems and dilemmas these countries have had to manage. Also included is a chapter on the issues that have emerged from a history education symposium organized by the Council of Europe in 1991. This chapter, written by John Slater (1995), reveals interesting details about the issues that occupy the attention of European history educators and policy makers (e.g., Who should control the teaching of history? Why don't we have more data about how children learn history?) These issues also compel attention in North America. How the Europeans have responded may be directly relevant.

Inward reflection and contemplation has its distinct advantages. Such an approach, however, may actually foster ahistoricism and presentism, resulting in the sort of strident, adversarial, stereotyped, and amateurish arguments Lee attributes to skirmishes in England. Given the range of cases offered in *Volume I*, peering outward at them helps with the important task of contextualizing and historicizing the history wars in general, and the recent battles over the national history standards in North America in particular. For this reason, the *Yearbook* is an important read for those researchers, teachers, and policy makers interested in the fortune of history education here and elsewhere.

To put a finer point on the concern for historicizing experiences in the United States, in the history curriculum symposium in the Fall, 1996 issue of *Theory and Research in Social Education*, Seixas (p. 408) wondered why all this attention was being paid now to history education research, curriculum-building, and reform? The examples found in the first volume of the *International Yearbook* will move us farther down the road to fashioning an understanding of this important historical question. Perhaps the next volume will even contain an "invited history" of the battles waged over the
United States history standards, thus providing an additional cross-national current to the efforts at historicizing the history wars.

References


The common dreams whose twilight Gitlin bemoans are largely his dreams for the rest of us. That is the major flaw of his sad but nonetheless disturbing book. Simply put, we don't appreciate or find sufficient all that he and his colleagues of the 1960s and 1970s new left (hereafter, left) have done for us in the name of equity and a good life. More bluntly, it is as if Gitlin is shouting the rhetorical questions: What do you people want anyway? Why don't you listen to me/us any more? The "you people" to whom he refers are primarily peoples of color and women.

Gitlin's position in this book is surprising and disappointing. I'd expected something quite different (e.g., more thoughtful, more generous) from a former SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) president and an academic sociologist from Berkeley (where he was on the faculty for 16 years) and more recently, New York University. But then Diane Ravitch has moved to NYU also (as a senior scholar, not a faculty member), via the federal Education Department and the Brookings Institution, from her prior position as adjunct professor of history and education at Teachers College, Columbia University. (She was not a professor of history there as Gitlin says on page 14.)

Gitlin's occasional insights (i.e., ideas and interpretations new to me) and well-turned phrases are not enough to carry the lightweight history in Chapters 2 through 4—for example, of America's quest for identity, of Marxism and the left, of U.S. racial demographics and the op-ed gibbness of pseudo-analysis and claims unencumbered by reasoning and evidence. The selected anecdote may entertain as well as illustrate a case but it does not necessarily demonstrate broader conditions, and it certainly doesn't "prove" anything. Gitlin seems to acknowledge the limitations of anecdote as evidence when he says, "Anecdotes are not conclusive..." (p. 117), but he continues to lean on them, (e.g., p. 122), sometimes without reference to particulars. For example, "But these incidents of small-mindedness and crude prejudice are legion, whatever the politics of those who report them" (p. 150).

In this review I address three aspects of Gitlin's Twilight: (1) his accounts of the 1990-1991 California history-social studies textbook adoption controversies, with which I have some familiarity from another perspective, and the 1994-1995 controversy over national history standards—as cases in point to support my general interpretation of the book; (2) Gitlin's...
seeming incomprehension and anger over the perceived loss of community and commonality in the United States—in an effort to understand those who share his feelings; and (3) alternative ways of understanding and working with social history and what Gitlin calls the "squandering of energy on identity politics...obsession with separate identities" (p. 35). The major value of the book, I believe, is the light it sheds on the aging, disillusioned, and now neoliberal or neoconservative, former new left spokesmen of the 1960s and 1970s. But first a brief overview.

Twilight consists of a Preface and eight chapters organized in four parts: I, "The Problem"; II, "The Exhaustion of Commonality"; III, "The Aggrandizement of Difference"; and IV, "The Poignancy of Multiculturalism." Parts I and IV consist of a single chapter; Parts II and III of three chapters each; the latter deals mainly with university politics, especially the author's experiences at Berkeley. "Earlier versions of [unspecified] parts of this book" (p. 240), Gitlin tells us, were reprinted from various journals and edited books. In addition to the usual acknowledgement of one's readers and reviewers, Gitlin states, "I have stood on the shoulders of many writers, most acknowledged in notes, but in particular wish to single out two predecessors: Robert Hughes for Culture of Complaint and Russell Jacoby for Dogmatic Wisdom" (p. 240). The links to Hughes and especially to Jacoby's negative disposition toward the academy (that did not grant him tenure) are clear. On the issue of notes, I prefer specific end or footnotes marked in the text to page notes at the end.

Text Adoption and National Standards Controversies

Following a brief, promising Preface, Gitlin begins Part I, "The Problem," with Chapter 1, entitled "A Dubious Battle in Oakland." He is referring to the Oakland, California school board's 1991 decision not to purchase the Houghton Mifflin history-social studies textbook series, the only one approved for adoption with state funds by the California Curriculum Commission and State Board of Education in 1990. Interestingly, the chapter seems as much about UCLA historian Gary Nash—in defense and praise—as about the textbook controversy (see Cornbleth and Waugh [1993, 1995] for another view of the controversy and Nash's role). About the same age as Gitlin, and apparently a friend as well as an academic colleague, Nash seems a stand-in for the author and his generational colleagues on the left. By defending and praising Nash—to excess it seems to me—Gitlin appears to be trying to vindicate himself and then to re-establish himself on 1960s-1970s grounds in a world that has moved on. It doesn't work.¹

Selecting Nash and Oakland as examples out of the context of controversy in other communities (see, e.g., Cornbleth and Waugh, 1995, Ch. 3) deflects attention from broader questions of history, ethics, and self-interest. The nature and extent of selective presentation and personalization in Gitlin's account encourages a good guys-bad guys response. Here are some examples of the images he offers us.

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At fifty-nine, the sandy-haired, neatly bearded Nash was wearing a work shirt and stonewashed jeans when I spoke to him at his comfortable Pacific Palisades home. (p. 15)

Everything about Steven Weinberg is trim—his beard, his V-neck sweater, his gold-rimmed glasses, his manner of speaking—but for his frayed white collar. (p. 24)

One leading anti-Houghton Mifflin activist, Fred Ellis, a husky, affable African American... (p. 27)

Another activist, Kitty Kelly Epstein, was the particular bane of many textbook supporters. A slender, intense woman in her forties, Kitty Epstein was a veteran of the Marxist Left... (p. 27)

It's hard to miss the intended good guys. But, for some of us, Gitlin's choice of language may have backfired.2

Not mentioned in Gitlin's account of the textbook adoption controversies, for example, is that Nash also co-directed, with Charlotte Crabtree, the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA, while she also chaired the California Curriculum Commission that approved only the Houghton Mifflin text series, of which Nash was lead author. In addition, Crabtree had co-authored, with Diane Ravitch, the version of the 1987 California History-Social Science Framework on which the new textbooks were supposed to be based.

While more sympathetic to Gitlin's account (pp. 189-199) of the conservative critique, led by Lynn Cheney, of the 1994 version of the national history standards, I was put off once again by the manner of presentation. Here, too, Gary Nash is center stage as co-director (with Crabtree) of the project that produced the standards. "A progressive democratic multiculturalist like Gary Nash," Gitlin tells us, "was bound to be whipsawed — attacked by California's extreme perspectivists and Washington's traditionalists alike" (p. 197). Crabtree, in contrast, is dismissed peremptorily as follows: "Project co-director Charlotte Crabtree maintained, somewhat defensively, resorting to conventional textbook boilerplate..." (p. 194). While not one of my favorites, Crabtree deserves fairer treatment in this instance. Not mentioned in Gitlin's account, perhaps because of publication deadlines, is that the standards documents were modified in response to conservative and other criticism (e.g., that they were too long to be useful). A shorter revised edition was published in 1996.3

In addition to highly selective presentation and personalization, Gitlin employs an opposite rhetorical strategy—the omniscient voice—to set himself up, for example, as the appropriate judge of legitimate criticism. A
matter-of-fact, depersonalized manner is easily read as authoritative if one has no other sources. For example:

CURE (Communities United against Racism in Education) pointed to some genuine instances of establishment bias, and to a number of places where the books were uncritical in a Dick and Janeish way...The majority of CURE’s charges were trivial and hypersensitive (pp. 9-10). Or later with respect to the history standards, “In truth, although Cheney surrounded her argument with a body guard of errors, she had a real argument (p. 194). Pointing out the pattern of rhetorical strategies employed in Twilight— anecdote as evidence, highly selective presentation/decontextualization, personal characterization, omniscient judge—strategies often employed by various critics and pundits in lieu of sound reasoning and evidence to support their claims, is intended to mute their effectiveness and encourage scrutiny of others’ work for similar ploys.4

Here and elsewhere throughout the book, Gitlin positions himself (or Nash as occasional stand-in) as the voice of reason against proponents of identity politics who would divide not only the left but also the nation, perhaps fatally. He is assuming or wishing “that history is a single story proceeding along a single time line” (p. 87).

What has become of the ideal of the Left—or, for that matter, a nation—that federates people of different races, genders, sexualities, or for that matter, religions and classes? Why has the ideal been neglected or abandoned by so many of the poor and minorities who should share the Left’s ideal of equality? Why are so many people attached to their marginality and why is so much of their intellectual labor spent developing theories to justify it? Why insist on difference with such rigidity, rancor, and blindness, to the exclusion of the possibility of common knowledge and common dreams? (p. 32)

Understanding Gitlin’s Loss

A key to understanding Gitlin’s seeming incomprehension and anger with a perceived loss of community and commonality clearly has to do with the further fragmenting of the left which never was the “left-wing universalism” (p. 101) he recalls.5 Another, more personal key seems to lie in what Gitlin calls “the demonization of white left-liberals, males in particular” (p. 34). Gitlin may only be describing others when he says: “The white heterosexual male, feeling besieged or abandoned by blacks, or feminists, or gays, abandons them — unless they agree with him” (p. 35, cf. pp. 124, 150). He seems particularly embittered by the separatism and attention claimed by women and gays (e.g., pp. 119, 152-153). He seems to feel left out, passed by.

Woe-is-meism aside, Gitlin does see economic or class inequalities as the root problem (e.g., pp. 236-237). Racial/gender/cultural politics be-
come a diversion. I’m wary of efforts, intended or otherwise, that in effect de-racialize racism by purporting to explain or resolve apparently race-based inequities on other, presumably colorblind grounds. A more satisfactory account of race-class relations can be found in Manning Marable’s *Beyond Black and White* (1995).

Decrying the “cant of identity” (p. 126) that has divided the left’s natural constituency, Gitlin also decries the retreat from public political action accompanying identity politics on university campuses. “The new academic Left tended to mistake strong language and steady, consequential political engagement” (p. 147). He seems on firmer ground here. Yet, I’m wary of his seeming “vanguard” notion of the left as spokesperson for the rest of us.

It is often for good reason that differences have multiplied, making their claims, exposing the fraudulence of the universalist claims of the past. Not everyone is male, white, hearing, heterosexual. Very well. But what is a Left if it is not, plausibly at least, the voice of a whole people? For the Left as for the rest of America, the question is not whether to recognize the multiplicity of American groups, the variety of American communities, the disparity of American experiences. Those exist as long as people think they exist. The question is one of proportion. What is a left without a commons, even a hypothetical one? If there is no people, but only peoples, there is no Left. (p. 165)

But what, Mr. Gitlin, from your point of view, is the proper proportion? And why must peoples and left politics be incompatible?

**Social Histories and Identities**

It is not necessary to bash difference in pursuit of commonality; it may even be counterproductive to do so. Neither leaving people out nor putting them down is a good way to gain their cooperation in a presumably joint project. Gitlin seems to recognize this when he says:

The enlightened democrat has a different faith: that particular thoughts and experiences can be accessible to those whose thoughts and experiences are different. The work of the democrat is to find points of contact, to sympathize, to explain, to reciprocate and to appeal to reciprocity (p. 218).

But he seems to withhold his own reciprocity.

The bearers of all identity cards need to know more than where they’re coming from; they need to know where to go, and where others are coming from and want to go. Toward this end, it helps
all of us to listen, to know that we, all of us, are capable of reason, respect, insight, but also of unreason, cruelty, error. It does not help to sneer at universal rights and capacities as if all general statements about the human condition amounted to nothing other than glossy masks over the skull called power (p. 218).

Nor, though, does it help to sneer at difference.

If Americans are going to come together, it will be in different ways or on different terms than in the past. The unum of *e pluribus unum* requires renegotiation and rebuilding, not merely patching and pasting. That probably means leaving us enough room, individually and collectively, to be ourselves—whatever that might mean at the time—not necessarily what someone else would like us to be. If that constitutes “identity obsessions” (p. 227), so be it. This new unum may be less a synthesis than a composition of overlapping networks and multiple points of contact, of harmony more than synchronicity.

Social history, for example, does not yield to a single story, as Gitlin among others reminds. Instead, it spawns multiple stories of the experiences, cultures, and perspectives of the various individuals and groups who participated in U.S. history. These stories, however, are not necessarily separate or separatist as critics like Gitlin (e.g., pp. 54, 218, 227) might have it — simply because various individuals and groups who make up the U.S. have participated in the same events such as raising a family, pioneering, enslavement, industrialization, and war. Our various stories are intertwined, braided, reciprocal. We ought to be telling those stories, and helping students see their interconnections, not merely adding an array of heroes and contributions to the conventional story like sprinkles on frozen vanilla custard.

**Notes**

1 After beginning this review, I encountered Omi and Winant’s reference to Gitlin’s being among those New Left survivors longing to overcome others’ supposed separatist tendencies and having “bemoaned the absence of ‘commonality politics’ that the left, he asserts, has historically upheld” (1994, pp. 128-129). They continue: “Our experiences of the New Left were considerably less universalizing, but apart from that, Gitlin’s dream of restoration seems hopelessly outdated” and further, “such nostalgia colludes with the neoconservative celebration of a largely mythical ‘common culture’ of progress and integration” (p. 129). I concur. Omi and Winant probably are best known to TRSE readers as co-authors of *Racial Formation in the United States* (1986, 1994).

2 In the book jacket photo, Gitlin, too, has a neatly trimmed beard.

3 In this section of the book, errors with respect to events in New York are irksome. For example, the Jackson and Schlesinger dissents to which
he refers were not to “the Afrocentrist Leonard Jeffries’s views” (p. 190), though I expect they would disagree with Jeffries. The widely-publicized dissents were included in the 1991 report, One Nation, Many Peoples, prepared by a committee of which both Jackson and I were members; Schlesinger asked to be a consultant rather than a regular member, and Jeffries had no part in the committee or its report.

4 In this regard, see Waugh and Cornbleth’s (1995) rejoinder to Bill Honig’s (1995) critique of their original “Great Speckled Bird” essay (Cornbleth and Waugh, 1993).

5 Only two pages later, in seeming self-contradiction, Gitlin states that “there is no golden past to recover” (p. 103).

References
JoAnn C. Sweeney: 
Social Studies Educator and Colleague

Days before Christmas, 1996, the sad news swiftly spread by telephone calls and e-mail messages. JoAnn Sweeney died in an accident at her Michigan vacation home on December 18.

JoAnn was my faculty colleague for 26 years. She joined our department in 1970 after she completed her Ph. D. degree at the University of Michigan. She regularly taught undergraduate social studies education courses for both elementary and secondary school teacher candidates. Students held first priority with JoAnn. They knew that reality from their initial encounter with her.

Early in her UT Austin career, she developed a major interest in economic education, a specialty in which she and her teaching and research received significant recognition. Over the years, she also emphasized multicultural and international education. She traveled, conducted research, and studied educational programs in a number of countries, from Japan to Jordan, from Korea to Turkey.

Always a scholar-teacher, she became a superb administrator. She served as Assistant Dean (for teacher education) of the College of Education for two years. In 1990, she was appointed Chair of our large Department of Curriculum and Instruction. During her tenure, she led a total reorganization of both the undergraduate and graduate offerings and the departmental structure. She guided the department to a renewed threshold of prominence. Moreover, she relished administrative duties; to her, administration was opportunity to build and to serve.

Especially, JoAnn was an equal opportunity supporter of her colleagues. I never knew her to make a promise that she could not keep. She never favored one program area over another or some individuals over others. She enabled us to be better than we knew that we could be.

JoAnn was a sterling social studies educator. Her role as a university scholar-teacher was based in school practice. An active member of NCSS and CUFA (Chair, 1971-72), she also participated in the Austin Area and the Texas Councils for the Social Studies. She was a member of several economic education groups and she attended meetings of the Atlantic Economic Society. She was a member of and often chaired work committees. JoAnn researched and published as an independent scholar; she also was a research collaborator with several of her graduate students and a few faculty colleagues.

Around UT Austin's Sanchez Building, faculty and students recognize a continuing hollowness. We miss our friend and colleague.

O. L. Davis, Jr. 
The University of Texas at Austin
modern liberal-democratic thinking and republican government. In
social studies classes we teach “exercising your right to vote” as a mani-
festation of good citizenship. Voting in elections, however, is more of-
ten about choosing a person to represent one’s interests than it is about
choosing to take a particular action (as in referenda). Rarely is there a
direct and felt consequence for our personal lives that results from our
vote.

Democracy based on proceduralism leaves little room for indi-
viduals or groups to exercise direct political action, this is a function
left to a specialized class of people such as elected representatives and
experts who advise them. Yes, citizens can vote, lobby, exercise free
speech and assembly rights, but as far as governing is concerned, they
are primarily spectators. Throughout the twentieth century progres-
sive intellectuals and media figures (e.g., Walter Lippmann, George
Kennan, Reinhold Niebuhr and many Deweyites) have promulgated
spectator democracy—in which a specialized class of experts identify
what our common interests are and then think and plan accordingly
(Chomsky, 1997). The function of those outside the specialized class is
to be “spectators”—rather than participants in action. This theory of
democracy asserts that common interests elude the general public and
can only be understood and managed by an elite group.4 According
to Lippmann a properly running democracy is one in which the large
majority of the population (whom Lippmann labeled “the bewildered
herd”) is protected from itself by the specialized class’ management of
the political, economic and ideological systems and in particular by
the manufacturing of consent, e.g., bringing about agreement on the
part of the public for things that they do not want.

The history of the United States is full of examples of public rela-
tions/propaganda campaigns intended to manufacture consent: The
World War I era Creel Commission, which converted a pacifist popu-
lous to a pro-war stance; The “Mohawk Valley formula,” a campaign
developed by the steel industry in 1937 to turn the public against strik-
ing workers in Johnstown, PA, and which spawned “scientific meth-
ods of strike-breaking”; And, more recently, efforts by the ruling class
to divert attention away from corporate and economic policies that
contribute to the staggering gap between the wealthy and the working
classes and poor by vilifying immigrants and their children who live
in the United States without documentation, as the cause of depressed
wages, high taxes and the federal deficit.

Examining how democracy works in our professional organiza-
tions regarding CUFA’s protest of Proposition 187, brings to light dis-
turbing mirror images. Actions within both leadership groups exem-
plify spectator democracy—the boards act to protect the organizations
from the “trampling and roar of a bewildered herd.” The NCSS Board voted for what has been described as a “reasonable and conscientious response to a difficult situation” (“More on CUFA’s Resolution,” p. 3) after the House of Delegates eschewed similar action.

On the other hand, the CUFA Board has yet to take action on the resolution, after nearly three years. Instead, the CUFA Board, is posturing in an effort to bring about another vote on the resolution, which suggests that procedural notions of democracy are inherently problematic when outcomes matter. Is it “democratic” when Californians vote in a “free election” to deny basic human rights to a particular class of people? Is it “democratic” when CUFA members vote to denounce Proposition 187 and boycott California? Would it be “democratic” if CUFA members voted to rescind the denunciation of Proposition 187 and the boycott of California?

Proceduralism is held inconsistently, however, when CUFA members invoke other principles (e.g., economic insolvency, need for effective communication with NCSS, or perhaps no or a poorly planned alternative site for the 1998 CUFA meeting) to rationalize a referendum on the resolution, which might result in a more desirable or “reasonable and conscientious” response in the eyes of some. All of which diverts our attention from the issue at hand, which is the state of California denying a class of children access to schooling in violation of international human rights accords—as well as any sense of democratic outcomes, and the role of social educators in responding to this deplorable circumstance.5

Perhaps we, as social educators, have all learned and taught our lessons about democracy too well. Perhaps the apparent consensus on purpose of social studies as citizenship education is not meaningless after all—we just don’t want to own up to what it does mean in everyday life. Instead of a democratic society as one in which “the public has the means to participate in some meaningful way in the management of their own affairs and the means of information are open and free” (Chomsky 1997, p. 5), we have (and sustain through our actions as social educators) a spectator democracy, in which the public is barred from managing their own affairs and the means of information is kept narrowly and rigidly controlled. While this is not likely the conception of democracy that most social educators would instinctively choose, it seems to be the one we act on.

E. W. R.

Notes

1 The resolution on Proposition 187 was presented for discussion and vote at the CUFA business meeting in Phoenix and was co-sponsored by Stephen C. Fleury, Perry Marker, Andra Makler, and me. The
resolution was moved as an action item, seconded, and extensive discussion ensued. The motion passed on a show of hands (not on voice vote as reported in the Spring 1997 CUFA News).

While the text of the resolution presented to the NCSS House of Delegates has been reprinted on the TRSE-L electronic forum and in the CUFA News (twice), to my knowledge the actual text of the resolution passed by CUFA has not appeared in print, until now. The text follows:

"Whereas the College and University Faculty Assembly of NCSS is an organization devoted to the study and advancement of social education in a democratic society, and

Whereas the citizens of California have endorsed the restriction of access to education for children through the passage of Proposition 187,

Be it resolved that, CUFA make known its firm opposition to any actions that restrict access to schooling for children, which are in violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention of the Rights of the Child and related international human rights instruments, and

Be it further resolved that CUFA refrain from holding meetings and conferences in California from this date until Proposition 187 is repealed or nullified, and

Be it further resolved that CUFA appeal to NCSS and to other professional organizations to state their opposition to Proposition 187 and to refrain from holding meetings in California until Proposition 187 is repealed or nullified."

2 It was at my instigation that the Emergency Committee was formed and there were approximately 12 people that worked on the press release campaign. The Emergency Committee press releases carried my address and announced CUFA’s decision to boycott California. The press release also noted that, in the past, NCSS had boycotted a planned convention site because of state laws that restricted equal protection under the law to a specific group of people (e.g., the 1994 NCSS meeting was moved from Denver to Phoenix because of Colorado’s anti-gay and lesbian legislation). During the campaign the Executive Director of NCSS phoned me and demanded the Emergency Committee stop its action and any external communication that mentioned NCSS be approved in advance by NCSS staff in Washington.

3 It should be noted that the title of the Spring 1997 CUFA News article on the CUFA resolution is misleading. CUFA’s resolution on Proposition 187 made no mention of a boycott of the NCSS meeting in Anaheim. The resolution pertained to CUFA meetings in California. A secondary intent of the resolution was to have CUFA lobby NCSS (and other profession organizations) to move their conferences out of California in protest of Proposition 187. (I am sure that supporters of the
CUFA resolution would be quite happy to meet with NCSS in 1998, just not in California.)

4 Chomsky (1997) points out a close ideological resemblance between the vanguard of revolutionary intellectuals in Marxist-Leninist thought and the specialized class of liberal democratic theory.

5 In education today, we are also faced with a resurrected cult of efficiency that has manufactured a crisis in public schools (Berliner & Biddle, 1995) and created a hysteria over standards. Standards-based educational reforms exemplify and engender spectator democracy. Like previous public relation efforts in our history, the current campaign for “higher standards” in schools rallies support behind slogans that are virtually meaningless, so as to divert attention away from the conditions of learning and teaching that must be changed if schools are to be improved (see Ross, 1996).

References


More on CUFA’s resolution to boycott the NCSS California meeting. (1997, Spring). CUFA News, p. 4-5.


Theory and Research in Social Education

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The editor would like to thank the following individuals for the time and careful attention given to manuscripts they reviewed for TRSE.

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James Akenson
Tennessee Tech U.

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