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The Journal of the College and University Faculty Assembly of National Council for the Social Studies
Volume 26 Number 2 Spring 1998
CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

Viewpoint

A forum for discussion of issues related to social education and the politics of scholarship, teaching, and curriculum

Readers’ reactions to the recent series of essays published under the title “TRSE at a Quarter Century” has been overwhelmingly positive. In the past, TRSE has been almost exclusively devoted to publishing research articles and book reviews, with little space devoted to opinion/editorial essays by readers. TRSE remains committed to its original mission—publishing rigorously juried, high quality scholarship from a variety of perspectives. This new section of the journal, however, will provide the field with a high profile forum in which researchers, teacher educators, teachers, and others interested in social education can share their views on issues relevant to the field. “Viewpoint” will typically feature one essay per issue.

Public discussion allows us to reason together and can improve our collective capacity for making the moral choices that are part of our work as social educators. As editor of TRSE, my hope is that this new forum will allow us to sustain a dialogue about important professional and intellectual issues in the field.

Author Guidelines

Essays to be considered for “Viewpoint” should address issues related to social education in general or the politics of scholarship, teaching or curriculum. Manuscripts should be prepared according to journal style (American Psychological Association Publication Manual, 4th edition) and be approximately 3,000 words (eight to ten pages, double spaced) in length.

Manuscripts or inquiries should be directed to: E. Wayne Ross, Editor, Theory and Research in Social Education, P.O. Box 6000, School of Education and Human Development, State University of New York at Binghamton, Binghamton, NY 13902-6000. Telephone: (607) 777-2478. E-Mail: wross@binghamton.edu
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Late last year Public Agenda released findings of a survey of how education professors view public education. According to the report, *Different Drummers: How Teachers of Teachers View Public Education* (Farkas & Johnson, 1997), education professors generally stress life-long and active learning approaches over drilling students on "facts" and eschew discipline practices intended to merely make students behaviorally compliant—stances that put them "fundamentally at odds" with teachers, students, and the public according to Public Agenda.

As remarkable as it may seem, the report and media coverage of its findings cast education professors as out-of-touch idealists whose pursuit of perfection makes their vision for education an enemy of the public good. While Public Agenda is known as a "bi-partisan" organization, this study and the conclusions drawn by Deborah Wadsworth, the group’s executive director, support the long-running ideological campaign to preserve and promote an approach to education that focuses on one-way transmission of information and control over students, rather than on nurturing students who are inquiring, curious, capable of solving problems, and respectful of different points of view.

The slant of this report, though, is not surprising considering the funding source: the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, a conservative think tank headed by Chester E. Finn, Jr., former assistant secretary of education under President Reagan and a founding partner of the Edison Project, which promotes the privatization of public schools. Ideological leanings (right or left) of funding sources do not necessarily undercut the veracity of research findings. However, as one of the survey participants, I believe it is important to examine the links between the ideological agenda of the Fordham Foundation and the conclusions drawn in the report of the survey. I found many of the forced-choice questions designed to evoke the one-dimensional responses, which have been used to promulgate a distorted view of teacher educators. Wadsworth's spin on the findings would have the public believe that a commitment to active, life-long learning makes one an enemy of safe, orderly schools, whose aim is to graduate students who have mastered basic skills, developed good work habits, and learned such values as honesty and respect. In fact, the priorities of teacher educators identified in this survey are fundamental to achieving the goals of teachers and the public, as reported in previous Public Agenda surveys.

Why then the bashing of education professors' views? One explanation may be that while, as a group, they support higher academic standards, education professors are less sanguine about standards-based reforms as the one
best solution to what ails public education. *Different Drummers* begrudgingly acknowledges that "perhaps because professors of education have thought long and hard about many of these issues [standards and curriculum reform], their views are often nuanced and complex" (p. 21). This, however, doesn't stop Wadsworth from characterizing approaches to teaching "that nurture inquiring, curious minds that are open to new information, capable of solving problems and respectful of different points of view and alternative paths for getting from here to there" as the "visionary agenda [of education professors] that is so detached from daily concerns that it [is] counterproductive" (Wadsworth, 1997, p. 28). But, counterproductive for whom? Certainly not those students, teachers, and communities that suffer from the inequities of the status quo in public education.

Public Agenda's report spawned a series of responses in the media similar to that of Sandra Feldman's, President of the America Federation of Teachers, who suggests that education professors are not concerned about the knowledge and skills teachers need to do a good job in the classroom because they have a vision of teaching and schooling that differs from classroom teachers' and the public's. Feldman claims, "Teachers always report that their college education hasn't prepared them for the realities of the classroom" (Sengupta, 1997, p. B8). The problem with this kind of thinking is that it accepts the "realities" of the classroom as fixed and unchangeable—to be adapted to rather than improved or transformed. The "realities" of public education are not natural or absolute, but social constructions that reflect particular priorities and interests (e.g., preservation of the status quo; schools as social, economic, and cultural sorting grounds, etc.).

That professors and teachers, in general, have different points of view on education is not surprising. Teachers' concerns are largely driven by issues of day-to-day practice. Professors, on the other hand, are (or should be) focused on working with teachers, students, and others to ask questions about premises and practices that shape schools as places of learning and work. As a teacher educator, I, like many of you, face the difficult task of providing students the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge to function effectively in classrooms as they exist today, as well as a vision of how teaching and learning might be transformed. A healthy teaching profession requires teachers who think critically about their work and take action as a result. Therefore, teacher education needs to be more than an apprenticeship to the status quo, it should, as John Dewey argued in 1904, set the stage for professional growth and development over the long term instead of focusing on immediate skill proficiency.

Policy elites who have established the drum beat of education reform in the past decade have written a score that allows for little or no improvisation. They would have everyone accept their conception of the problems faced by public schools (e.g., lack of focus on teaching "facts," neatness, manners, and compliance) and the solutions (e.g., standardized curriculum accompanied by mandated high-stakes testing). Nuanced and complex representations of public education that include issues such as: fiscal inequities among schools, deleterious effects of mandated high-stakes testing, and empowerment of local school communities to construct the purposes and direction of public school reforms are not welcome among the players pounding out the simple rhythm
that the problems public schools face can be solved by merely being tough-minded.

An important truth that should not be overlooked is that professors and classroom teachers who stress life-long, active learning approaches are neither naive nor utopian in their visions of what schools should be. They are merely working to make students' learning experiences more intellectually appealing, less arbitrary, and ultimately more personally meaningful—and those are rhythms everyone can dance to.

This issue contains the final installments of the project to reflect on twenty-five years of Theory and Research in Social Education. I invited over fifty individuals to write essays that would take stock of our past endeavors and chart new courses for social education. As part of the TRSE at a Quarter Century feature, 15 essays have appeared over the last six issues, including essays by former editors Cleo Cherryholmes, in the last issue, and Jack Fraenkel, in the current issue. In addition, articles by Jack Nelson (Spring 1997), Thomas S. Popkewitz (Winter 1998), and Lee H. Ehman (current issue), all former TRSE editors, are responses to this call to assess where we have been and where we might be headed as a field. I want to thank each of these contributors for their efforts and encourage other readers to share their views on pertinent issues by writing essays for the new Viewpoint section.

The Summer 1996 issue of TRSE included a call for manuscripts on “Defining the Social Studies: An Inclusive Perspective.” The aim of this effort is to encourage the submission of manuscripts that consider the development of social studies from the standpoint of diversity (e.g., race, class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) and theorists whose work could be viewed as historical antecedents to contemporary writing about multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion in social studies. This issue contains the third article published in response to the call, “Democracy, Social Studies and Diversity in the Elementary School Classroom: The Progressive Ideas of Alice Miel” by Elizabeth A. Yeager. Previously published articles in this series include: “Mary Ritter Beard and Marion Thompson Wright: Shaping Inclusive Social Education,” by Margaret Smith Crocco (Winter 1997) and “The Politics of Difference and Multicultural Feminism: Reconceptualizing Education for Democracy,” by Leslie Rebecca Bloom (Winter 1998). I encourage readers conducting research in these areas to submit manuscripts for consideration.

E. W. R.

References


Practicing Democracy at School: A Qualitative Analysis of an Elementary Class Council

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Abstract
Advocates of democratic education argue that regular class meetings are essential to the school curriculum, offering students practice in democratic process as they deliberate issues that affect them. This article describes an experiment with regular class meetings over three years in a mixed-age upper elementary class. Students readily adopted the rudiments of parliamentary order and also invented democratic procedures to achieve their goals. Analysis of the minutes of 216 meetings suggested students' implicit goals were self-definition and consensus-building; explicitly they defended respect, fairness, and the right to work undisturbed. Negotiating standards for conduct, sharing information, and planning events provided opportunities for students to improve deliberation skills, develop empathy, and build community. The mixed ages in the class appeared to facilitate the development of moral reasoning. Students' inclination to imitate peers, however, suggests their need for help developing tolerance for minority positions and practice defending unpopular points of view.

Perspectives on Democratic Education

Recent theorizing about democratic education recognizes a fundamental tension between individualism and concern for the public good (Barber, 1992; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Goodman, 1992; Kaltsounis, 1994; Noddings, 1992). In the United States individualism is part of our national heritage—we esteem self-determining immigrants, self-sufficient pioneers, self-motivated entrepreneurs. Individual academic achievement is the primary goal of public schooling; we pressure schools to provide for individualized instruction that meets individual needs. As a result, modern schooling in this country promotes the legacy of individualism at the expense of community values that are also essential to democratic society (Goodman, 1992).

How can schooling help restore the balance between the competing democratic values of individualism and community? Goodman's work on education for critical democracy in the elementary school (1992) suggested
balancing individualism with a connectionist perspective—helping students recognize their connections to other humans and all living things. Noddings (1992) proposed that the school curriculum be reorganized around themes of caring—for self, intimates, equal and unequal others, living things, ideas. In his argument for renewed focus on democratic citizenship education, Kaltsounis (1994) asserted that the conflict between individualism and concern for the common good might be resolved by developing “a shared conception of justice—creating a feeling that everyone lives in a just community” (p. 184). These perspectives suggest that schools can become places that promote democratic values associated with the general welfare—justice, equality, compassion, cooperation, and civic responsibility.

Political attitudes research has demonstrated that children acquire long-lasting political attitudes and values during the elementary school years (Abraham, 1983; Glenn, 1972; Greenstein, 1965; Hess & Torney, 1967; Moore, Lare, & Wagner, 1985; Zellman & Sears, 1971). Moreover, the acquisition of more democratic dispositions is associated with classroom climates characterized by democratic leadership, divergent questioning, respect for students, peer interaction, student participation, cooperation, and open discussion (Angell, 1991). Student participation in democratic deliberations figures prominently in the recommendations of Noddings, Goodman, and Kaltsounis, as well as in the theories of democratic education advanced by Dewey (1916/1966), Kohlberg (1975), and Gutmann (1987). Democratic deliberations require talking in turn, intentionally listening for the purpose of understanding others’ points of view, supporting one’s own claims with reasoning, defending unpopular ideas, suspending judgment to gather more information, and defending everyone’s right to an opinion—skills that must be acquired through practice (Kaltsounis, 1994; Parker, 1997). The practice of these skills promotes a “just community” in which members have equal voice and equal rights that are defined and protected by the group (Kohlberg, 1975).

Regular community meetings aimed at self-governance were key to Kohlberg’s concept of a just community. Marion Turner, who described three years of class meetings conducted with preschoolers in the 1920s, observed that even for very young children meetings promoted increasingly prosocial behavior and contributed to a social climate that the children perceived as just. “Until studies are undertaken which will examine the potential of self-governance at different age levels, over extended periods of time, and under varying conditions,” she wrote, “we cannot begin to know its educational implications for a self-governing nation” (Turner, 1957, p. 90).
Methodology of a Three-Year Study

In this study I have examined the potential of self-governance among elementary students in a mixed-age class of 9-12 year olds over a three year period (1994-1997). My analysis of the minutes of more than two hundred class meetings, student survey responses, and individual interview data suggests several generative hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) about the relationships between class meetings, democratic classroom climate, and the development of democratic dispositions among elementary students.

The class meetings that I describe in this article were conducted in a Montessori upper elementary class that included students who would be assigned to fourth, fifth, and sixth grades in more traditional schools. During the first year of the study, the class comprised only 8 students, growing to 13 and then 20 students in the second and third years.1 Although the character of the class meetings changed somewhat as student numbers increased, many procedures that were invented by the students and group processes that evolved during the first year’s meetings persisted over the next two years of class council meetings. This continuity is hardly surprising, given that most of the original eight students returned for one or both of the subsequent years, providing a core of leaders who had established the community and its principles of justice. I describe the first year’s meetings in some detail and then show how the patterns observed during the first year are enhanced or altered through the deliberations of the second and third years.

Many questions are unanswered here. How could self-governance meetings be implemented in a class operating within the constraints of a public school curriculum? What adjustments would have to be made to promote full participation in democratic deliberations with class sizes of 25 or 35 students? How would ninth graders use a forum for self-government? What would urban students deliberate? How, without creating undesirable levels of cynicism, can teachers set limits on the range of decisions that students have the authority to make? No less than when Turner called for them in 1957, studies of class meetings with varying populations under many different conditions are needed to help us understand how democratic deliberations influence the development of political attitudes and values so essential to a self-governing people. Those who are closely associated with students of the upper elementary ages must judge for themselves the authenticity of the language and patterns of interaction described here.

Research Objectives

The first class council meetings were conducted during the year that the class was created. As the teacher, my purposes in creating the council were: (a) to teach students the rudiments of parliamentary procedure as a
tool for deliberating issues of importance to them; (b) to offer practice in
democratic process skills—speaking and listening, expressing convictions,
compromising, defending unpopular ideas; and (c) to foster a sense of
justice and community. As a researcher, my objectives were to explore the
following questions, which guided data collection and analysis:

1. What did the students talk about?
   What were their concerns?
2. What patterns of interaction characterized their delibera-
tions? What kind of social ethos evolved in the council?
3. How did the students perceive class council meetings?
   What value did they place on the proceedings?

Data Sources
Acting as the recording secretary for class council meetings, I cre-
ated a body of data consisting of the minutes of 216 meeting episodes.
Although the minutes are not verbatim records, I endeavored to render
faithfully the students' language—their expressions and habits of speak-
ing—in my paraphrasing of the proceedings. At the beginning of each
meeting, minutes of the previous meeting were read, followed by a call
for corrections or additions. Students were quick to catch misquotes and
correct mistakes in attributions, providing a participant check on the ac-
curacy of the minutes. Corrections became part of the record. Several stu-
dents who were interviewed asserted that the minutes of the meetings
usually "sounded like what happened." On one occasion, I transcribed
the proceedings from a recording of the meeting and compared that tran-
scription with the minutes I had written. The two documents contained
very similar language, although the minutes were always written in the
third person.

In an effort to provide for triangulation of the data, I asked students
to complete a short survey about class council in early April, 1997; and I
interviewed five students individually during the first month after the
1996-1997 school term had concluded. The survey asked students (a) to
list problems that had been discussed in class council during the year,
indicating which discussions were most useful and which were not use-
ful; (b) to list rules that had been made, indicating those they deemed
important and those they thought were unnecessary; (c) to explain whether
or not they felt free to speak their opinion in meetings; and (d) to give
suggestions for improving class council. In the interviews, I probed stu-
dents' survey responses and asked other questions raised by my analysis
of the minutes.
Participants

Participants in the study were the 28 students who constituted the class and participated in class council during the school years 1994-1997. Of those students, three were members of the class throughout the study, and another seven students were members of the class for two years. There was considerable diversity among the students academically—four had been diagnosed as attention deficit disordered, several had specific learning disabilities, and a few worked above grade level in all subject areas. Overall, however, the student population represented a normal range of abilities according to scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Of the 20 students in the class during the third year, five were Asian-American students, one African-American, and one Hispanic in an otherwise Caucasian population. Two of the students were learning English as a second language. There were more girls than boys (almost 2 to 1) in the class each of the three years. Most students were children of middle to upper class families, and most lived with both parents.

I was an experienced teacher, having taught elementary classes for 15 years, with additional years of public high school teaching at the start of my teaching career and two years of college teaching prior to forming this upper elementary class. By acting as recording secretary for the class council meetings, I was able to take a legitimate role as participant observer throughout the proceedings. Like the students, I had a voice in the council, but I used it sparingly—usually after all the others had expressed their opinions and given their reasons. Issues that I added to the agenda, when not considered intrusions, generated little interest; and so I usually restricted my input to announcements. Using *Roberts Rules of Order* as a guide, I did introduce parliamentary procedures as they seemed called for.

Analysis

Following the methodological guidelines of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), my analysis of the minutes focused on social processes through constant comparison of interactions, strategies and tactics of individuals, conditions under which those occurred, and consequences of interactions (Strauss, 1987). Although the research questions suggested initial categories of interest in the data, I used open coding in the first phase of the analysis, which produced many unexpected categories. To provide for constant comparisons, I moved back and forth between coding the minutes of a month and writing theoretical memos that compared codes and patterns with those identified in the minutes of previous months. Constant comparisons revealed that many patterns of interaction that persisted over the three years had been established in the first several months. After identifying core categories, I began to describe the complex relationships between core
categories and the other categories of meaning that I had coded in the minutes of the 76 meetings that occurred during the first year.

Analysis of the minutes recorded during the next two years of class council proceeded along two lines. First, I compared the kinds of motions that were made across the three years; and secondly, I selected four deliberations from different months of both the second and third years for a text analysis and comparison with deliberations of the first year. This comparative analysis strengthened the core categories that anchor my interpretation of the data.

**Evolution of a Democratic Forum**

Although class meetings may be key to establishing a democratic classroom climate, other contributing factors include a spirit of open inquiry, frequent opportunities for peer interaction, and democratic leadership (Angell, 1991). In the following section I briefly describe the organization and pedagogy of a Montessori elementary class in order to provide the larger social and pedagogical contexts within which the class council occurred.

**Social Context: The Montessori Elementary Classroom**

Students in the Montessori classroom are expected to make responsible decisions about their academic program daily. As each school day begins, I make an effort to negotiate work schedules with the group, touching on as many individuals as possible to generate a plan for each that balances lessons I plan to give with group work and independent work periods. Students decide whether to use independent work periods to complete assignments, to pursue follow-up work generated by the lessons, or to carry out research projects, inquiries that may be outgrowths of curricular themes or of students’ particular interests. I try to respect the decisions students make about the order in which they plan to accomplish their academic objectives, which we negotiate in biweekly conferences.

Most lessons are conducted with small groups of students of similar interests and abilities, but not necessarily similar ages. Because the ages of students usually span three years, the Montessori teacher introduces a wide range of academic material across several grade levels. Students must therefore take more responsibility for their own learning and also cooperate to help each other. Throughout the day there is a predominance of student-student interaction in small, informally organized work groups where students sometimes pursue common projects and at other times assist their classmates working on material they have already mastered.

The Montessori curriculum is a spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960), which revisits key concepts and ideas at increasingly more complex levels of understanding as the child progresses. A rich array of materials provides concrete representations of key concepts. History is introduced with a series of
pictorial time lines; a set of small stamps that students print on maps teaches economic concepts of imports and exports. Manipulative materials make concepts more accessible and enable students to work more independently. Textbooks are few, used primarily as references and (especially in math) sources of skill practice. Raising questions that generate research projects and using multiple resources (including peers) to investigate and carry those projects forward is a primary model for academic work.

In addition to the personal responsibility and social interaction associated with academic work in the Montessori classroom, students are organized into small groups to carry out a variety of activities—service projects, classroom responsibilities, or academic projects. In my classroom, activities such as playing soccer with the local Japanese Saturday School or helping a younger class plant a butterfly garden have provided interaction with diverse groups and broadened students' experience in the larger community. Camping trips, dramatic productions, and student-planned events such as Pet Day have been shared experiences that also contributed to a sense of community. The social life of the class, the highly social nature of the students, and the inherent friction of frequent social interaction (Parker, 1997) brought students with interest to class council meetings and shaped its purposes.

Establishing a Democratic Forum

The first episode of class council occurred on the second day of the school term. I had scheduled class council meetings three times a week for fifteen minutes, after which the students were dismissed for recess. I called the first meeting to order, acting simultaneously as leader and recording secretary. The teacher-made agenda included asking for a volunteer to write a thank-you note, making a decision about which of two plays the class would attend, and an announcement about group games during recess. Although these topics were deliberately suggestive of appropriate council topics, I encouraged students to make their own agenda by listing concerns or problems on a special sheet posted on the bulletin board. The agenda sheet was used regularly thereafter.

As the third meeting was getting underway, one of the older girls volunteered to be the leader. She successfully called the meeting to order, called for votes, and moderated the discussion. In subsequent meetings others volunteered until, by the end of September, all students had taken a turn as leader. Reading the minutes became a second role carried out by the students (for some, an excellent opportunity to practice reading aloud). By mid-year students also rotated in the role of sergeant at arms, whose job it was to help the leader by dismissing disruptive students. In subsequent years students created charts to keep a public record of the rotations. Perhaps because students anticipated a turn in each role, they usually cooperated with the individuals acting in the various roles; and each
seemed to benefit in a different way from their participation. Alex\textsuperscript{2} explained that he enjoyed being the leader because “it’s kind of like a review of remembering everybody’s name that you don’t talk to very much” (Alex, 6-11-1997). Eleanor admitted that when she was the leader she sometimes found it difficult to keep the meeting under control and get everyone’s attention, but she liked the job because “I just like being in control sometimes” (Eleanor, 6-12-1997).

The second class council meeting was primarily devoted to an issue that a student had written on the agenda—how to regulate use of the classroom computer. Not only was access and appropriate use of the computer discussed, but also noisy classroom activity and how it interfered with others’ ability to work. During the meeting two motions were made that regulated computer use and required more quiet. The right of every student to work undisturbed continued to be an explicit goal expressed throughout the three years of class council. In later meetings I introduced additional parliamentary procedures: amending a motion, calling for a vote, and the tie-breaking vote of the leader. Outcomes of the early motions afforded me opportunities to explain the concepts of a unanimous vote, a simple majority ruling, and the rights of minorities to a fair hearing.

After eleven class council meetings during the first month of the school term, the students were successfully conducting meetings that followed a basic set of parliamentary procedures. They had passed motions to change the schedule for snack time and to adopt a classroom pet—a bird named Nibbles—that demanded shared responsibility. They had added a regular “announcements” segment to the meeting and decided on name-drawing from a hat as a strategy for deciding who would take care of Nibbles on weekends.

Topics for discussion that students posted on the agenda gradually defined a decision-making domain that I considered appropriate for class council. There were some aspects of the classroom that I would not have considered negotiable, such as attendance at lessons or participation in activities such as sustained silent reading (SSR). The daily half-hour of reading was, in my judgment, essential to the students’ academic progress. Had several students challenged it, perhaps I would have considered alternative scheduling, but it is unlikely that I would have agreed to abolish the reading period altogether. Decisions regarding which game to play at recess became a regular feature of class council during the early meetings, a habit that persisted over the three year period and often proved to be the most interesting feature for some.

New procedures were invented throughout the year—some minor, a few significant enough to change the character of the deliberations. In response to the embarrassment expressed by a student at being singled out during a discussion, students adopted a policy in early December that
no individual's name could be used in discussion. Sallie suggested that "maybe we shouldn't mention people's names because it's so embarrassing" and Luke added "just say people." Although the term "people" had often been used prior to this procedural invention, the word soon became the standard referent in all discussions of student affairs; naming individuals was henceforth regarded an infraction of the rules of fair talk. This new agreement appeared to protect everyone's good reputation and enable students to raise criticisms without anyone losing face or being pegged as the whistle blower. They often reminded one another of the no-names policy. Like almost all of the procedures that the students invented, the new policy prohibiting the use of an individual's name supported both individual dignity and group consensus-building.

**Implicit Goals: Self-definition and Consensus-building**

Through analysis of the minutes, I identified two primary goals that were implicit in the deliberations that took place during class council meetings: self-definition and consensus-building. Employing a wide range of strategies and tactics to achieve these goals, the students established patterns of interaction that characterized the group process. As core categories, self-definition and consensus-building have a high degree of explanatory power in regard to these patterns and processes.

In the following discussion from a midyear meeting, the students try to arrive at a common understanding of the gray area between "telling other people what to do" and helpful reminders. As they strive for consensus about meanings and conduct, several students find an opportunity to reveal something about their experience that defines them further as individuals within the group.

We discussed the problem of some people telling other people what to do. Maura said she doesn't like it because it makes you feel small. Tiffany said that people have also been telling her to water her plants. Maura said sometimes it's better not to say anything even when you want to tell someone something. Tiffany said that sometimes people don't know that you already know what they are trying to tell you; they can make a mistake. Eleanor said that sometimes at home she feels lazy and asks people to do things for her, and if she's in a bad mood, she says thank you, but not in a very nice way. Tiffany asked if there are any solutions to making this better? Maura made a motion that you should not tell people what to do unless you ask in a very nice way or remind them, like saying "may I remind you." Alex seconded the motion. Roland asked what if people don't want to be reminded. Tiffany said that you might ask someone to remind you, like, "would you remind me to
water my plant?” Then it would be okay. Tiffany [serving as leader] asked for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.

(1-13-1995)

The comments of Maura, Tiffany, and Eleanor in this discussion serve the purpose of self-definition. Each tells something about her personal experience and response, about the kind of person she is. At the same time, the personal revelations contribute to a consensus-building process that characterized group problem-solving throughout the three years of class council meetings. A student (usually the one who wrote the agenda item) states the problem, often a problem that has recently affected him or her personally. Other students attest to the legitimacy of the problem, giving examples to demonstrate that the offense has occurred in different circumstances. A student makes a motion aimed at remedying the problem, and another asks for clarification of terms. When accord appears to exist, a vote is taken that is often unanimous in favor of the motion, indicating consensus.

The process of consensus-building included other features of self-definition and problem-solving strategies. Sometimes students offered personal reasons for supporting the motion, provided explanations for problems, or made constructive suggestions for solutions based on their experience. Often someone presented moral grounds for supporting the motion or called for empathy. When a student expressed a strong objection to the prevailing opinion and the consensus-building process was stalled, the result was often an amendment to the motion that accommodated that individual’s position. In the following segment, students do not try to override individual points in order to make a general rule that will apply broadly. Rather, the motion that passes unanimously addresses all of the particular needs expressed in the discussion.

Next we discussed people bringing stuff to school to play with, like Game Boy or noise games. Eleanor made a motion that you don’t bring any games to school. Sallie seconded it. Maura said if you’re bringing something because you are taking it to someone’s house after school, you should leave it in your backpack. You shouldn’t trade Game Boy games during school because it distracts people. Tiffany said that people are also bringing candy and gum to school. Sallie said that she has a bald eagle at her desk, but she just keeps it there to make her desk feel homey. Roland said that the reason his Game Boy was at school was that he is going to a friend’s house. Tiffany called for a vote. Victoria amended the motion to say that people should not bring games or candy and gum or comics except when they are brought for sharing or for taking to someone
else's house, but then they must stay in your backpack. You can bring models for decorating your desk. Sallie seconded the amendment. Victoria asked for a vote, and the motion passed unanimously. (2-17-1995)

The rules of parliamentary order in use here have established formal standards of polite discourse that assure justice and equality, creating a climate within which individuals can define themselves while also contributing to consensus regarding the goals and norms of the group. The model in Figure 1 shows a variety of interactions—both formal and informal—that facilitated the group's goals of consensus-building and self-definition. Individuals articulated personal problems and received empathy from the group members, they raised objections and received accommodations for their needs, they announced their personal news and heard group news, they articulated the expectations of the group. Sometimes individuals resisted group expectations through infractions of the rules,
but the group responded with procedures such as reminders for reasserting the group-defined principles of justice. When the minutes were read at the beginning of each meeting, students heard for a second time what they had said and how the group had responded—a brief exercise in self-reflection. The call for corrections to the minutes gave individuals an opportunity to hear their own voices, to verify their intent, and to set the record straight regarding their identities.

Occasionally I proposed an action when the consensus-building process seemed to be stalled. When the majority ruled in favor of a game that two students were adamant about not wanting to play, I suggested that one day each week be designated as “group games day.” When the topic was hurt feelings caused by note swapping, I proposed installing a mailbox in the classroom. Although both suggestions were adopted with enthusiasm, I made a concerted effort to reserve my suggestions for the occasional dilemma that seemed unresolvable to the group in light of their goals.

Explicit Goals: Individual Dignity, the Right to an Education, and Fairness

Three explicit goals were articulated by the students throughout the three years of class council: (a) to respect the dignity of individuals, (b) to insure every individual’s right to work and learn undisturbed by others in the classroom, and (c) to provide for equal rights and fair judgments. Students often invented procedures to support their goals, such as the rule prohibiting the use of names, which prevented individual embarrassment and hurt feelings. Being able to work undisturbed was a persistent theme. Frequent strong statements were made in support of the value of lessons, the opportunity to learn, and the benefits of getting a good education. As the students built consensus for the work ethic, their metaphors for school were consistent—a place to work, a place to learn, a place to get a good education. The students seemed to be very clear on the purpose of schooling.

Issues of fairness and justice were highly respected in class council. Procedures such as drawing names from a hat or number-guessing games were invented to support equal chances and equal treatment. The rotation of class council roles was regarded as a fair practice and was strictly observed. In the following segment, Maura articulates the equal rights principle with regard to responsibility for coming to lessons:

Eleanor said people should come to lessons when they are asked. She said that you should come to all the lessons in your group so you can get a good education and not get behind. Maura said that when a person doesn’t come, it feels like they have more freedom than the others. Also she said that everyone will need to know decimals to know what’s going on in the world. (5-10-1995)
Maura’s conclusion was that if one person has to come to lessons, then everyone must. At the end of this discussion, Eleanor made a motion that “people should come to lessons when they are asked.” The motion passed unanimously. Consensus was easy to build around matters of fairness, although what constituted fairness was sometimes heatedly debated. By building consensus for the goals of individual dignity, the right to an education, and fairness, the students created both a sense of community and a culture of justice.

**On Compliance and Consequences**

Once students established policies and procedures through the class council, they expected compliance. The motions that passed became rules; and there was from the beginning the expectation that all students would abide by those rules, which were almost always passed unanimously. When there were infractions of the rules, students reminded each other of the rules; both during informal interactions and more formally during meetings. A special segment of the meeting called “reminders” was instituted to follow announcements. Students eschewed punishments in favor of repeated reminders on the grounds that the rules had been established unanimously in good faith and all would therefore surely comply.

No penalties for rule infringement were established nor consequences mentioned until February of the first year. Having discussed poor behavior in Spanish class during several prior meetings, Eleanor proposed that students either “stay at the table to learn or go sit at another table by yourself.” When the motion passed, I was the only person who expressed interest in how this consequence would be carried out; but the students surprised me with several matter-of-fact enforcements. In another instance the group decided that two boys should be required to work at their desks for a week because they had repeatedly disrupted others’ work. The boys acquiesced, but the matter was not reviewed for its success after the week. Perhaps interest in the issue dwindled because the boys’ conduct did improve, which may have added legitimacy to the group’s authority.

In subsequent years, prescribing consequences for breaking rules was seldom the focus of group deliberations. On those few occasions when a punishment was endorsed by the group, the rule needed enforcing only once or twice before the behavior disappeared. Such was the case with saying “shut up” during the second year; when the students decided that the punishment would be an hour’s silence. How to achieve compliance was a problem the group continued to debate throughout the three years of the study. The students seemed to recognize that true consensus had not been achieved until everyone complied with the rules made.
Outcomes of the First-Year Council Deliberations: 100 Motions

During the proceedings of the 76 class council meetings that were conducted during the first year, students made 100 motions. Of those, 77 motions passed unanimously and another 15 passed by a majority, a further indication of the degree of consensus that the students forged. There were few close votes, although differences of opinion were often expressed in the discussions.

Almost half of the motions (45) were related to individual behavior—"no one should mess with anyone else's personal property unless they have that person's permission," or "eat with good manners and don't play with food." Standards for politeness and ethical conduct were clearly the predominant concern of the group, and establishing group norms became the main business of the council. The remaining 58 motions made during the first year regulated classroom routines (...to start class council at 11 am instead of 11:15 so we won't be so rushed); established council procedures (...that we have reminders after announcements); or formulated group action (...that we go hiking if it's not raining and to the museum if it is.) Despite the large number of motions made during the first year, the students were able to quote rules that applied when there was an infraction or a new discussion of an old issue.

Class Council: The Second and Third Years

The 1995-1996 class council year began with a debate over whether to keep all the rules made the previous year or to start with a clean slate. It was pointed out that new people would be at a disadvantage if old rules were kept and that even the returning students might have difficulty remembering all of them, so the new class of 13 students agreed to start over. They did, however, vote to keep the most important rules, which they agreed were: to respect school equipment and to be nice to each other. Despite this initial rollback, motion-making quickly gained momentum; and by the end of February, 1996, the group had passed 61 motions, most unanimously. Using parliamentary procedure to solve problems and establish group norms seemed to have been internalized by both returning and new students.

The second year of class council was characterized by leadership, both acknowledged and tacit. The oldest—and tallest—member of the class, Sallie, was admired for her fairness, her ability to articulate principles clearly, and her sensitivity for animals, an endearing quality among peers. I was more aware of Eleanor's leadership on moral matters. Younger than Sallie by two years, Eleanor acted frequently as the "class conscience," bringing forward the ethical dimensions of a debate and establishing the moral grounds for resolving problems. Her moral reasoning was respected and often echoed by others in later discussions. Sallie's occasional words of wisdom provided a counterbalance to the social dissonance that some-
times threatened the community. In the following excerpt, her expression of empathy clearly influences the thinking of the other girls; and Eleanor concludes with a restatement of the empathy question.

Sallie said that if you have bad feelings about someone, you should keep it to yourself. Think about how you would feel and get in their shoes. Caroline said that if people are talking about someone, maybe they could write it down like in a diary. Melinda said it’s like talking behind your back and you wouldn’t feel that great. Meagan said that if you heard someone talking about you, you would feel really bad. Eleanor gave an example and asked “how would you feel?” (1-22-1996)

One student’s explanation of Sallie’s influence, however, suggests that her leadership sometimes shaped group opinion by inhibiting open discussion:

Last year everyone was trying to say what Sallie said. I guess she was the oldest or something. I don’t know why, but last year people waited until Sallie raised her hand to see what she was going to say. (Meagan, 6-11-1997)

Toward the end of the year, there was a definite note of cynicism expressed about the effectiveness of council discussions and rules to regulate interpersonal conflict and relieve social tension. For every protest, however, there were strong voices to defend the process. Of the 80 motions passed during the second year of class council meetings, nearly three-fourths were aimed at regulating individual behavior and establishing group norms. What emerged as a new category of motion-making during the second year was group action. Some of the group action motions were related to events as they had been in the first year; but there were other motions that articulated a group resolve, such as “…that we make sure everyone gets to play and gets to be what they want to be in games.”

During the third year of class council meetings, making motions to regulate individual behavior again accounted for more than half the motions made, but group action motions increased as a percentage of the total. Among the first group actions was the adoption of a class goal for the year, which was “To help others and the school.” That resolution was soon followed by motions to have a Pet Day and a Halloween Party, both of which were successfully planned during council meetings. Event-planning continued to be a principal activity throughout the year, and the successful organization of student-initiated events suggested a sense of group efficacy, a feeling of confidence about the group’s effectiveness in working together to accomplish a goal or carry out a plan of action.
Most students who were interviewed at the end of the year described the purpose of class council in terms of rule-making or problem-solving: "...where you talk about how you're going to make the laws, what they're about, and how you're going to use them" (Jeremy, 6-17-1997) or "a meeting that our class has...to talk about problems that people have and we try to fix it by making a motion that people have to agree to if it passes (Eleanor, 6-12-1997). However, one student included planning events in her description of class council purposes: "if we have a problem, [the purpose is] to talk about it together and find a solution, and to talk about events we have in our classroom" (Cecilia, 6-11-1997). Responses to the survey question that asked which discussions had been useful included mention of Pet Day, Shinji's good-bye party, Twins Day, and other events.

Analysis of other responses indicated that the central issues of the third year had been physically harming others, saying shut-up, and name-calling or making fun of others, although there was widespread disagreement about which were productive discussions. On one list of useful discussions, a student noted that the debate about "saying shut-up" was useful only "after a few discussions, when people started to change." Students who were interviewed, however, generally agreed that discussions were often effective in influencing behavioral change.

Ann: The last thing you listed was calling others names and the rule that you can't call others names.

Cecilia: I think that really helped because a lot of people were calling other people names, and even after the rule a few people were calling names, but I think it helped a lot.

Ann: If it doesn't stop everybody right away, what makes people start obeying the rule?

Cecilia: Because we talk about it more and more and more.

Ann: So it helps when we bring something up again?

Cecilia: Uh-huh. Because if people are still doing it, you should bring it up again and maybe people will listen this time.

The minutes contain occasional student remarks about motions "not working." One student commented on vote abstentions: "Some people just didn't bother even raising their hand in the first place. They didn't even bother voting...I don't know why" (Jeremy, 6-17-1997).

The composition of the third year class included only 8 boys among the 20 students. Six of the boys were new to the class, and three came from
systems outside of Montessori schools. Throughout the year, the boys seemed to participate less in class council, and during the interviews I tried to find out why. There were many theories, among them that "boys care about different things" and "boys can't really think of anything to say." Most agreed that boys and girls experience different problems and sometimes find it difficult to appreciate problems when they are the perpetrators. Jeremy admitted that ponytail pulling was only a girls' problem for obvious reasons, but that the boys had an obligation to discuss the problem with them. Meagan's reasoning about the discrepancy between boys' and girls' participation was sweeping, and surprising, because women's rights had been discussed only briefly in connection with an American history play the students performed a year before this interview took place.

Maybe it's because of women not having the right to vote for such a long time or something like that. But boys—they've always had their way. It's always been "mankind." But girls have to fight for what they get, I guess. (Meagan, 6-11-1997)

One boy suggested that the boys' reluctance to speak might be attributed to the fact that most of them were new, and that they would probably speak up more next year. Both boys who were interviewed emphasized that they personally had felt free to speak whenever they disagreed, and that they had made frequent contributions to the deliberations.

Responding to a question on the survey about whether individuals felt free to express their opinion even when most of the others disagreed with them, two-thirds of the students asserted that they personally felt free to express their opinion. One student said that when people disagree, "we try to make it a win-win situation," language learned when the class had been trained in peer mediation. However, more than half the students also said that they felt other people didn't feel free to express their opinions or simply didn't exercise that right because of peer pressure. In their words, "somebody will get mad at them," "they don't think it will be useful," "they vote like their friends," or "they don't feel free to give their opinions because they are afraid they won't have any friends if they do." When Cecilia tried to explain her reluctance to put a topic on the agenda, she intimated what peer pressure might feel like:

I would think that your friends would say "hurting others? Who put that on the agenda?" Like that. Like "why do we have to talk about that again?" I mean "why did you bring it up?" Like saying "why did you bring it back up," or "I don't care about hurting others." (Cecilia, 6-11-1997)
There were a few students who worked against the group ethic of caring and challenged the consensus that existed regarding the authority of class council rules. They were the individuals who often declared that they “didn’t care” about the proceedings or the problems or the rules. These individuals were usually silent when charges of continuing abuse and rule-breaking were brought to class council. In discussions about repeated infractions, the other students continued to adhere to the “no-names rule,” although most knew who the rule-breakers were; and each discussion brought several new suggestions for alternative behaviors that might help everyone conform to the rules.

When the parent of one of the students who frequently challenged the rules told me that her son disliked class council because the discussions were always negative—about “what people did wrong”—I instituted a new meeting element called acknowledgments, a time for thanking others and recognizing prosocial acts. It quickly became a popular part of the meeting, usually comprised of statements of appreciation—for parents who drove on field trips, friends who helped with math problems or report-writing, or teachers for particular lessons. Students who did not often enter into discussions—younger and newer students—seemed to find it easy to speak up during the acknowledgments segment of the meeting.

After several disorderly meetings in April of the third year, I conducted an informal discussion with the students about class council, its proceedings and its failings. Among the suggestions for improving its effectiveness were to limit announcements to public information, reduce the number of examples given, and try not to repeat things in discussion that had already been said, indications to me that most students, however disgruntled, were still listening to the proceedings. Moreover, they seemed to recognize that the quality of deliberation could be improved. Because there was also support for having fewer meetings, during the month of May there was only one meeting held each week. Students who were interviewed at the end of the year agreed that once a week probably would not be enough over the long term, but three times a week was probably too often to keep meetings interesting and productive.

Refining the Deliberations

The implicit goals of the deliberations during the second and third years of class council appeared to remain stable, with most aspects of the meetings affording opportunities for self-definition and the deliberation process aimed at consensus-building. There did appear, however, to be some refinement of the processes that forged consensus. For example, there was an increasing amount of deliberation that did not result in formal action, but clarified definitions of terms, proposed alternative solutions, or called for empathy. In the following example, consensus already seems to exist that name-calling is not acceptable behavior. Students register their
disapproval by casting name-calling as an ethical affront and by presenting examples—personal and hypothetical examples that call for empathy. Justin’s example is both self-defining and empathetic. Jeremy concludes the discussion with a clarifying statement of moral principle.

We talked about calling people names. Jeremy said that someone called another person the fattest person in the world, and he didn’t think it was nice to say that about anyone. Cecilia said that she has been called names lots of times. Tiffany said that someone is being picked on all the time and being called names. Eleanor said someone was getting teased and she went over to talk to the person who was teasing and they said it was a joke. She said that no one deserves to be teased in this class. Alex said he was at his desk when someone came in and said “Hi, Boulder” to a person close by him. Justin said that you would feel bad if someone called you names. If someone called him “four eyes,” he wouldn’t like it. Julie said that calling people names is rude. Some people just do it for fun and use funny names, but it’s not nice to use mean names. Jeremy said that you shouldn’t tease people about physical things—things they can’t change about themselves like Justin wearing glasses. (1-27-1997)

Discussions such as the preceding one suggest a new emphasis on generating common understandings and shared sentiments rather than rule-making, which may help explain the comparatively few motions made during the third year (48). There appeared to be a commensurate increase in the amount of responsive talk that suggested active listening—a restatement or paraphrase of a prior comment, a supporting statement that followed from the previous speaker, or a question and answer exchange. Moreover, the increased amount of intentional listening and responsive interaction suggested efforts to understand and appreciate one another’s points of view.

**Hypotheses**

Class meetings conducted under the basic parliamentary rules of order and grounded in the principles of justice and equality can promote the development of democratic skills, attitudes, and values among upper elementary students. Students appreciate democratic processes as they define themselves within the group and work with others towards building consensus about the rules that will govern their community. Practicing participation in a democratic forum, particularly when the group comprises children of several consecutive ages, increases empathetic response and elevates moral reasoning, resulting in more prosocial behavior and concern for the welfare of the group. Because all participants are empow-
ered to speak, the group ethic that takes shape is more likely to reflect balance and diversity.

When my students were given the collective responsibility for a particular domain of authentic decision-making about their lives at school, they were eager to practice the difficult skills of democratic talk—listening as well as talking, taking turns, grounding argument in reason, defending everyone’s equal right to speak, empathizing with others’ points of view, and delaying judgment until all have spoken. As they practiced these skills, the students developed more democratic attitudes such as personal confidence, efficacy, and interest in participation; and exhibited democratic values—respect for each other, for justice, and for the law. As members of a group that extended equal rights and responsibilities to its members, the students worked to build consensus by creating the rules by which they wanted to live and by helping each other respect the rules that were made. The group provided empathy, accommodation of individual needs, and clear expectations that guided individual development. As the group built consensus on standards of polite and ethical conduct, a democratic ethos developed within which individuals further defined themselves as members of the group culture. Identification with the group motivated caring for other group members, cooperation, and commitment to group goals.

**Conclusions**

Class council meetings conducted in my class over the past three years suggest that the 9 to 12 year olds’ social inclinations, which Montessori characterized as the “love for working together” (1936/1966), may provide a window of opportunity for developing the habits and beliefs associated with responsible democratic citizenship, particularly when the students are grouped in a mixed-age class. In this study the students’ interest in being together and their need to talk brought them eagerly to meetings where they practiced respect for equal rights and defined justice for themselves in deliberations governed by parliamentary order. Through the students’ social experimentation, they found avenues of self-expression, but also personal reasons for accepting the principles of equal voice and majority rule. Each student became a player in the shaping of peer group norms; and most developed their ability to demonstrate empathy. Although minority positions were still weakly defended, the students’ demonstrated increasing respect for differences of opinion, exercised their right to speak and vote freely, and together made progress towards establishing a just community.

When invited to set their own agenda for democratically conducted discussions, these students chose to reason about moral issues and conduct. Their concerns were about fairness and standards of civility. More-
over, as they practiced democratic processes and accepted the discipline of respectful dialogue, they established norms that raised the standards for acceptable conduct and raised one another’s levels of moral reasoning. It was not unusual for a student to straddle two stages of moral reasoning in a single discussion. This might be partly attributable to the mixed ages of students in the group, given Kohlberg’s principle that we attend to and learn best from exposure to moral reasoning that is just slightly more advanced than our own. (Kohlberg, 1973).

The students described in this study demonstrated a strong tendency to imitate prevailing models of peer behavior, attitudes, and beliefs—to follow the crowd. Whenever there appeared to be a strong majority opinion, the others were inclined to join in building consensus, adopting the prevailing position in order to affirm their identity with the group, moreover, students in this 9-12 year old crowd were not necessarily prosocial, but rather seemed to be still emerging from life’s deep wells of childhood and family where individualistic goals prevail (Paley, 1993). They were not naturally good group members. They were often selfish, defensive, and arbitrary as they tried to define themselves as individuals while also seeking peer approval and acceptance within the group. The desire to be accepted, however, motivated individuals to conform to group norms, which often represented higher standards of conduct and moral reasoning than individuals brought with them to the forum. Moreover, the higher standards remained relatively stable due to the effect of returning students each year, who provided the memory, the continuity of expectations, and the leadership for the group. Entering a group with higher standards than their own, newcomers soon appeared to be reasoning at higher levels after attending only a few meetings.

Class meetings conducted as democratic forums provided for the students a safe arena within which they could legitimately define and redefine themselves and, at the same time, have a voice in establishing norms that governed the group. Balanced by group members’ diverse perspectives and needs, the norms that the peer group adopted were less likely to be shaped by the loudest and the strongest—the bullies; and more likely to be nonrepressive and nondiscriminatory (Gutmann, 1987). There was always, it seemed, at least one student who could empathize or reason or clarify in such a way that the real issues could be recognized by the group.

Drawing on clinical sociology in her essays on ethics, Bly (1996) points out that “in addition to helping one duck scorn, herding together is the structure of social life with the least risk of personal failure” (p. 109). However, if individuals are given adequate opportunities to be heard—to be recognized and listened to—then growth and change, risk taking and empathetic listening can begin in earnest (Bly, 1996). Perhaps because class council provided an arena for self-disclosure and self-definition, students were able to improve the interactive quality of their deliberations and to increase their levels of
empathetic listening and response. They may have been paving the way for a
greater level of comfort with dissent. The students clearly acknowledged the
problem of peer pressure, but they also invented processes that encouraged
listening, free expression, and respect for dissenters.

Although unquestioned acceptance of the group’s will is an extreme
to be avoided, the inclination to admire peer leaders in the group can have
beneficial effects. The leadership of students like Sallie and Eleanor ap-
ppeared to help shape the logic and moral reasoning of the other students.
Had those two leaders not been as articulate within the class council meet-
ings, it might have been necessary for me to play a larger role in promot-
ing democratic attitudes and behaviors. The operating factor here again
seems to be the mixed-age grouping with returning students who could
provide the democratic leadership learned through previous experience
in class meetings.

It was difficult for some students to reason about the need to con-
sider problems that might concern only one or two people or, for that mat-
er, the other gender. The rights and responsibilities of minorities suggests
an area that may require more explicit teaching about democratic prin-
ciples, or sometimes teacher intervention. Teachers must also be prepared
to handle extreme violations of the group’s efforts, to provide suggestions
or ideas when the group is struggling with intractable problems, and to
help students develop realistic strategies for exercising authority as a group
so that cynicism does not become a destructive factor.

The students interviewed said that some rules were still broken, and
that others became effective only after repeated discussions. Student sur-
vey responses and individual interviews revealed some skepticism regard-
ing the effectiveness of the council, but there was also a prevailing belief
that most of the rules they made in class council “worked.” According to
research on political socialization, moderate levels of skepticism may be
desirable in a democracy, especially when combined with feelings of po-
litical efficacy (Hahn, 1998). Students expressed confidence in the legiti-
mate authority of student decision-making (political confidence) and in
the group’s ability to carry out decisions and accomplish goals (political
efficacy). Most also seemed to believe that their skills for conducting and
participating in class council were improving with more experience. When
asked if she thought the class was getting better at problem solving in
class council, Eleanor reflected on her own development.

When I started out, I was horrible at it. I couldn’t read any-
thing on the agenda and it was really hard discussion and
people would say stuff and I wouldn’t know what to say back
and I...it was...The longer you do it, the better you get at it.
(Eleanor, 6-17-97)
Why didn’t students put academic issues on the agenda? Students interviewed were confused by this question. Several asserted that there seemed to be the right amount of math or spelling. When asked what parts of the academic program might benefit from change, Jeremy suggested adding more geography lessons and science; but he doubted that he would put that suggestion on the agenda. The students seemed to have clearly in mind the parameters of the student decision-making domain and considered class council a social problem-solving meeting rather than an open-ended meeting or an educational-diagnostic meeting (Glasser, 1969). Perhaps because these students already had daily opportunities to make decisions about their academic program, they defined class council for other purposes—for social problem-solving, information-sharing, and event-planning. It seems possible, however, that even in a more traditional classroom the opportunity for self-governance in the domain of social interaction would afford students practice in democratic decision-making skills, promote a sense of efficacy, and encourage the development of empathy.

Not always harmonious, the group ethic in my classroom nevertheless appeared to be one of equality and justice, with a collective belief that every individual had a vested interest in creating and maintaining a just community. Through their participation in the democratic deliberations of class meetings, the students found a forum in which to shape themselves as individuals and to become more empathetic group members. By exercising their role as citizens of the classroom, they practiced for their adult roles as citizens of a democratic nation, discovering that citizenship involves both individual rights and the responsibility for working together to achieve the goals of their group.

All of the students who were interviewed said firmly that they would plan to continue class council if they were the teacher for the following year. Asked for his reasons, Jeremy said, “We discuss a lot of important things that might not be discussed at any other time. We usually get a lot done in class council; a lot said. And so I guess that’s about it” (Jeremy, 6-17-97).

Notes

1Now in its fourth year, the class has 24 students, which is regarded as a full size or “mature” class. It is common in Montessori schools to start a new class with a small number of students and to increase the size of the class gradually. The advantage of this program is that the teacher can work more closely with students to establish standards for conduct and work. Because students generally spend three years in the same class, the returning students pass on the standards to newcomers, who usually are quick to adopt them.

2Student names used throughout are pseudonyms.

3I did not record numbers of abstentions in the minutes. Sometimes the leader called for a vote by hand count, sometimes by voice vote.

4It became clear during the spring of 1997 that class council was not effective in solving recurrent interpersonal problems. The students responded enthusiastically to the suggestion that we all be trained in peer mediation. A team of upper elementary students who had long practiced peer mediation, along with a teacher, provided an excellent training workshop that included demonstrations and practice in mediating conflicts. Comments during the year-end interviews suggested that the students thought that peer mediation was more effective in solving some problems than was class council.
M. Montessori, whose early work on developmental stages continues to anchor the psychology of the educational programs operated under her name, observed that 9-12 children are motivated by a strong tendency to enjoy working together and to identify with the group.

References


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Historical Constructions: How Social Studies Student Teachers’ Historical Thinking is Reflected in Their Writing of History

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Abstract
How do current social studies student teachers think about and write historical narratives? This question was explored through an examination of student teachers’ historical thinking, use of sources and writing. Specifically, this inquiry focused on social studies student teachers’ construction of historical accounts through their use of multiple sources of information relating to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Three secondary social studies student teachers provided the data for this study, and Wineburg’s (1991a) research design served as a model. Each of the three cases were analyzed on the basis of certain criteria. After completing this analysis, common themes and patterns became evident among the student teachers’ historical thinking and writing. Based upon the findings, several suggestions for improving student teachers’ engagement with historical thinking and writing are posited.

Great abilities are not requisite for an historian...Imagination is not required in any high degree.

Samuel Johnson
6 July 1763

Samuel Johnson’s characterization of the people who practice history as a profession likely would be supported by a large number of U.S. high school students who must study history as part of their required curricu- lum. Indeed, hearing students label history as boring is commonplace. As Bruce VanSledright (1995) noted, students often have difficulty understanding and learning history because they typically are taught multitudinous chronological archival details which become confused, conflated and eventually forgotten. Nonetheless, history can be intriguing and enlightening. Stimulating historical text, however, is not stripped of its narrative form
and reduced to a string of crowded, chronicled events that lack meaning (Cronon, 1992). Intriguing history requires the imaginative ability to place oneself back in time, to understand human struggles, actions and consequences, to derive meaning from the stories of persons, places and events, and to make informed judgments on the basis of historical evidence. Conveying such fascinating history to others requires considerable ability, knowledge and effort. Preparation of history teachers to be able to understand and to perform this role, therefore, is critical.

One part of teachers’ preparation includes their personal development of historical thinking. The present research explored a dimension of preparation through an examination of student teachers’ historical thinking as reflected in their writing and verbal explanations.

A growing body of research about historical thinking and understanding exists. On the other hand, most of this research has focused on school children rather than on teachers (e.g., Barton, 1997; Downey & Levstik, 1987; Greene, 1994; Levstik & Pappas, 1987; VanSledright, 1995; VanSledright & Brophy, 1992). Much of this work is grounded in theories of cognitive science and current socio-constructivist approaches to learning (e.g., Wineburg, 1991a; Wineburg, 1994; VanSledright, 1995). The foundation for this perspective is attributed to the ideas of Vygotsky, a Russian theorist, and his followers (Wertsch, 1991). In this socio-constructivist perspective, socially shared cognition is emphasized. Knowledge is viewed as being actively constructed by the learner, which in turn calls for a shift away from a “transmission model of teaching toward one that is more complex and interactive” (Prawat and Floden, 1994, p. 37). The teacher is no longer the sole disseminator of information. Indeed, recent studies on historical thinking have suggested that changes in the way history is taught and learned are warranted.

Classrooms in which teachers have “devoted themselves to diversifying students’ understanding of history” have been held as exemplars in the literature on historical thinking (Barton, 1997, p. 16). In these model classes, students learn how historical accounts have multiple perspectives and their contributions are welcomed as part of a shared learning process. Yet, a mismatch between research findings and typical history courses remains. This discrepancy persists through the university level. Many future teachers sit in history lecture courses and later teach similarly in their own classrooms. To compound matters, state and national policy recommendations that have emphasized breadth rather than depth of historical knowledge, increase teachers’ practical difficulties in matching instructional practices with Vygotskian cognitive principles.

For history to be taught differently requires teachers and students to look at history in a new light (e.g., Davis, 1998). Certainly, this different view would dismiss Samuel Johnson’s notion that imagination is not required. In fact, understanding varying historical accounts and the recog-
nition of multiple interpretations and differing arguments is essential to history (VanSledright, 1996). History no longer should be viewed as a fixed body of uncontested information (White, 1987). Students should be encouraged to imagine many possibilities when thinking of distant times, places, people, and ways of living.

These tenets, nonetheless, do not suggest that history courses should minimize factual information and acknowledge only personal and relativistic interpretations. Consider, for example, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the topic under consideration in this research. Were people to examine documentary and photographic evidence, most would agree that this event occurred. Still, little consensus may be expected on the rationale for the bombing or the subsequent effects, implications, and results of the employment of such weaponry. Students still can learn about varying perspectives and divergent interpretations of an event, and also can learn about the difference between supportable and insupportable claims (Levstik, 1996). Historical accounts provide several explanations for the dropping of the atomic bomb, such as: the bomb was necessary to end the war; it saved American lives; the bomb was employed to impress the Russians and demonstrate American military might; and, also, the dropping of the bomb was an act of unmitigated, savage brutality, not critical to ending the war. In sum, although history always is subject to revision and multiple interpretations, it is not absent structure and sound methodological approaches based upon reasoning, imagination, and evidence.

**Student Teachers’ Historical Thinking and Writing**

Clearly, teachers of history should be familiar with historical thinking and understanding. In fact, teachers’ content knowledge has been found to be critical to their ability to convey historical knowledge and is, therefore, fundamental to student understanding (e.g., Downey & Levstik, 1991; Wineburg & Wilson, 1991). On the other hand, substantial knowledge of historical events, persons and places does not translate easily into wise pedagogical practice. Teachers, like historians, must perceive of differing perspectives, multiple causation, potential bias in authorship, authenticity of evidence, and view events in context and time period (Downey & Levstik, 1991).

Accordingly, the goals of the historian and the history teacher reasonably may differ in several important respects. Although an historian seeks new knowledge or new ways of understanding events, a history teacher seeks “to create new understanding in the minds of learners” (Wineburg & Wilson, 1991, p. 335). In fact, an historian examines documents to evaluate the type and credibility of evidence presented, but a
history teacher reasonably must consider, as well, how useful, interesting, and readable such documents may be for students.

In the preface of their *Teaching and Learning in History* (1994), Leinhardt, Beck and Stainton, acknowledge that the body of research on history instruction and learning continues to expand. Much of this research has focused on students' historical learning. However, information on student teachers' preparation to engage in historical thinking and teaching remains scant as does research generally on historical writing. Because teacher education programs provide a major foundation for subsequent professional development, specific attention to preservice teachers' historical thinking is warranted. Only a few studies, however, have undertaken such inquiries (e.g., Goodman and Adler, 1985; Yeager and Davis, 1995). These studies found that social studies methods courses devoted little attention to historical thinking. Furthermore, both called for more research to examine how historical thinking could be incorporated into teacher education programs which then could be translated by teachers into their classroom practices.

Especially, little research on historical writing exists. Most research on composition lies "outside the domain of history teaching and instruction" (Greene, 1994, p. 165) and within the domain of language arts and literacy or the teaching of English (e.g., Giroux, 1988; Graves, 1989; Graves, 1994; Flower, 1990). In contemporary school programs in school composition, a transformation has occurred that focuses particularly on the writing process itself rather than exclusively on the finished product. Moreover, although the writing process continues to receive much research attention, analysis of students' construction of historical thinking through engagement in the writing process remains meager. Stuart Greene's study, "Students as Authors in the Study of History" (1994) is a notable exception. In this investigation, Greene identified various factors which influenced students' composition. These included: the type of writing assignments, students' prior knowledge, their methods of selecting and structuring information from a variety of sources, students' use of evidence, and means for organizing and sequencing ideas (Greene, 1994, p. 138). This study involved college history students enrolled in an advanced European history course, not university students who were preparing to become history teachers. Furthermore, only four of fifteen students in Greene's project were undergraduate history majors. Preservice teacher candidates' construction of historical meaning through writing, an important area of investigation, remains unexamined. It is the focus of the present research.
Study Participants and Methodology

The present study examined how student teachers’ historical thinking was reflected in their writings. Specifically, inquiry was directed to student teachers’ constructions of historical accounts through their use of multiple sources of information and the methods by which these documents might be used in their classrooms. Three secondary social studies student teachers provided the data for this study. These student teachers were enrolled in the教师 Certification Program at a large public university, had completed a social studies education methods course, and participated in student teaching field experiences at nearby urban public high schools and middle schools. For two of these student teachers, their declared major was history and both had completed the required minimum of thirty-six credits in history. The third student teacher’s minor was history, and she had completed eighteen hours of coursework in this field. Two student teachers taught tenth grade World History and one taught eighth grade U.S. History. The teacher candidates are identified here by the pseudonyms Rebecca, Alexa, and Julie.

Wineburg’s (1991a) research design served as a model for this study. In his study, Wineburg presented eight historians and eight high school students a series of documents and paintings pertaining to the Battle of Lexington. Both groups subsequently engaged in several activities, including think aloud protocols in which they read and evaluated the historical texts. Wineburg found that historians and high school students considered the texts differently. The historians corroborated information, employed a sourcing heuristic and contextualized documents more frequently than the students. Additionally, the students accepted documents as literal bearers of factual information more commonly than did the historians.

In the present study, student teachers used a set of sixteen sources related to the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. As they read the documents, they talked aloud about what they were thinking. These interviews were audio tape recorded and were interrupted only occasionally with questions such as, “What are you thinking?” These infrequent interruptions sought to facilitate individuals’ expression of ideas. After reading the sources, they first wrote an historical account of the dropping of the atomic bomb and, second, explained in writing how they might use these sources in the classroom. The sessions were conducted on an individual basis. The interviews and the writing component lasted from one hour and one-half to two and three-quarter hours. Differences in length of sessions were due to multiple reasons including the participants’ willingness to talk, their effort expended, and the time they needed for writing.

The sixteen sources used for the study deliberately reflected a wide range of perspectives on the bombing of Hiroshima. The diverse primary and secondary source documents included several historians’ descriptions
from books and journals, eyewitness accounts of Japanese adults and children, Japanese military documents, the memoirs of President Truman written ten years after the bombing, statements of U.S. government officials at the time of the bombing, Winston Churchill's account in his series on the history of World War Two, excerpts from nonfiction books, (e.g., The Rising Sun and City of Silence: Listening to Hiroshima), statements of Robert Oppenheimer at the Senate Hearings on the bombing in 1954, reports of scientists at the Metallurgical Lab in Chicago, and excerpts from an interview with the former Japanese War Minister conducted in 1963. Indeed, these accounts of Hiroshima were rich with conflicting information, bias, persuasive and rhetorical descriptions, dramatic and graphic explanations, narratives, scientific explanations, testimonials, literary devices, and personal experiences. See Appendix A for the complete texts of the sources used.

Instructions for the writing component of the session were deliberately vague in order to enable responses to take a variety of possible forms. Student teachers were given only two tasks: 1) Write an historical account of the bombing of Hiroshima and 2) Explain how you might use the documents in class. Prior to the interviews, students completed questionnaires about their background in history. Questions included: What history classes have you taken? What types of primary source materials have you read in history class? Have you had any research papers in history classes? Describe any research assignments in history and education courses and mention the types of sources used. The purpose of the questionnaires was to explore the student teachers' familiarity with various types of documents, research methods, and forms of writing. In order not to influence the student’s own historical accounts, these questions were posed several weeks prior to the talk aloud/writing sessions.

**Analysis of the Student Teacher Data**

**Rebecca**

Rebecca approached the task of reading the documents most like an historian. Not surprisingly, her session took the longest to complete because she was extremely conscientious and demonstrated a sincere love of history. She was the only student teacher who had both studied primary source documents in a history class and used such materials to write research papers. She generally identified the author of each source in order to determine perspective, potential bias, context, time period, and audience for whom the document was written. Several times after reading various sources, she noted that she would use the documents in a class to discuss distinct opinions and differing historical interpretations. Samples of such remarks include:
(After reading Barton Bernstein and Admiral D. Leahy) I would discuss different historians' views... Historians think differently...

(On Winston Churchill's excerpt) I would talk about different opinions and compare this to earlier sources. Obviously, a different view is presented... He talks about averting "butchery"... remember the U.S. and Britain were wary of Russia and the thought of sending more soldiers to the Pacific... They were not thinking of Japanese civilians... They were thinking of propaganda...

(On Robert Oppenheimer's statement) Again, one needs to look at sources. Obviously, the atomic bomb is very controversial. This is an after-the-fact discussion... Opinions change over time. And, things often get covered up...

(After reading an excerpt from No High Ground) On any of these you must look at who is writing it... Approach it from that direction and get bias from their writing.

Furthermore, Rebecca revealed fairly sophisticated prior knowledge. For example, while reading Ochika Matsuda's recollection of finding her husband's burned, naked, and dead body, Rebecca remarked that Asian culture stresses the importance of covering one's feet, and this fact explained why Ochika commented that her husband had nothing to cover his feet. She also had rich personal experiences on which to draw. All of her family members who lived in New Mexico at the time the bomb was tested subsequently died of cancer, although no one in her family who lived at that time in other parts of the U.S. died of cancer. In addition, Rebecca commented that the type of vocabulary employed by different authors often revealed their sentiments. She called attention particularly to strong imagery, propaganda-type statements, and anti-war description. Because she also was an English major and was seeking teacher certification in both History and English, she impressively called on her background knowledge of writing composition and literature.

Not surprisingly, the historical account of Hiroshima that she wrote was not only informative, but it took an expressive, narrative form. Her account had a clear beginning, middle, and conclusion. She introduced her story by inviting the reader to imagine the immediate sensation of a bomb exploding. She began,

Imagine going about your daily activities and all of a sudden—there is a blinding light. Since you can no longer see—your eyes
have been burnt to a crisp—you can only feel. Feel your eyes sizzling and your skin melting or peeling off. Makes dirt in your contacts and sunburns seem like heaven.

In the body of her narrative, she described events surrounding the dropping of the bomb and the various means by which its creation, use, and implications could be explored. Rebecca granted that, “The sources provide a lot of knowledge—when it [the bombing] happened, what it did, who had differing opinions (and what those opinions were) about it, as well as who helped invent it (i.e. Oppenheimer—The Manhattan Project).” She concluded her composition by explaining how the documents could be used as the basis of a discussion about historical judgment.

Rebecca’s account included inferences to several of the sources she had read, displayed one specific reference, and revealed much evidence of prior knowledge. For example, she mentioned the Enola Gay, the airplane that dropped the bomb, but nowhere in the documents was that aircraft identified. She also referred to the date that the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, but no references to Nagasaki occurred in the source documents. In the development of her composition, she mentioned Machiavelli. “One could say that such means of destruction is inevitable concerning the human condition - however pessimistic and Machiavellian this may seem.” Rebecca also employed emotive language in her account, calling to mind vivid images of “skin melting” and “eyes burning.” She also wrote, “Civilians died in ways so gruesome that even the average psychopath could not even imagine the carnage.” Her narrative did not intend to persuade readers to her perspective about Hiroshima; she acknowledged that the sources provided differing opinions. In fact, she observed that they “could be the basis of a discussion about historical judgment- how it is made, conveyed, and... why.”

Alexa
Alexa’s interview session and writing sample were much shorter than were Rebecca’s. In fact, Alexa’s composition was less than one single spaced typed page, whereas Rebecca’s was twice as long. Although Alexa reported that she had read primary source documents for history classes, she claimed not to have been required to write any research papers, but only short writing assignments based on a few articles. Furthermore, although she previously had taught about Hiroshima to one of her classes, her responses to and analyses of the documents were cursory. For the most part, she ignored the author’s perspective and potential bias as well as the context and time period in which the documents were written. Her comments primarily were reactive to what she read, summaries, or assertions of her agreement with the ‘side’ the document revealed (Wineburg 1991b, p.510). For example, after reading Admiral Leahy’s statement, she remarked, “I can buy this
theory...We just wanted to test the weapon... I am amazed we would drop a weapon we didn’t know much about. It seems irresponsible.”

In addition, she did not contrast any of the documents. In a few instances, she was unclear about the meanings within the documents. For example, after reading Churchill’s excerpt, she remarked,

I am not following what he’s saying...[about a moment’s discussion] Why didn’t we need the Russians? Wasn’t Yalta’s whole point to ask the Russians to step in and help us? I don’t know what he’s saying.

In this example, Alexa struggled with the information because her prior knowledge about Yalta conflicted with the new information presented. Because she could not reconcile the seemingly contradictory information and her prior knowledge was more familiar and salient, she discounted the new material (Woloshyn, Paivio and Pressley, 1994). Furthermore, she was surprised when she read accounts that conflicted with the ‘side’ she expected them to support. For example, after reading an excerpt from Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam (Source 12), she said, “I am surprised Eisenhower said that. The Japanese were going to surrender. I am used to hearing the stock argument that we had to drop the bomb.” However, Alexa did not note the context, time period, and potential bias of the author. Of significance is that Eisenhower made his remarks twenty years after the dropping of the bomb, and that they were incorporated in a secondary source written by historian Gar Alperovitz (1965). Most importantly, Alexa could have but failed to wonder about Eisenhower’s possible reasons and motives for expressing his opinion at the time.

Alexa’s written account reflected similar patterns of thinking as did her think aloud remarks. She remained concerned about one of two sides: bad guys and good guys. Her bad guys, including Truman, made “benign” arguments “that the bomb ended World War Two and ultimately saved lives.” On the other hand, her good guys, particularly the scientists, advised against dropping the bomb. She wrote, “Scientist[s] advised against it because we were still studying the bomb, so why did we drop it?” Ironically, she assumed that all “the scientists” opposed dropping the bomb, but the document upon which she based this assertion surveyed only seven atomic scientists at the Chicago atomic laboratory, and this information was reported in a secondary source written in 1961. She then set forth the rest of the two-sided argument until she concluded that, the major bad guy was the U.S:

Overall, I think the bomb was irresponsible because we made thousands of innocent people suffer... from a weapon we didn’t
know enough about...I don't think our intentions were so altruistic as 'millions of lives will be saved.'

Alexa clearly is one of many Americans who are secure in their "good guy, bad guy" thinking about the Hiroshima bombing. The 1994 controversy about the Enola Gay exhibit at the Smithsonian remains fresh (e.g., Hogan, 1996; Levstik, 1996). American history is filled with "images" of diametrical opposites in conflict (e.g., Democrats vs. Republicans, North vs. South, Liberty vs. Slavery, Rush Limbaugh vs. Bill Clinton, Hawks vs. Doves). On the other hand, history cannot be reduced to simplistic polar opposition; such a rendering is too simplistic to account for the complexity of historical reality.

Alexa employed a persuasive rhetorical style in her composition. She attempted to convince the reader of her conviction that "our intentions were [not] so altruistic." She contended,

The argument goes that the Japanese would never have surrendered because their culture is against surrendering. I think people would have given up eventually. Also—why did we drop two bombs? We have correspondence from the emperor that he wanted to surrender, but we proceeded anyway. Were we impatient?

Her approach was direct and she only sparingly used expressive language. Her historical account was presented in one long rambling paragraph rather than being constructed with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. She made only one direct reference to a source although, in at least seven instances, readers reasonably can infer that she "used" evidence from other documents. Her single direct reference noted the condition of Ochika's husband (a Japanese woman who recalled her painful memory of her husband's death) related in Source 2 (Appendix A). Inferences that information she used derived from the available documents include; mention of Truman's position on the bombing (Source 4), reference to the scientists who opposed the bombing (Source 11), and discussion of the Japanese emperor's desire to end the war (Source 15).

Although Alexa advocated her personal convictions about the bombing, she believed that her students should determine their own position because of "ambiguities and complexities" surrounding the bombing of Hiroshima. Alexa wrote, "I wouldn't just teach the material because there are so many ambiguities and uncertainties that I'd rather the students make up their own minds." Interestingly, she acknowledged the complex nature of this material, even as her historical account, partly perhaps because it took a persuasive form, ignored the contradictions.
Initially, Julie expressed concern that her middle school students would not be able to deal with some of the graphic descriptions of how the atomic bomb physically affected human bodies. Neither of the high school student teachers expressed this concern. Julie knew of one teacher who permitted students to excuse themselves from viewing photographs of Nazi war atrocities. Nevertheless, Julie thought that pictures from Hiroshima might be better than “gross” written explanations which might “shock” students. However, she believed that the students should relate the bombing to their personal experiences. She suggested that students could write about how they would feel if a bomb hit their city. Students might explain the difficulty of recovery if transportation and medical services suddenly were eliminated. Additionally, she thought her students might relate to the seventh grade Japanese student’s eyewitness account of the bombing (Source 1).

In a few instances, Julie expressed confusion about a particular document she read or a lack of understanding about why a source was presented. For example, after reading an excerpt from Truman’s memoirs in which he expressed that an invasion of Japan “might cost half a million lives,” Julie said, “I wonder why did he go through with it [the dropping of the bomb] if millions of lives were lost.” In another case, after reading an excerpt from Churchill’s book, she remarked that she did not know why he referred to the Russians. After she read subsequent sources, she stated that the “U.S. wanted to be above Russia.” Despite a few minor uncertainties, Julie used the sources to construct a mental model of the circumstances surrounding the bombing of Hiroshima.

Similar to that of Alexa, Julie’s mental model of the Hiroshima bombing consisted of a two-sided argument. She sought to determine which position a particular document supported. However, Julie did not always commit herself to one of the positions. For example, after reading Admiral Leahy’s statement, Julie noted, “I agree. The bomb wasn’t necessary. I think the Japanese were about to surrender.” On the other hand, she revealed prior knowledge of events in her comment, “I think the bomb was more, I guess, a retaliation for Pearl Harbor.” A similar unwillingness to commit to a position but two-sided perspective about the bombing also appeared in her written essay. Julie noted,

Although American lives may have been saved, the cost to the Japanese and future generations was much more... Hiroshima became a test site for the A-bomb as well as a retaliation from angry people who still held a grudge over Pearl Harbor.
She delineated this polemic line of thinking and her equivocal stance even further after she read an excerpt from a biography of Truman (Source 10). She commented,

He [Truman] is justifying dropping the bomb... You can usually show both sides of an argument. It is good for kids to see both sides. He might have a point about a lot of American soldiers dying, but then he might not have [a point].

In her essay, she concluded by noting that students should understand that, “The U. S. is not always the good guy trying to keep the peace.”

After reading a majority of the sources, Julie expressed concern that most of the documents she had read were against the dropping of the atomic bomb. She thought she would need to find other sources other than the President’s perspective, in order to create a more balanced presentation to students. Apparently, she was either unmindful of or believed that “pro-bomb” sentiments in the sources were not strong enough or were too indirect. Such perspectives were expressed in historian Bernstein’s argument (Source 13) that Germany and Japan surely would have used the bomb if either country had possessed the technological capability, in Churchill’s support for use of the bomb (Source 7), and in Arthur Zich’s description of the Japanese brutalities in the prisoner-of-war camps (Source 8).

Julie’s written account was similar to Alexa’s essay in that she made several inferential references, but only one direct reference to a specific document. Julie devoted only one paragraph consisting of eleven sentences to historical narration. She focused twice as much attention on how she would use the documents in class. In this second portion of her essay, Julie wrote six shorter paragraphs about possible instructional applications. Perhaps she felt more comfortable to state how she would use the documents than to construct an historical account. In her historical narration, however, she reiterated the position that Hiroshima was a retaliation for Pearl Harbor which she expressed in her think aloud session.

Unlike the other student teachers’ writing samples, Julie expressed several general and unsubstantiated claims. She made a few assertions, but, even then, failed to provide supporting evidence. For example, she wrote:

The American government with Truman as its leader never really thoroughly thought about the lasting consequences of a weapon that was hardly tested. Most of the people of the U.S. did not know the true story of the War.

She reasonably should have explained what she meant be the ‘true story’ and how she knew that most Americans were unfamiliar with it. Furthermore, she either had conflicting prior knowledge, misunderstood,
or misinterpreted Gar Alperovitz' claim (Source 12) about Truman’s probable knowledge of intercepted cables that revealed the Japanese Emperor’s desire to end the war. She claimed:

Truman heard advice from many different people in his government and ignored what was said. He received messages of surrender from Japan but ignored those.

How did she know Truman ignored advice he was offered? Did he ignore all advice or accept only some advice? She needed to substantiate her statement that Truman received messages of surrender or to warrant her claim. Historian Gar Alperovitz said, “It was impossible to determine whether President Truman saw every one of the intercepted cables,” but Alperovitz believed Truman knew about the important ones. Clearly, Julie needed to support her general claims with evidence.

Julie’s explanation of how she would use the documents read like a list of objectives from a lesson plan. She answered the typical focus question, what will students be able to do after having completed the lesson? Like the other student teachers, Julie expressed her desire that students have an open discussion from which they could form their own opinions about the Hiroshima bombing issue.

**Discussion**

Several trends emerged from the historical writing and thinking of all three student teachers. Although Rebecca’s work clearly was the most distinguished of the three, all the essays revealed inexperience with the process of historical inquiry and writing. For example, each student made only a single direct reference to one of the sixteen sources, even though they were told explicitly that they could cite sources simply by putting the identification number of the source in parenthesis after a sentence. Rebecca referenced the Oppenheimer excerpt (Source 9), whereas both Julie and Alexa referenced the Kanda excerpt (Source 2). Julie’s lack of references created a significant problem because she asserted general claims in the absence of evidence to support them. Consequently, her insupportable statements appeared to be historically inaccurate. Had she been aware of her need to reference statements and to furnish supporting evidence, she might have qualified her general claims and, thereby, written a more accurate narrative.

Very importantly, the student teachers often failed to consider the context or the time period in which a document was written. Rebecca was the only one of the three to employ a ‘sourcing heuristic,’ the practice of reading the source of a document before reading the actual text” (Wineburg, 1991b, p. 510). The others almost never used this technique in the talk.
aloud sessions. Even so, Rebecca looked first for the source less than forty percent of the time, while the historians in Wineburg's study used this technique (98%) almost all the time (1991b). The sourcing heuristic helped historians evaluate the credibility of information and analyze the perspective presented. These student teachers clearly had little or no practice implementing this technique.

Consequently, evidence of the student teacher's reliance on documents was presented as factual rather than analytic. For example, Julie wrote, "Truman heard advice from many different people in his government and ignored what was said." Aside from her statement needing qualification and reference, she did not consider the context or perspective of the historian who wrote the information upon which she based her conclusions. Presumably she meant that Truman ignored the recommendations of the seven atomic scientists in the Metallurgical Laboratory in Chicago who favored demonstration of the bomb rather than an unannounced attack (Source 11). She read about the scientists' recommendations in Knebel and Bailey's book, *No High Ground*. That title alone, suggests the authors' perspective and interpretation of the bombing. Also important to consider is that this book was published in 1961 during the height of the Cold War. Julie, however, accepted Knebel and Bailey's account as strictly factual and falsely extrapolated that Truman ignored the advice he received. She failed to consider that Truman may have read the scientists' report and disagreed with their recommendations. Similarly, Alexa wrote that Truman took the position, "that the bomb ended WWII and ultimately saved lives." However, she did not consider when and why Truman would advance such claims.

Additionally, both Alexa's and Julie's historical thinking and writing tended to focus on which "side" a document supported rather than to compare and contrast individual sources. Their view of history appeared to stress a two-sided polemic model rather than a search for multi-dimensional, complex perspectives. Although Alexa acknowledged, "There are many different accounts of why we dropped the bomb," she evaluated which 'camp' each source fit into and claimed, "The most benign is that the bomb ended the war and saved many lives." Julie grouped Truman with "the bad guys" as she wrote that students should be sure to, "understand that someone like Truman, a U.S. President, has tendencies toward wrong doing." Simplified historical accounts certainly are easier to understand for students who are inexperienced in learning about the complexity inherent in historical events. More research should investigate this idea.

Several important factors apparently influenced the student teachers' historical thinking and writing. First and most obviously, they lacked familiarity with the processes of historical inquiry and writing. These student teachers had little experience in the use of primary sources to create an historical account. Only Rebecca admitted some experience in this respect, but
even she was tentative about her familiarity with the use of documents in
the construction of an historical narrative because she had written only one
such paper, a narrative about her family history. Both Julie and Alexa re-
ported that they had not written research papers either in the history or
education courses they had taken. For these student teachers, their univer-
sity and high school history courses typically featured teacher lectures and
students listening and recalling on tests what they had memorized (e.g.,
Levstik, 1996; Greene, 1994).

A second factor that likely affected the student teachers' historical
thinking and writing was their prior knowledge about the Hiroshima
bombing. All three student teachers revealed evidence some prior knowl-
edge by their use of information in their written accounts that was absent
from the provided sources. For example, Rebecca wrote, "on August 6,
1945, the 'Enola Gay' made its sojourn to Hiroshima, Japan," and nowhere
in the documents was the name of the plane revealed. They combined
their prior knowledge with some new information to construct their his-
torical accounts. This construction was reflected in their think aloud pro-
tocols. However, prior knowledge did not always enhance these students'
understanding. In a few instances in which prior knowledge conflicted
with new information, their understanding was obstructed. Both Alexa
and Julie admitted their confusion at points while reading the documents.
Alexa noted that she was "not following what he's [Churchill] saying" and
Julie said that she was unclear why Churchill referred to the Rus-
sians. Indeed, in their reading research, Woloshyn, Paivio and Pressley
(1994) found that when information was inconsistent with students' prior
knowledge, their long term learning was inhibited more than when stu-
dents simply learned new information.

In addition, the three student teachers had difficulty creating com-
plex mental models which accommodated conflicting information. Rather
than incorporate multiple perspectives, they tended to choose a simple
explanation for the dropping of the bomb despite their expressed desire
for open discussion in the classroom. All three mentioned this sentiment
in their written essays. For example, Rebecca noted,

People will probably realize that they may never reach a con-
sensus—but what possibilities for a discussion! And, everyone
can/will get involved in this way. Also, it gives a chance for
everyone to voice their opinion- and controversial topics such
as this invite a multitude of opinions.

Alexa also wanted students to "make up their own minds," and Julie
wrote that students would "discuss openly about what they wrote." Yet,
their historical narratives did not reflect multiple perspectives; they tended
to adopt a singular rationale. Alexa argued that "the bomb was irrespon-
sible” and Julie maintained that “Hiroshima was a tragedy in America’s history that would leave a black spot on the U.S. forever.” The student teachers’ resultant single line of reasoning was similar to another study in which students intentionally were given several texts containing contradictory information, but whose mental structures showed no gains after reading two or more texts (Stahl, et al., 1996). These researchers concluded that reading multiple texts did not enhance student historical understanding because, first, students lacked familiarity with such a task and, second, they chose to ignore conflicting information. Both Julie and Alexa seemed especially to ignore evidence to the contrary when they constructed their historical accounts of the Hiroshima bombing.

Third, students’ familiarity with various literary forms and techniques affected the type of prose they composed. All three wrote strikingly different essays. Rebecca’s account read most like a descriptive historical narrative. Alexa’s was a persuasive essay. Julie’s account took the form of a lesson plan with stated objectives. For example, Julie wrote,

First, students can see the power and destruction caused by advances in technology... Second, students will see and understand how a country and government functions during wartime... Third, use these documents and get students thinking about the Japanese.

Rebecca employed the most descriptive words in her essay. Also, she employed the most clearly delineated organizational structure which included an introduction, body, and conclusion. The other two essays were not as well organized and followed the task directions straight forwardly, almost as a test response. Perhaps these student teachers wrote so directly because they sought to follow the instructions precisely. As Greene (1984) has observed, “When students read and write they invoke knowledge about discourse, their beliefs about writing in school” which can affect the goals they set in planning to write (p. 140).

Finally, the nature of the assignment most certainly impacted the manner in which student teachers engaged the writing task. Directions intentionally were vague in order to encourage a range of possibilities in their construction of an historical account of the bombing of Hiroshima. Had the student teachers been given narrowly focused directions, their writing might have differed significantly. For example, the instructions to the students might have read: Write a three to five page report with an introduction, body and conclusion in which at least five sources are directly referenced. In the report, provide a persuasive argument in which you support why the United States was justified in dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Given this assignment, certainly, the student teachers’ written product would have been entirely different. In other words,
the nature of the task a writer is assigned affects the manner in which writers organize and select information (Greene, 1994).

Perhaps, also, the student teachers were discomforted with the assignment to write an historical account of a clearly controversial subject. For many Americans, Hiroshima evokes strong sentiments. Powerful cultural myths persist which may have constrained the student teachers’ full use of the sources that they examined. Their potential discomfort may explain why these student teachers’ historical accounts tended to be shorter than their descriptions of how they would use such documents in the classroom. On the other hand, in their descriptions of how they would use the sources, they may have considered themselves to be on “safe ground”. Clearly, no right or wrong way exists to use these documents. All three individuals asserted their wish that students form their own opinions and remain free to read all accounts, with the possible exception of the few Julie thought might be age inappropriate.

Several methodological problems emerged during the conduct of this research. One consideration that should be accounted for the analysis of the student teachers’ written and verbal explanations was that the time allowed to think and to write was too short. Students wrote only a first draft of their thoughts and ideas. Had they been given opportunities for revision, their written essays likely would have been more refined and, possibly, longer.

Another problem was that each of these student teachers did not have extensive prior information about the bombing of Hiroshima. Clearly, Rebecca’s knowledge of Hiroshima was more sophisticated than that of both Julie and Alexa. Considering these circumstances, not surprisingly, Julie and Alexa encountered more difficulty with the writing task than did Rebecca.

Using historians’ thinking as a kind of criterion for the assessment of student teachers’ historical thinking represents an unresolved difficulty. Certainly, the goals of the student teachers differ from that of historians. Historians routinely read documents in order to construct history. Still, their methodology and purposes are not uniform. Furthermore, histories appropriately represent multiple genres and diverse audiences. Some history, for example, is written for the New York Times best seller list, whereas some is written for a very limited academic community. Some historical pieces are persuasive and others mainly are more descriptive. Teachers in schools, on the other hand, may look at historical documents for content, interest, and usefulness in the classroom. Even teachers’ purposes are not uniform. Nonetheless, although intents and purposes may differ among and between school history teachers and historians, teachers’ understanding of the roles of historians, their derivations of meaning, judgments and appreciation of history’s multiple genres can only enhance history instruction.
Conclusions

Student teachers of history likely would benefit from more systematic and deliberate engagement and practice with historical thinking and writing in their history courses. Otherwise, history may well remain for teachers and their students alike, simple accumulations of facts, purportedly bearing objective truth, in which, as Samuel Johnson claimed, little need exists either for great ability or imagination.

In both history and social studies education courses, furthermore, teacher candidates should encounter frequently multiple perspectives as well as writing assignments in which they must construct historical narratives using both primary and secondary sources. Such recommendations certainly are practicable. Future history teachers also should have opportunities to become familiar with archival evidence. Assignments can be devised by which history teacher candidates examine source documents, such as ones archived in the Library of Congress and in numerous university, and state and local historical institutions throughout the country. Then, teacher candidates should consider how they might use these documents in their own teaching. Certainly, the internet has increased the accessibility of library holdings. With increased opportunity and practice, social studies teacher candidates likely will come to enjoy the process of constructing history, rather than being alienated by contradictory information. In addition, their understanding that history involves interpretation will also be enhanced.

Another approach to increasing student teachers' familiarity with historical thinking is the desirable coordination between the work of history professors and history teacher educators. At present, the gap between subject matter knowledge and teaching methodology is unnecessarily wide. In a course taught by professors of both disciplines, students could practice the "sourcing heuristic" in their examination of documents and also learn about strategies for the incorporation of these documents into classroom instruction. One hundred years ago, historians demonstrated active interest in the teaching of history by their participation on committees which made recommendations to secondary and elementary schools (See, the National Education Association's Report of the Committee on Secondary School Studies, The Study of History in the Schools Report to the American Historical Association by the Committee of Seven, and The Study of History in the Secondary Schools: Report to the American Historical Association by the Committee of Five). The history of history education provides insights about the possible relationship of these fields once again.

Another implication holds that student teachers need to be taught how to develop a greater personal awareness of their prior knowledge and how to accommodate new information when it conflicts with knowledge previously learned. Before learning about an historical topic, stu-
dent teachers’ prior knowledge could be assessed. To facilitate understanding, complex mental models which accommodate conflicting information could be presented and analyzed. Student teachers might also explore and write various forms of historical writing, such as a biographical piece, a descriptive narrative, a persuasive essay, and, even, a general textbook account. In addition, professors and students could examine the power and impact of the language used for both assignments and student projects.

Of course, additional research on student teachers’ historical thinking and writing should be undertaken. Certainly, some of this research should employ an expanded number of student teachers. In addition, explorations of the historical content of student teachers’ preparation appears critical to the formulation of improved history teacher education programs. If student teachers of history engage more frequently in the process of historical inquiry and writing, they should be more likely to implement such practices when they become certified classroom teachers. Although the goals of student teachers may differ from those of the historian, history teacher candidates can enrich their courses as they develop their own expanded abilities to think and write historically.

**Appendix A**

**Source Materials**

**SOURCE 1**

Although stunned by the ferocity of the explosion, 7th Grade student Osamu Kataoka, believed that the bomb had only affected an isolated part of the city. But, as he walked with his friends he realized...

> everything was on fire, no matter how far we went. There was brutally smashed house after house, all burning. There were figures that hardly looked human in the midst of it...

> Two of my friends who had been working at Zakoba-cho hung on to my arms. The surface of their bodies had been burned all over, and their skin had peeled off and was dangling loose from their elbows like the sleeves of a kimono. Their bodies slippery and red, they clung to my weak body. Their eyes were gone, and they could not see anything.

**SOURCE 2**

Ochika Matsuda recalls the painful memory of her husband’s death:

> I heard that my husband had been found dead in the River Motoyaasu. Mr. Matsuda from Nakachoshi found him and brought him back by boat. Just like Yayoi had said, he wasn’t breathing at all...
They'd laid my husband out on the bare boards of one of the rooms in the barn. He was naked and didn't even have anything on his feet. His whole body was burned terribly. His skin was hanging off him in shreds. His peeled skin lay in a pile at his feet. You could hardly bear to look at his charred and swollen face. It was so awful, it broke my heart. You couldn’t imagine it was the same person who’d gone off, saying: 'I'll be back early today...”

SOURCE 3

Extract from Japanese Army manual issued during the Second World War.

“Bear in mind the fact that to be captured is a disgrace to the Army. Also your parents and family will never be able to hold up their heads again. Always save the last bullet for yourself.”

SOURCE 4

“All of us realized that the fighting would be fierce and the losses heavy... General Marshall told me that it might cost half a million lives.”

SOURCE 5

“A redefinition of morality was a product of World War II, which included such barbarities as Germany’s systematic murder of six million Jews and Japan’s rape of Nanking... By 1945 there were few moral restraints left in what had become virtually total war... In that new moral climate, any nation that had the A-bomb would probably have used it against enemy peoples. British leaders as well as Joseph Stalin endorsed the act. Germany and Japan’s leaders surely would have used it against cities. America was not morally unique—just technologically exceptional.”

SOURCE 6

Admiral D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to President Truman, commenting in 1945.

“It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon was of no material help in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and were ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful use of conventional bombing. The scientists and others wanted to make this test because of the vast sums that had been spent on this project.”

SOURCE 7

“At any rate, there was never a moment’s discussion as to whether the atomic bomb should be used or not. To avert a vast, indefinite butchery, to bring the war to an end, to give peace to the world, to lay healing hands upon its tormented peoples by a manifestation of overwhelming power at the cost of a few explosions, seemed, after all our toils and perils, a miracle of deliverance...
Moreover, we should not need the Russians... We had no need to ask favours of them.”

**SOURCE 8**

“In all, Japan maintained about 300 prisoner-of-war camps... In Makassar, where a number of survivors of the Battle of the Java Sea were imprisoned, the men were routinely beaten with iron pipes, as many as 200 blows per beating, enough to reduce human flesh to a pulp. On the deck of a ship bound for Shanghai, five American prisoners from Wake Island were decapitated without any explanation whatever.”

**SOURCE 9**

Senate Hearing, 1954. Robert Oppenheimer, Director of the Manhattan Project being questioned.

Question: “Wasn’t there a particular effort to produce a bomb before the Potsdam Conference?”

Answer: “It was the intention of the President to say something about this to the Russians. The President said no more than that we had a new weapon which we planned to use in Japan, and it was very powerful. We were under incredible pressure to get it done before the Potsdam conference.”

**SOURCE 10**

“If there was one subject on which Mr. Truman was not going to have any second thoughts, it was the Bomb. If he’d said it once, he said it a hundred times, almost always in the same words. The Bomb had ended the War. If we had to invade Japan, half a million soldiers on both sides would have been killed and a million more ‘would have been maimed for life.’”

**SOURCE 11**

“(On June 4, 1945) at the Metallurgical Lab in Chicago, seven atomic scientists met under the chairmanship of [James O.] Franck in search of a method to prevent use of the bomb against Japan... Their report read in part:

‘We believe that... an early unannounced attack against Japan inadvisable. If the United States were to be the first to release this new means of indiscriminate destruction upon mankind, she would sacrifice public support throughout the world, precipitate the race for armaments, and prejudice the possibility of reaching an international agreement on the future control of such weapons. Much more favorable conditions could be created if nuclear bombs were first revealed to the world by a demonstration in an appropriately selected uninhabited area.’”

**SOURCE 12**
"My own view is that presently available evidence shows that the atomic bomb was not needed to end the war or to save lives- and that this was understood by American leaders at the time. General Eisenhower has recently recalled that in mid-1945 he expressed a similar opinion to the Secretary of War: 'I told him I was against it on two counts. First, the Japanese were ready to surrender and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing. Second, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon...''

SOURCE 13

"The American aim was to avoid, if possible, the November 1 invasion, which would involve about 767,000 troops, at a possible cost of 31,000 casualties in the first 30 days and a total estimated American death toll of about 25,000... In the spring and summer of 1945, no American leader believed- as some falsely later claimed- that they planned to use the A-bomb to save half a million Americans.

SOURCE 14
Excerpt from an interview with the Secretary to the Japanese War Minister conducted in 1963.

"We thought we would be able to defeat the Americans on the first landing attack. But if the Americans launched a second or third attack, first our food supply would run out, then our weapons. The Americans could have won without using atomic bombs."

SOURCE 15

Historian Gar Alperovitz in his book suggests that the Japanese were ready, through negotiations with the Russians, to reach a peace agreement with the Allies in mid-July 1945.

"American intercepts of cables between Tokyo and the Japanese ambassador in Moscow confirmed the 'real evidence' that the Emperor, the one person all agreed could end the war... wished to end the war... It is impossible to determine whether President Truman saw every one of the intercepted cables. That he surely was familiar with the contents of the most important ones cannot be doubted."

SOURCE 16

August 6, 1945

The bomb exploded in the air about 600 meters above the city.

At the moment of explosion, a fireball with a temperature of several million degrees centigrade and an atmospheric pressure of several hundrst thousand bars was formed at the burst point. The fireball rapidly expanded to a sphere with a maximum radius of about 230 meters, emitted particularly strong thermal rays until three seconds after the explosion, and continued to shine for about ten seconds. Because of the thermal rays, the temperature of the hypocenter [the surface position directly beneath the center of the nuclear explosion] is thought to have risen to 3,000-4,000 degrees centigrade — far higher than the temperature at which iron melts, 1,550 degrees centigrade.
The strong expansive power of the fireball produced what is known as a shock wave, followed by a high-speed wind...

Buildings were smashed to pieces and incinerated by the blast and thermal rays, and it was the great quantities of dust from the destroyed buildings, carried by the winds, that cast the city into pitch-darkness just after the bombing.

The heat at ground zero was so intense that vital organs were vaporized and death was almost instantaneous. Burns from thermal rays caused damage to deep tissues. Many people suffered from both primary thermal burns and secondary burns from the fires caused by the bomb’s intense heat. Victims were trapped beneath wooden structures that collapsed from the blast or experienced trauma (bruises, cuts, and fractures) from flying debris. These wounds became severely infected because of the decrease in resistance secondary to radiation exposure.

The bomb’s initial radiation, emitted within one minute of the explosion...

Throughout the day, a tower-shaped cloud hung over the city, and from 9:00 in the morning until 4:00 in the afternoon “black rain” fell “in large, muddy, sticky, pitch-black drops, coarse enough to give pain to the naked bombing victims.”...

Ninety percent of Hiroshima’s physical structures (most of which were wooden) were destroyed by the blast effect and firestorm. Police, fire, communications, transportation, and medical services, essential for the care of survivors, were rendered useless. Ninety percent of medical personnel were dead or disabled; eighteen emergency hospitals and thirty-two first aid clinics were destroyed...

In corpses near ground zero the eyeballs were blown outside their heads. The skin was a black-tinged yellowish brown, and very dry; it was clear that these persons had died in agony. Whether they were incinerated instantly by the intense heat, or were crushed by the immense blast force, theirs was an instant death from a sudden flash and blast of proportions beyond imagination.

References


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Democracy, Social Studies, and Diversity in the Elementary School Classroom: The Progressive Ideas of Alice Miel

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Abstract
Alice Miel, a nationally prominent curriculum development scholar-practitioner at Teachers College from 1942-1971, has been overlooked in research on the evolution of social studies education. This study examines her contributions to the practice and theory of children's democratic social learning and views her work as historical antecedent to current research on diversity in the social studies and the elementary school classroom. Miel advocated the development of democratic behavior as the ultimate goal of schooling. She applied theories of social learning and democratic principles and processes to the school curriculum. Her research on the importance of social and cultural learning, especially for postwar suburban children, revealed her conviction that human diversity was a proper subject for the curriculum in a democratic society. She believed that children must be educated to deal fairly and realistically with questions of social justice, civil rights, national unity, and international peace. She argued that, at the time, there was no more urgent business in American schools.

Alice Miel, a nationally prominent curriculum development scholar-practitioner at Teachers College for some three decades, frequently has been overlooked in the research on the nature and evolution of the curriculum field and on the history of American education since the end of World War Two. Furthermore, her contributions have been overlooked even as attention to women in the curriculum field and in educational history has risen. This study specifically examines her contributions to the practice and theory of children's democratic social learning and views her work as historical antecedent to current research on diversity in the social studies and the elementary school classroom in general.

This manuscript is based on a 1995 dissertation completed at The University of Texas at Austin, largely supported by a Doctoral Research Fellowship from the Spencer Foundation/American Educational Research Association.
Study of Miel's own influence on education and her role in the larger historical context, almost thirty years later, offers a perspective on the past that, according to Kliebard and Franklin (1983), is "most appropriate...for reaching conclusions about curriculum thought and, in a more limited way, curriculum practice" (p. 138). They emphasize the significance of research that focuses on "the proposals of leaders in education, [which is] unquestionably helpful in gaining a perspective on the development of curriculum thought" (p. 138). Prominent curriculum leaders may not necessarily influence the actual school curriculum, but they may be viewed as "barometers of the direction the school curriculum was taking" (p. 138). Miel's career offers a valuable source of knowledge and deeper understanding about an important span of historical time in American schooling.

In a broader context, this study is informed by aspects and issues of curriculum history. According to Kliebard (1992), for example, curriculum history often deals with the relationship between social change and changing ideas and contains significant social and cultural artifacts of knowledge that have become embodied in the curriculum of schools. Kliebard also asserts that curriculum history properly emphasizes the importance of the intellectual and historical context of educational reforms taking place in society and illuminates the variety of ways in which curriculum is "made." Cuban (1992) concurs with this view, explaining that every effort to alter the intended or the taught curriculum must contend with the past. The accumulated weight of historical antecedents, in the form of previous innovations and mandates that become embedded in the school curriculum, must be addressed by each new generation of "reformers." Finally, Davis (1976) characterizes curriculum history as a reflective enterprise for curriculum workers that contributes to their understanding of present courses of study and of the professional field by lending a framework for thoughtful deliberation of what the schools should teach. Miel's work may be understood as "artifact" of curriculum history and as mindful reflection, situated within a particular social and historical context, on curricular meanings and processes.

Several themes emerge readily in Miel's body of work. First, Miel advocated democratic ideals and the development of democratic behavior as the ultimate goal of schooling. Second, and to that end, she applied theories of social learning and democratic principles and processes to various aspects of the school curriculum. Third, she focused on the social learning environment of children in schools and articulated aspects of cooperative learning and other democratic procedures available to teachers. Fourth, she applied her ideas about a democratic social learning environment to specific areas of the curriculum, particularly to the social studies and to the elementary school curriculum as a whole.

One final point must be made about historical interpretation of Miel's work. Above all, Miel's was a scholarship of the reflective, practical, and
personal that she sought to make highly relevant and accessible to school practitioners and to her students. However, much of the historical and philosophical context of her scholarship often cannot be documented in conventional ways. Miel often did not document in footnotes, memos, journals, and recorded conversations the nature of the context in which she lived, taught, and worked. Miel was an activist and intellectual who read widely, internalized many of the prominent ideas of her day, reflected these in her teaching and research, and generated practical ideas on how these might apply to elementary schools. The fact that she was not a textual scholar of, for example, Dewey, Counts, Kilpatrick, or Myrdal and did not always explicitly reference their work is not evidence that she was unaware of their impact, nor is it evidence that she did not understand their major points. Indeed, she extended some of these ideas into the classroom in highly accessible language. However, it must be acknowledged that she did not footnote extensively in many of her published articles; one must simply infer from reading her work and through knowledge of the context of her career at Teachers College, her professional relationships, and her activism in education, that she knew a great deal both inside and outside the world of education. When possible, in this study, reference will be made to contextual issues that likely influenced her thinking.

**An Overview of Miel's Career**

Miel's curricular interests and advocacies came to fruition in the context of Teachers College. One of only a handful of doctoral students supervised by Hollis L. Caswell there, Miel went on to a fruitful academic career as a professor there from 1942-1971 and was head of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching from 1960-1967. Her teaching and writings focused on democratic curriculum development and policy in local schools (e.g., *Changing the Curriculum: A Social Process*, 1946); social studies education (e.g., *More Than Social Studies: A View of Social Learning in the Elementary School*, with Peggy Brogan, 1957); and children's social and democratic values (e.g., *Children's Social Learning*, with Edna Ambrose, 1958). She was also involved in the action research movement of the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., *Cooperative Procedures in Learning*, 1952).

Miel's career at Teachers College spanned the latter years of the College's preeminence as the "intellectual crossroads" of the progressive education movement under Dean James Earl Russell (Cremin, 1961, p. 175). Her career also spanned the movement's alleged decline and disarray in the 1950s as the main target of conservatives who attacked progressive philosophy and demanded a return to the "basics" of schooling. In Miel's last decade at Teachers College, the national mood shifted again in the 1960s when Silberman and other humanist educators decried confor-
mity and rigidity in school curricula and wanted to return the focus of education to the needs of individual learners (Zilversmit, 1993).

Besides her career in academia and her major research contributions, Miel's involvement in and service to the curriculum field beyond Teachers College was distinguished. She was one of the early presidents of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (1953-54). In the 1970s, she became a guiding influence in the founding of the World Council on Curriculum and Instruction (WCCI). The establishment of the WCCI was a natural outgrowth of her interest in improved curricula for all children and her work with doctoral students from all over the world. In addition, she played an active part in the Association for Childhood Education, International (ACEI), for several years. One of the distinguishing features of her career was her advocacy of global understanding through cooperation in international educational activities.

Beginnings of Miel's Career in Education

This study begins its visitation of the curriculum scene in which Miel played a prominent role by examining her early years and formative experiences. The progressive movement in education emerges as the strong undercurrent in her story.

After completing normal school and then graduating from the University of Michigan, Miel taught social studies and Latin in Michigan public schools from 1924 through 1936. During her Ann Arbor years, Miel collaborated with her principal, G. Robert Koopman, and other colleagues on several curriculum projects. One of these projects yielded a junior high social studies curriculum guide, Helping Children Experience the Realities of the Social Order: Social Studies in the Public Schools of Ann Arbor, Michigan (Koopman et al., 1933). This guide reflected the awakening concern of Koopman, Miel, and their colleagues about the effects of the Great Depression on society and the schools, as well as their emerging belief that "the breakdown in our social, economic, and political structure has brought into serious question the objectives and purposes which have dominated public education during the past quarter century" (p. iii). Incorporating the ideas of Dewey, Rugg, Kilpatrick, and Shumaker, Miel and her colleagues demonstrated their conviction that the school curriculum must be modified to emphasize the study of contemporary personal and social problems, as well as the knowledge that students would need to fashion solutions to these problems.

A landmark experience for Miel was a 1936 summer session at Ohio State University with Laura Zirbes, a prominent figure in the field of elementary education, and with Ralph Tyler, who was in the midst of his evaluation work on the Progressive Education Association's (PEA) Eight-Year Study of the progressive curriculum (Tanner and Tanner, 1990, 1995;
Schubert, 1986). She was particularly impressed by this experience because her normal school and university education had equipped her solely with knowledge about the subjects she would teach in high school. Neither the normal school curriculum nor her University of Michigan courses addressed the nature of children and how they learned. She left with a commitment to the idea of providing for children’s individual differences.

"Child-centered" progressive education during the late 1930s, according to Cremin (1961), had become, for all intents and purposes, the conventional wisdom in American educational thought and practice. Miel moved into this company in the early years of her career in education. During this late Depression period, progressive education was also at a crucial crossroads. A 1938 Time cover story perhaps overstated its conclusion that no American school had completely escaped the progressive influence. Clearly, not all American educators embraced these ideas, and few became passionate advocates of progressivism in education. Many teachers likely continued to teach in conventional ways (e.g., Cuban, 1984; Davis, 1976). "Schoolmen" may have, as Cremin believed, embraced progressivism because it was "good politics" (Cremin, 1961, p. 324). However, they likely simply adopted or borrowed liberally from the rhetoric of contemporary progressive reform. On the other hand, "both within the movement and without, the more perceptive already realized that despite apparent successes, something of a crisis was brewing," according to Cremin (1961, p. 325). Bode was especially prophetic about internal divisions within the progressive movement and about the fate of the movement as it came to a parting of the ways in the 1940s (1938, p. 43-44).

At this time of transition for the progressive education movement, the locus of Miel’s story began to shift to Teachers College, where it would remain for the next three decades. At the College, she became more deeply involved in progressive ideas, even as the movement itself began to wane.

Miel at Teachers College, 1942-1971: An Overview

Miel arrived at Teachers College, Columbia University, in the fall of 1942. When she completed her doctoral studies there in 1944, she joined the faculty and remained until her retirement in 1971. By the time Miel arrived at Teachers College, the institution had secured its position as the "intellectual crossroads" of the progressive education movement (Cremin, 1961, p. 175). Teachers College professor George Counts' Dare the School Build a New Social Order? (1932) informed Miel’s thinking about the role of the school in society. Counts argued that if teachers were truly to educate, they could not focus exclusively on the child; rather, he asserted that they would have to attend much more to the social matrix in which education takes place and play an essential role in articulating desirable goals for society (Counts, 1932). In addition, Harold Rugg’s foundations course im-
pressed Miel because of his views on the social role of schools, which he believed should be broadened through organization of the curriculum around real social problems (Miel, 1994; Kliebard, 1986).

However, by the time Miel joined the faculty, the postwar era brought turmoil to the world of education, and to Teachers College in particular, through conservative attacks on progressive education led by such critics as Arthur Bestor (Bestor, 1953), Admiral Hyman Rickover (Rickover, 1959), and Mortimer Smith (Smith, 1949), who advocated a return to "traditional" academic content in the schools. During the late 1940s and 1950s, Teachers College also experienced a number of internal "educational struggles" within its own ranks as the progressive movement further splintered. Miel's work does not seem to have been directly attacked by conservatives, and from all appearances, Miel maintained her strong convictions and continued on the same scholarly path. She acknowledged problems within the progressive movement and criticized its lack of a unified, focused base of support. She also raised the possibility that "the ideas had become so general and accepted, and there were no new thrusts" (Miel, 1994). Although she acknowledged that Dewey’s ideas had been distorted by some individuals - for example, in some educators' "overemphasis on the individual" and in "activities just for activity’s sake" - Miel argued that most of progressivism was constructive.

Communist hunters looked askance at Teachers College in particular, regarding it as the de facto headquarters of left-wing subversive educators (Caute, 1978). Miel herself encountered controversy through her involvement in a 1966 study of the Washington, D.C., public schools when members of the city’s school board tried to ensure that no communists from the College would participate in the study. A. Harry Passow, director of the study, refused to undertake a search for communists among his colleagues and students, arguing that political affiliation was not one of his criteria for participation in the study (Passow, 1995). Miel had personal experience with the Red Scare on two occasions. She recalled that "columnists and radio people who were making a fuss back then took some of the things I wrote and said I was a communist” (Miel, 1994). She did not remember who these accusers were, nor did she remember specific references in her book on which the Red Scare activists pounced. One may discern a few passages that may have aroused right-wing suspicion if taken out of context. For example, Miel illustrated the "lack of simple courtesy and regard for personal feelings that is all too common in human relationships in a highly competitive society like ours” through an apocryphal anecdote in which a capitalist boss in the Works Progress Administration snaps at his employee not to worry about how deep a particular ditch will be, saying, "I’ll take care of that; you just go ahead and dig" (1946, p. 32). In general, though, Miel remained largely insulated from the more extreme manifestations of anti-Communist activity throughout the nation.
Miel was promoted to professor in 1952, a time when slightly more than one-third of the College faculty were women. In an era when women often found promotion difficult in academia, Teachers College was a pioneer in this regard (Cremin et al., 1954). Miel recalled the large number of female professors and students who were “treated as equals,” and she never felt that she was either “punished or promoted” simply because of her gender (Miel, 1994).

In terms of Miel’s research interests while at Teachers College, she continued to believe in the fundamental importance of schools’ and communities’ self-study. Most of her books and articles during the 1950s and 1960s were devoted to explorations of these positions. From 1958-1962, she directed the “Study of Schools in Changing Communities.” From this project, she developed her book with Edwin Kiester, The Shortchanged Children of Suburbia (1967). Passow described this action research study as a “groundbreaker” in its emphasis on what suburban schools were failing to teach about human differences and cultural diversity (Passow, 1995). In 1966, she worked with Passow on his comprehensive curriculum study of the Washington, D.C., public schools. Miel and her students at the College were responsible for studying the District’s elementary schools. Each of her College students was assigned particular teachers in the District with whom to correspond about their curriculum and teaching practices. The students then wrote reports, which Miel synthesized as her contribution to Passow’s study. These two studies are explored below.

Also, despite the transitions and conflicts at the College, Miel and other faculty members continued to attract a number of doctoral students from across the nation and from around the world. This attraction stemmed partly from the College’s non-discriminatory admissions policy that welcomed, among others, women, international students from all parts of the globe, and, especially, African-Americans from the American South who were denied admission to higher education institutions in their home states for years (Miel, 1994; Passow, 1995).

Apparently, Miel was highly regarded by her students. Although some of her classes were rather large, her students generally regarded them as inviting and stimulating environments in which their participation was valued and fundamental to making the class an intellectual success (Hunt, 1994; Passow, 1995; Martinello, 1994; Varis, 1994; Berman, 1992). Miel maintained her residency in the Morningside Heights area near Columbia University from 1956 until her retirement, partly in order to be able to entertain students in her home on a regular basis (Miel, 1994). Ultimately, Miel supervised approximately 140 doctoral dissertations throughout her career. Also, she maintained numerous contacts and collaborative efforts with students and former students in her classes at Teachers College and in other countries. Through her extensive contacts with students from all over the United States and the world, Miel’s influence was indeed wide-
spread (Alexander, 1994). Miel retired in 1971 after 26 years of service to the College.

**Miel, Democracy, and Democratic Social Learning:**

**Contexts and Meanings**

Miel never adhered dogmatically to a precise definition of democracy. She believed that, although certain fundamental ideas were embedded in the term, its meaning must be developed and nurtured by people who professed it. She also conceived of democracy as more than a system of government. For her, it was a unique way of living and thinking (Miel, 1994).

Miel's interpretation of democracy was developed in the context of the era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom she greatly admired. Dewey's ideas in *Democracy and Education* (1916) also informed Miel's beliefs. In particular, she was drawn to his emphasis on the role of the individual in a democracy in determining the conditions and aims of his own work, and the free and harmonious sharing of tasks by different individuals in society. Dewey argued that as long as the structure of schools remained undemocratic and repelled intellectual initiative and inventiveness, all efforts toward reform would be compromised and their fruition postponed indefinitely.

In terms of Miel's understanding of democracy in practice, especially her own opportunities for democratic participation in educational settings, she benefited from her experiences in the Ann Arbor (Michigan) public schools. There, Miel worked with and observed democratic leaders who created settings in which teachers and students could practice democracy.

As a doctoral student at Teachers College from 1942-1944, Miel developed her ideas in the context of the Teachers College "democratic mission" that the faculty had articulated during World War Two (Cremin et al., 1954). In addition, her studies there in educational philosophy inevitably led her to John Dewey's ideas. More important in her Teachers College experience was Miel's doctoral study with Hollis L. Caswell, whose work in curriculum development derived from his belief that schools should play a viable role in helping to mold a democratic social order (Caswell and Campbell, 1935, 1937; Seguel, 1966; Burlbaw, 1989). While Caswell borrowed from Harold Rugg's identification of key concepts helpful to children's understanding of those problems, he went further to underscore the preparation of children for social action and improvement through appropriate social learnings in school (Seguel, 1966). His concerns are reflected in Miel's work and illustrate the extent to which Caswell and Miel shared a vision of democracy.

With regard specifically to democratic social learning, Miel also was informed by the theories of social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Lewin argued that "in democracy, as in any culture, the individual acquires the cultural
pattern by some type of 'learning'' (Lewin, 1948, p. 38). He explained that young people needed to learn to accept a particular system of values and beliefs by “accepting belongingness to a group...the establishment of a feeling that everybody is in the same boat, has gone through the same difficulties” (p. 67).

Miel believed that the school was democracy’s proving ground because it had a large share of the responsibility for socializing the nation’s young people into participation in democracy (Miel, 1986, p. 320). School was the ideal environment for democratic socialization, she believed, because of the possibilities for group process in a structured, particularistic setting. While some critics may have demurred that democratic lessons could be gained from an institution that mandated participation, Miel viewed the school as society in microcosm, where people from many backgrounds learned about freedom and responsibility, individuality and cooperation - all with an eye toward citizenship.

Miel’s own democratic predilections were whetted in a particular school context - her work in Ann Arbor. Furthermore, throughout her own life, Miel continued to develop a keen sense of the historical context of social problems that, for her, raised acute concerns for the future of a democratic society: postwar reconstruction, the Cold War and Red Scare, the social tensions between “haves” and “have nots,” and the Watergate scandal. In particular, she was deeply affected by the state of race relations and civil rights in American society: Miel often taught African-American students in her classes, and she had several formative experiences that brought racial issues into increasingly sharp focus for her as she learned of her own students’ experiences with prejudice and discrimination (Miel, 1994). Miel sought to move beyond the outmoded notion of racial tolerance, which, for her, connoted “putting up” with people who were different, to a more active, broader notion of intercultural understanding and appreciation (Miel, 1944).

Miel also sought to refute the claims of back-to-basics school reformers who were, in the 1970s, enjoying their moment in the spotlight. She argued that the “basics” also extended to the “moral-ethical-social realm,” and that they should be given a prominent place in the school curriculum. Miel was convinced that students’ understanding of freedom and responsibility should be high on the agenda of every school in the United States. She returned to these themes in 1986 in the context of the “educational excellence” movement, manifested in reports such as A Nation at Risk (1983), that called for higher achievement in the schools in order to ensure American competitiveness in the global economy. Miel criticized “remedies (that) give little consideration to the individual...Young people are being put under enormous pressure to perform for their society’s sake...It is distressing that those claiming our nation is at risk do not see how risky it is to overlook the power of a populace informed about, committed to, and com-
petent in the ways of democracy” (Miel, 1986, p. 322). For Miel, the overarching responsibility in democracy was to know how democracy worked and how to maintain it through changing conditions.

Miel’s work expressed fundamental ideas about what she considered to be appropriate democratic social learnings for children. Furthermore, she connected these ideas to her interest in democracy by focusing on the development of social behaviors that would best serve a democratic society. Her writing featured a number of recurring themes, particularly in her 1957 book with Peggy Brogan, More Than Social Studies.

Miel’s work expressed fundamental ideas about what she considered to be appropriate democratic social learnings for children. Furthermore, she connected these ideas to her interest in democracy by focusing on the development of social behaviors that would best serve a democratic society. Her writing featured a number of recurring themes, particularly in her 1957 book with Peggy Brogan, More Than Social Studies.

First, a democratically socialized person, according to Miel, saw democracy as an ideal arrangement for keeping individual and group considerations, freedom and responsibility, in balance. Such a person had respect for the individual, as well as for group intelligence, welfare, and cooperation. In a democracy, Miel argued, especially in critical times, students needed a better grasp of the tools of learning than under any other circumstances in order to safeguard against irrational thought and behavior. Miel conceived of these skills in terms of social learnings for which the schools should share responsibility and specified that such learnings included: bearing a friendly feeling; having concern for all mankind; valuing difference; being a contributing member of a group; seeing the necessity of a cooperative search for conditions guaranteeing maximum freedom for all; taking responsibility for a share of the labor involved in a common enterprise; problem-solving and working for consensus; evaluating and cooperating with authority; refining constantly one’s conception of the “good society”; and making use of good communication skills.

Miel particularly emphasized her theme of cooperative learning to build good relationships - what she called the “fourth R” in schools - and specifically focused on getting along with people and the development of “friendly feelings” as essential components of democratic social learning. Miel recommended three approaches that teachers use to help children improve human relationships: creating a friendly, respectful atmosphere in the classroom, teaching ways of managing group endeavors, and teaching about peoples’ commonalities and differences. Miel also focused on social learning opportunities for world understanding. She criticized “culture units” commonly taught in the elementary schools for encouraging unhealthy stereotypes of cultural and ethnic groups.

Miel argued that the elementary school was in a unique position because it presented opportunities throughout the school day for practicing democracy through discussion, problem-solving, consensus-building, and learning “world citizenship.” Miel’s illustrations of these concepts in her writing were selected to show the practical possibilities of educative experiences centered around problems as children meet them, many of which arose in school living or in the community. Most importantly for children’s social learning, however, the problems she described were man-
ageable by children, and the solutions reached could be tested in action and revised if found wanting. Moreover, Miel stressed that planning and problem solving with children did not mean manipulating them and making decisions for them in advance; planning meant studying children to judge their readiness for different degrees of complexity. Most importantly, teachers could model democratic behavior and help young people to learn from those in society who exemplified the highest values.

Finally, Miel strongly believed that no single school subject, including the social studies, could be expected to carry the full load of children’s social education. She explained, “Every school experience must be utilized for social learnings...[and] these experiences must be reinforced...in the home and community” (Miel, 1949, p. 51). She criticized the “traditional school” for failing to impress upon children the social value of what they were learning and for drilling them in “isolated skills” without challenging children to “use [their] gifts for the benefit of others” (Miel, 1939, pp. 110-111). If, as she assumed, teachers’ responsibility was to do “everything in [their] power to promote the socialization of children,” then this meant that all teachers must provide experiences that gave children certain “tools of learning”: better reading and language skills, good discussion techniques, research skills, problem solving methods - so that children could become sensitive to the needs of people and appreciative of the living world.

In terms of the unique contribution of the social studies to children’s learning experiences and to their democratic socialization, Miel and Brogan’s More Than Social Studies pointed to the field’s capacity to place social learning at the center of the curriculum. Teachers could provide experiences designed to develop children’s interpersonal and intergroup relationships through solving problems of daily living; to satisfy children’s curiosities about the world; to solve problems of understanding and community action; and to build positive attitudes toward others through organized individual and group studies. Most importantly, they could help children to develop socially useful concepts, generalizations, and skills so that children could organize the experiences they gained in and out of school.

In fact, in bringing social learning to the forefront of the social studies curriculum, Miel and Brogan criticized traditional approaches to the organization of the social studies based upon compartmentalized subjects and separate textbooks. Also, Miel and Brogan asserted that children reaped no benefits of social learning when they were simply taken through the motions of choice and discovery. If, as the authors believed, the fundamental goal of social studies derived from its social learning function, then any approach that overrelied on a preplanned scope and sequence could not help but fail. Myriad learning opportunities were embedded in the concept of “social” studies, but these would be wasted if social studies
designs were “divorced from living...[and] looked upon merely as a new way to cover certain subject matter,” instead of as a way to learn lessons “needed by people in a democracy” (1957, p. 120).

This analysis notwithstanding, Miel’s other publications rarely focused on the role of specific social studies subject matter in a social learning context. She suggested how the social studies could “make much more difference in the lives of individual children and in the society educating them” (Miel, 1962, p. 45). However, her suggestions usually were quite general and did not delve into disciplinary perspectives. She sought instead to discourage teachers from merely “conveying bits of information” (p. 45). Rather, teachers could help children to “clarify, organize, and extend information...to see how facts are interrelated, and to draw useful generalizations” (p. 45). Miel stated that social studies on the elementary level, although not always well developed, contained opportunities for thoughtful study of people, current events, societal movements, and global problems that required children to investigate, cooperate, and become better informed about their world.

Miel recalled that her view of social studies was less than warmly received in some circles. Perhaps thinking her presumptuous, one colleague objected specifically to her use of the word “more” in More Than Social Studies. Her response was that social studies content in the traditional sense was important and was “well covered” by other scholars, but that the field had “stopped with merely providing an information base...there was no understanding of relationships, let alone caring and action” (Miel, 1994). Her social studies focus, centered on problem areas and cutting across different disciplines, was different, and not confined to the area of the curriculum labeled “social studies” (Miel, 1994).

Perhaps the most concise, illuminating statement of Miel’s perspective on the social studies, and on what she meant by “more than social studies,” came after her retirement from Teachers College. In 1981, she offered ideas for the development of sociopolitical “giftedness” towards useful social ends. Miel adeptly characterized talent in this area as uniquely and totally “group linked...It cannot be developed or demonstrated except in a social context” (Miel, 1981, p. 257). This feature, she claimed, placed a special burden on the social studies to help students understand themselves and others and to participate constructively in societal and global affairs. In a cogent statement of the mission of the social studies curriculum, Miel argued that social studies must be designed for understanding of the world, caring for others, and action on community problems with which students had a reasonable chance for success. Influenced by Dewey’s The Child and the Curriculum (1902) and Experience and Education (1938), Miel averred that through such a well-rounded, interdisciplinary and interdimensional approach to the social studies would help students “see how the information they are gaining relates to existing bodies
of knowledge" (p. 268). Moreover, teachers could help them “to organize their learnings and fill in gaps so that they are constantly building a more systematic view of the world” (p. 268). If social studies content were selected to facilitate observation, generalization, evaluation, and application of learnings to new situations, students would become “lifelong social learners” (p. 268). According to Miel, there could be no better equipment for political leaders and all participants in our democracy than knowing ways of gaining understanding, ways of extending feelings of caring, and ways of acting on convictions.

**An Assessment of Miel’s Views on Social Learning and Social Studies**

Several factors likely limited the widespread acceptance of Miel’s conception of social learning. First, Miel believed that social learning should be taught throughout the school day and not compartmentalized into one particular academic subject area - and especially that it should not be the exclusive domain of the social studies. This view posed problems for teachers and curriculum workers, who, even at the elementary level, increasingly tended to think in terms of discrete subjects, whether they were integrating these subjects or teaching them in traditional organizational forms. “Social learning throughout the day” was probably too nebulous a concept to fit into such a structure, especially one with a predetermined, written course of study. Moreover, teachers may have shied away from explicit attention to the complexities of moral development and social action as components of social learning, preferring instead to inculcate certain proper behaviors in their students, and social studies teachers may have felt no unique responsibility for these components in their curriculum.

Second, the circulation of Miel’s ideas was restricted by the publication of *More Than Social Studies* during the conservative, subject-centered reform movements of the late 1950s. The book’s publication coincided with increasing criticism of American schooling and demands that math and science receive priority in education. The Sputnik inspired National Defense Education Act, linking federal support for schools with national policy objectives, ensured that social studies would be de-emphasized and that traditional academic history likely would prevail in new federal guidelines for education. Miel’s notions of social learning throughout the curriculum simply found no place in anti-progressive times.

Third, Miel lacked affiliation with social studies traditionalists, and she did not consider herself to be a specialist in any of the social studies content areas. These factors likely limited her role in this area of the school curriculum. For example, Miel considered herself a weak history teacher when she was at Tappan Junior High, mainly because she had taken so few history courses at normal school and had to rely heavily on the textbook (Miel, 1994).
The social studies became increasingly dominated by subject matter experts in academia who viewed and shaped this field through the lens of their particular disciplines. Miel simply did not have the academic credentials or teaching background to be considered an “expert” in any of these disciplines. In the 1960s, the research of Bruner (1960), Phenix (1961, 1964), Schwab (1962) and others on the “structure of the disciplines” was in vogue in the curriculum reform discourse (Mehaffy, 1979). Bruner, for example, suggested that each discipline had an inherent structure and that curriculum content should be presented in a form that helps students to comprehend this structure (Bruner, 1960). Phenix (1961) argued that the curriculum should consist entirely of knowledge that comes from the disciplines, because the disciplines revealed knowledge in its teachable forms. Also, a sizable contingent of leaders of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development began to assert that ASCD’s emphasis on group processes, which Miel had helped to develop, came too much at the expense of content knowledge in the academic subjects. Arthur W. Foshay, for example, in his 1961 presidential address, told ASCD members of his concerns about planning curriculum without due consideration for formal knowledge (Foshay, 1994; Hass, 1994). Moreover, advocates of discipline-centered views claimed that curriculum developers should rely on the “expert interpretations of subject matter specialists who reveal the logical patterns that give shape to their discipline and imply the order in which its elements should be learned” (Schubert, 1986, p. 238).

Miel’s work did not focus on inherent structures in particular realms of knowledge and the feasibility of “expert” agreement on the dimensions of that structure. Rather, much of her work revealed a strong belief in a focus on other variables that influenced learning, especially those that related to social context. In fact, partly because of her concern that “problems of a modern society cannot be solved by specialists in any one discipline,” she produced at least one brilliant critique of the “structure of the disciplines” approach upon noting that “separateness (of knowledge and disciplines) is once more on the ascendancy” in schools of the 1960s (Miel, 1963, p. 94). She cautioned that no general agreement existed on what a discipline was or on what the structure of particular fields should be. Moreover, structure was not a thing, unchanging and unchanged, to be packaged and handed over “ready-made and full-blown” (pp. 80-82). Furthermore, Miel criticized Bruner’s neglect of the “interrelationships among disciplines...and of the question of the structure of the curriculum as a whole within which the fields of knowledge are to find their place” (p. 86). Most importantly, Miel’s preoccupation with a “disciplined way of dealing with social policy questions, where values must be applied and strategies worked out,” led to this criticism:
Becoming enamored of the idea of teaching the structure of a subject may lead to emphasizing the fields most easily structured, mathematics and science. This, in turn, often leads to an emphasis on education relating to production of knowledge and a neglect of education for knowledge consumption, for it is the mark of a science that it is knowledge producing but not concerned with any use of the knowledge produced except for continued exploration in the field. After we have the best information we can get from a scientist as to the likely consequences of this or that course of action, social policy questions remain. What course of action should be taken? (p. 84).

She also cited Foshay’s (1962) admonition that learning the structure of a discipline alone was insufficient. Rather, any discipline also has a history or tradition that enters into decisions on domains and rules of that discipline. Therefore, learning the structure must be accompanied by study of how it was formulated and what constituted the structure of inquiry (Miel, 1963).

Neither did Miel become deeply involved in the “new social studies” movements of the 1960s, particularly because they often resulted in written courses of study that she eschewed. For example, Miel traveled to Harvard University to hear about the new curriculum, Man: A Course of Study, which she believed to be too narrow in its focus. Her interpretation of the role and function of the social studies in the school curriculum still diverged from the “conventional wisdom” that social studies meant the study of discrete subjects at particular grade levels. In all likelihood, this view of the social studies also precluded her involvement in the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). Miel’s earliest work in social studies came as she made the transition from high school Latin teacher to junior high history and Latin teacher and then to her long career in elementary education. NCSS in the 1930s and 1940s was a high-school oriented organization dominated by historians, including those on the college level. Not until the 1950s did Harold Drummond, John Jarolimek and others bring an elementary school presence into NCSS, and only years later did NCSS begin to include more elementary representation in its governance. In addition, the Teachers College presence in NCSS for many years was largely restricted to very strong individuals from the Department of the Teaching of History, quite a separate department from that of Curriculum and Teaching, with which Miel was affiliated. Miel likely would have felt out of place in NCSS because of her lack of subject matter credentials.

A confluence of factors, then, circumscribed Miel’s contributions to the social studies discourse and contributed to her remaining a lesser-known figure in this field. These important factors included, certainly, the historical context of the school curriculum, and her emphasis on social
learning at the expense of deliberate attention to - and even criticism of - the common social studies disciplines. Although many of Miel's ideas and criticisms were well-founded and well-stated, her voice sounded one of only a few discordant notes in the increasingly loud chorus of approval for a more traditional academic, subject-centered curriculum.

Diversity Issues in Miel's Research

Miel's work in elementary school education seemed a natural outgrowth of her views on children's social learning. As a Michigan junior high school teacher, Miel worked in the Ann Arbor schools, which were, in many ways, a model setting (Miel, 1994). However, the Donovan School at which Miel became a teaching principal was "on the so-called wrong side of the tracks, in a poor neighborhood...where parents didn't care about coming to the PTA and so forth" (Miel, 1994). Miel soon realized that a number of these children had experienced acute socioeconomic and intellectual deprivation. Although after three years in this position Miel became a curriculum coordinator, she retained strong impressions of the diverse experiences of the children with whom she had worked and of their particular social learning needs. These impressions later figured prominently in her work at Teachers College as she taught and wrote about the importance of children's cooperation, understanding, respect, and relationships, and as she heard about and witnessed the experiences of her African-American students with racism and discrimination (Miel, 1994).

Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* (1944) took American socioeconomic, cultural, and class issues in a profound new direction and seems to have influenced Miel, who cited Myrdal in her 1946 *Changing the Curriculum: A Social Process*. Myrdal focused on the disadvantages of African-Americans, criticizing in particular the inferiority of vocational training programs offered to African-American youth and, consequently, the discrimination and lack of opportunity they faced in the job market. More broadly, Myrdal excoriated the United States as a backward nation for its failure to provide appropriate educational opportunities and employment to its youth and for maintaining a socioeconomic underclass. Myrdal viewed education as the "great hope" for both individuals and society, as the foundation for equality of opportunity for the individual, and as an outlet for individual ability - a view that Miel clearly shared.

Miel conducted several major qualitative research studies, especially case studies, that related to diversity issues. In a broad sense, all of these major studies represented Miel's attempts to verify, through conventionally acceptable forms of inquiry, her common-sense beliefs and advocacies. First, Miel worked with A. Harry Passow in the mid-1960s on a comprehensive curriculum study of the Washington, D.C., public schools. Under Passow's leadership, Miel studied the elementary schools in the
District. She in turn facilitated contacts and correspondence between her students at Teachers College and approximately eighty Washington, D.C., classroom teachers.

Miel and her students set out to examine several aspects of the Washington, D.C., elementary program: the social-emotional climate, learning objectives, the utilization of time, space, and human and material resources, organization and types of subject matter, and opportunities for learning the skills of information-processing and democratic living. When their task got underway, they discovered a sterile physical and intellectual environment that emphasized efficiency at the expense of children's active participation in their own learning. With numerous illustrations and anecdotes, the observers concluded that most learning activities appeared to be designed to promote order, silence, passive conformity, rigid adherence to a time schedule, and uniform instruction of children. Challenging subject matter and intellectual stimulation were scarce, as were basic instructional materials. One observer reported:

While the room gave an attractive appearance, it was also sterile in terms of child life, child art, child work...Nothing came from them; nothing reflected their wonderful uniqueness. The sadness was the negation of the lives of the children in that room...The observers began to wonder, 'What part do the children play in schools?' (Miel et al., 1967, p. 5).

The report further stated:

Teachers seemed to expect little progress from the children...Individual differences in children were generally disregarded...That so few classrooms could be described as places where children were understood and supported is perhaps not surprising, for the [instructional plan adopted by these schools] seems not to encourage either teacher or children to find joy in the process of education...Teachers were decent to children, yet the climate was not one deliberately cultivated for its effect on the morale of the inhabitants (p. 20).

From the perspective of Miel and her students, the Washington, D.C., elementary schools were failing to meet either the intellectual or social-emotional needs of the children. Data on the children's academic performance and teachers' impressions that "our children are not learning" confirmed their observations (p. 21).

Miel and her students advanced a number of strong recommendations for the schools to adopt. These suggestions seemed to synthesize Miel's most prominent ideas on elementary schooling and to apply them
to an actual school setting that had been targeted for improvement. Foremost among them was the suggestion that the District's elementary schools must provide children with opportunities to develop a "social personality," characterized by individuality, autonomy, independence, respect, and a sense of well-being (pp. 20-28). Their creativity, decision-making, and participation in classroom activities must be encouraged and affirmed. Miel and her students also advised that instruction in these schools become more flexible and individualized, taking into account the special needs of various children. Finally, they emphasized that none of these recommendations could be fully implemented unless changes were made in teachers' self-concept and professional status. Teachers must become more actively involved in curriculum development and more autonomous in the classroom. They must also have better opportunities for inservice education and "more constructive supervisory relationships" (p. 34). Not surprisingly, Miel and her students also recommended changes in the schools' subject matter. They had criticized the curriculum for disregarding "actual events and problems in today's world," and they suggested that the curriculum be made more "relevant" for the students (p. 28).

Miel's concern for "relevance" was particularly significant because, in the Passow study, it directly addressed the large African-American population in the Washington schools. Years before the multicultural curriculum debate moved to the forefront of the educational discourse, Miel and her students helped to draw attention to the educational needs of minority children. In a foreshadowing of the debate to come, Miel and her students took the following position on a culturally inclusive curriculum:

[Relevance] means more than making a bow to the large proportion of Negroes in the schools...and the introduction of a little Negro history into the social studies curriculum. Both Negro and white children need to be aware of the contributions of the Negro to American life, but one distortion will be supplanted by another if the curriculum is not balanced and if the Negro is not seen in perspective (p. 28).

The "desirable direction" they recommended was for teachers to begin with the experiences of the children in their homes and communities. Teachers and students would then work toward a general understanding of minority group concerns, an examination of the contributions and interactions of different cultural and ethnic groups in society and around the world, and, eventually, an analysis of "the way our society makes decisions and solves problems" (p. 28).

Miel's concerns for intercultural relations and the problems of minority groups may be discerned as early as 1944, when she wrote a chapter on "living in a modern world" for the Yearbook of the Department of
Supervision and Curriculum Development. She argued that the school curriculum must broaden the concept of "racial tolerance," explaining:

Once we considered it enough to live and let live, to tolerate in the sense of put up with the man who was so 'unfortunate' as to have been born outside our own country or to have inherited a colored skin. Today, the concept is broadening considerably (Miel, 1944a, p. 15).

Miel advocated a "broadened" view that went beyond mere "tolerance" and "understanding" to actual improvement in relationships among all groups - not only those groups based on race, culture, and religion, but also, those based on gender, occupation, educational level, age, and regional identity (p. 16). She criticized teaching approaches that emphasized only the strangeness or quaintness of other cultures. Miel believed that intercultural education, when properly conceived, had two primary, mutually reinforcing goals: "helping children discover how much like other people we are," and "helping children to understand why differences in cultures have arisen and to value differences as a way to enrich us all" (p. 16).

James B. Conant's book, Slums and Suburbs (1961), also seems to have had a powerful impact on Miel's thinking. Conant, whom Miel had heard speak at the Teachers College fiftieth anniversary convocation in 1944, provided a striking contrast between affluent, spacious, well-staffed suburban schools and run-down, understaffed, overcrowded inner-city schools. He argued strongly for the American public to address these disparities or face the "social dynamite" of social disorganization, alarming dropout rates, and unemployment, all of which would largely harm minorities who lived in American slums.

Miel first broached the incipient concept of suburbia and the "post-war rush to the country" in an article with Betty Psaltis, "Are Children in the Suburbs Different?" (1964). Her central question was whether suburban children, raised and educated in homogeneous environments, were being deprived of important social learnings about similarities and differences among people. The article, based upon the results of her five-year "Study of Schools in Changing Communities," surveyed the attitudes of several hundred rural, urban, and suburban children toward themselves, their families, and their neighborhoods. Significantly, Miel determined that the "dominant middle-class cultural values" of the time - for example, order, cleanliness, conformity of dress and behavior - were being transmitted on an unprecedented scale throughout school and society (p. 440). Moreover, these values were being inculcated in all types of children, without regard for their cultural backgrounds, frames of reference, and experiences. She concluded:
The gulf between the values taught in school and the real-life experiences of a large number of children still remains...Our findings have demonstrated, among other things, the effectiveness of a whole constellation of educative media in standardizing young children's opinions and attitudes. The school has contributed its share in the achievement of such homogeneity. If now, in a world with new problems, the full development of individual potential is seen as desirable, there is a need for the same creativity and resourcefulness in moving in that direction as were employed when our national goals seemed to necessitate the fostering of alikeness (p. 440).

These concerns emerged fully in Miel's book with journalist Edwin Kiester, *The Shortchanged Children of Suburbia* (1967), an outgrowth of her "Study of Schools in Changing Communities" from 1958-1962. This research project, conducted in suburban schools and funded primarily by the American Jewish Committee, was developed in the context of the social unrest and civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Indeed, the book's publication coincided with the onset of great civil disorder in American inner cities. It focused on "how the public schools prepare children for a world peopled by men and women of many different nations, races, religions, and economic backgrounds" at a time when "human differences are precisely what the chief problems of our time are about" (pp. 8, 10).

Miel believed that this book best represented her research efforts. Like the Washington, D.C. study, *The Shortchanged Children of Suburbia* was prescriptive in a general sense. That is, Miel herself recommended an "action program" for teachers to broaden social learning opportunities for their suburban pupils. Passow (1995) described this project as a "groundbreaking" study of what suburban schools were failing to teach about human differences and cultural diversity. Indeed, Miel recalled that, because of Kiester's coauthorship and the backing of the American Jewish Committee, *The Shortchanged Children of Suburbia* generated more publicity than any of Miel's other published works. She also recalled that she was interviewed for an evening news broadcast in the New York area (Miel, 1994). Fred Hechinger, education editor of the *New York Times*, described the book as analyzing "the problems of enclaves of affluent homogeneity," which he characterized as follows:

The depressing aspect of this isolation is not that it may breed prejudice...Prejudice can be bred under any conditions, and exposure to differences offers no assurance of the flowering of brotherly love. What is depressing is the reality of an artificially limited horizon - naturally coupled with a feeling that this sheltered homogeneity is the best of all possible worlds...[This feel-
ing] flows naturally from the adult folklore which tries to turn status quo into a virtue (Miel and Kiester, 1967, p. 6).

Hechinger further criticized what he saw as the “self-satisfaction,” “overwhelming preoccupation with material possessions,” and “the distortion of values” of the children of suburbia (pp. 6-7). Moreover, he argued, in this atmosphere teachers often appeared more anxious to avoid than to answer troublesome questions, and to pretend that controversial issues and inequities did not exist in American society and throughout the world.

Miel and several doctoral students from Teachers College extensively studied the pseudonymous, ostensibly representative suburb of “New Village.” They collected information on the community, administered questionnaires, and interviewed sixty teachers, fifty parents, over 100 elementary children, and over 100 community members (p. 9). They concentrated on the role of the elementary school as the “chief training ground for American children today” and on the opportunities that children had in their schools and communities for “social learning” about life in a multicultural society (p. 12).

Miel and her colleagues reached conclusions that troubled them. First, they found that “extraordinary effort was required to bring about any encounter between a child of the suburbs and persons different from himself” (p. 13). The suburban child’s world remained highly circumscribed and insulated. Second, the children in their study reflected only a superficial “tolerance” of differences. Beneath the surface, prejudices toward people of different races and religions, especially toward African Americans, already were deeply ingrained in the children. Third, although New Village parents and teachers seemed eager to address religious differences, they were much more likely to ignore or avoid racial ones, especially those relating to poverty and economic inequalities. The children in this study did not know about - nor did they want to know about - people of different races or socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the children’s strong preference for conformity and for a single norm of appropriate behavior underlay all of their attitudes. Finally, Miel found that parents and teachers in New Village placed much higher value on skill acquisition and factual learning than on social learning. Not surprisingly, teachers found it “unrewarding” to develop children’s social attitudes because this had little to do with “getting them into the ‘right’ colleges” (p. 55).

For these reasons, Miel determined that suburban children were being “shortchanged” in their social learning, and, despite the “many enviable features” of their environment, they were educationally “underprivileged” (p. 14). The “action program” that she suggested for suburban schools and their communities emphasized greater attention to the development of “higher thought processes,” to children’s value systems, and to
a more “realistic picture” of their own community in relation to others (pp. 57-59). She also made numerous, specific recommendations for the study of race, religion, and socioeconomic status - all aimed at dismantling stereotypes, avoiding facile generalizations, studying different groups in their appropriate cultural and historical contexts, and understanding the concerns and struggles faced by particular groups in society. Finally, Miel stressed the importance of supportive parental, administrative, and community attitudes toward the teaching of human differences.

Within the New Village scenario, then, Miel was able to reassert her conviction that human diversity was a proper subject for the school curriculum in a democratic society. She firmly believed that “children must be educated to deal fairly and realistically with questions of social justice, civil rights, national unity, and international peace” (p. 68). In fact, she argued that, at that time, there was “no more urgent business in the schools of America” (p. 68).

Miel believed that hers was one of a few lone voices at the time on the cultural education and social learning of suburban children. She did not view herself as a crusader, venturing into suburban schools with a multicultural mission (Miel, 1994). Indeed, she was never directly involved in suburban schools after the completion of this project. Neither did she discount the probability that important social learnings were being neglected in other types of communities and enclaves in American society. Instead, she went to New Village “to find out what was happening in an especially homogeneous environment, to report what we found, and to let people make of it what they wanted to” (Miel, 1994). Passow pointed to the study chiefly as “an example of (Miel’s) values and morality which always came through in her work” (Passow, 1995). Indeed, she received the National Education Association’s Human Rights Award in 1968 as a result of this publication. Miel also recalled favorable responses from parents in various suburbs around the country, some of whom “really thought about this issue for the first time” (Miel, 1994).

### Miel, Schools, and Change: Final Assessments

On the larger question of schools and social change, Miel did not understand the school merely as a reactive institution or only as the target of social change efforts. Her conceptualization of the school’s role was an active, albeit indirect, one. She claimed that the educational process - and the curriculum itself - should be “the beginning of helping children to understand social problems and to feel a responsibility for helping to solve them” (Miel, 1994). She explained, “If you have a curriculum where you’re looking at community problems, drawing attention to certain issues, and helping children study them, you’re already initiating a look at change”
(Miel, 1994). Addressing social problems was a natural outgrowth of the development of relationships between school and community.

Zilversmit (1993) concluded that one of the foremost legacies of progressive education was its emphasis on the process of change, deliberation, and continuous renewal. This emphasis was essential in order for education to remain vital. Moreover, because this process was crucial, teachers must be involved in it "directly and intimately" (p. 182). When society recognizes this process as valuable and affirms the importance of teacher involvement, he argued, the impossibility of standardized, permanent curriculum goals becomes obvious. Certain questions, including those centered on what knowledge should be taught in schools, simply cannot be solved once and for all and, according to Reinhold Neibuhr (1953), "must be continually solved within the framework of the democratic process" (p. 115, 118).

This study places Miel in the company of what Franklin (1986) referred to as "professional educators from 1900 to the 1950s [who worked to] design a curriculum appropriate for preparing youth for life in urban, industrial society...and to promote liberal democratic values" (p. xi-xii). These first curriculum workers, most of whom he described as "middle class intellectuals," favored a particular notion of social control that gave them a conceptual framework for explaining how a sense of community could be restored to modern American society (p. xii). However, despite the ostensibly pejorative connotation of the concept of "social control," Franklin asserted that this particular group of curriculum workers did not see the child as a "passive organism under the control of the school" (p. 130). Rather, children were active beings "whose actions were the eliciting factors in learning" (p. 130). The task of social control, for them, was not to submerge individuality, but to "establish an accord" between individual needs and desires and the demands of American society (p. 130-131). Miel, along with Caswell and others, sought to "strike a balance between the forces of change, and the forces of stability" (p. 132). In other words, schools must respond to change, especially that which increased individual opportunity, but the school's role in making people more cooperative and devoted to "common ideals" was essential to social stability and ongoing social improvement (p. 132).

Later historical evaluations of progressive education were somewhat more circumspect than those of Bestor, Smith, Rickover, and other strident critics of the 1950s. Still, they agreed that the progressive movement ultimately collapsed for similar reasons: professional infighting, ideological fragmentation, removal from the public discourse, overuse of slogans and clichés, inertia, and obsolescence in the face of the continuing transformation of postwar American society (Cremin, 1961, pp. 348-351). Zilversmit (1993) emphasized that progressivism, ostensibly a philosophy of change, had become a fixed set of methods and rhetoric for teach-
ers to learn (p. 168). He also concluded that progressivism's hidden social controls were manipulative. Indeed, the idea of a role for the schools in the advocacy of social change aroused increasing public hostility, especially as the Cold War intensified. But more importantly, teachers' involvement in social revolution was simply unrealistic, given the reality of power relationships, the authoritarianism under which most teachers worked, and the capacity of schools merely to reflect and reproduce community values and patterns of social organization (pp. 176-7).

Perhaps an overarching reason for the demise of progressivism in the 1950s was the inability of progressive educators to respond forcefully andconcertedly to genuine calls for reassessment of their movement. Their defense, probably largely unused, lay in the possibility that conservative claims about progressive excesses were exaggerated. Miel criticized the progressive movement's lack of a unified, focused base of support. She also raised the possibility that "the ideas had become so general and accepted, and there were no new thrusts," and she acknowledged that distortion of Dewey's ideas had taken place (Miel, 1994).

The apparent lack of sustained attention to Miel's work and ideas may have been a matter of the timing of her life and career. Her work in academia began as progressivism was not only on the decline but under deliberate, if exaggerated, attack from conservatives. Her explicitly stated beliefs regarding democratic socialization and the value of diversity for schoolchildren were not among the favored educational ideas of the 1950s and early 1960s. Moreover, the liberal sociopolitical perspective that Miel openly espoused became unfashionable throughout those years. To a number of Americans during that time, it was even unpatriotic. Unfortunately, because she was at Teachers College during a particular era, Miel also may have been unfairly associated with the worst excesses of the progressive education movement, causing her work to be ignored later by academic traditionalists anxious to distance themselves from that movement. Later in the 1950s and 1960s, the "structure of the disciplines" movement, dominated by the research of Bruner (1960), Phenix (1961, 1964), Schwab (1962), elevated the importance of subject matter expertise, which Miel never claimed to possess, in academic circles.

Certainly, much of her work did not observe the traditional academic conventions of quantitative, "objective" research. Much of it indeed appears to be based mainly upon a combination of Miel's firm convictions and her own sense of professional ethics, along with extensive observations and conversations in schools. However, nothing in her work suggests intellectual or pedagogical softness. Underlying all of her ideas was a deep concern for the intellectual growth and well-roundedness of all students, and her work revealed attention to a number of variables that influenced learning, especially those deriving from the social context of schooling.
Still, there remained a “timelessness about many of the problems the progressives raised and the solutions they proposed...[they had] an authentic vision (that) remained strangely pertinent to the problems of mid-century America” (Cremin, 1961, pp. 352-3). Poor slum schools still existed. So did wretched rural schools, outmoded and harmful teaching practices that ignored the unique needs of students, glaring social inequities, and dehumanized approaches to knowledge. Clearly, Miel’s work consistently illustrated her capacity to call attention to some of the nation’s enduring educational and social problems. Miel agreed that progressivism had indeed brought about changes in teaching methods, experiences, and materials that “probably would never be undone.” She argued that the “best of progressivism” was more than simply the integration of subject matter and experience. Even more important was the emphasis on inclusive, democratic teaching and learning processes, which she believed “brought out the best in all people...so that they wouldn’t just stop, thinking they had the final answer, but keep pushing the boundaries” (Miel, 1994). She concluded that:

Progressive education, to me, was more than just integrating subject matter and experiences. Something is progressive when it moves in the direction of freeing people, of engaging people, of bringing out the best in people, students, everybody...and it involves ways of working that help you do that. Some of the things that progressive education brought about made you look at your subject matter differently, but generally it just helped you break through some boundaries. So maybe what I was trying to do was not stop at some point and think we had the final answer, but to push out the boundaries a little farther (Miel, 1994).

Notes

1 Helping Children Experience the Realities of the Social Order drew upon several prominent strains of progressive educational thought. One stressed the Deweyan notion, in his 1902 book The Child and the Curriculum, of education as experience and of the child and the curriculum as two limits that define a single process. Education was the continuous recreation of the individual through experience, curriculum was the organization of experience, and the school was society’s agency for furnishing a selected environment in which directed growth could take place more effectively during certain periods of a child’s life. Another aspect of Helping Children Experience the Realities of the Social Order propounded Boyd Bode’s concern for a new Social order whose primary focus was the development of the capacity of personality. Third, the guide also drew from ideas of William Heard Kilpatrick (“The Project Method” in the 1918 Teachers College Record) and Harold Rugg and Ann Shumaker’s The Child-Centered School (1928) about how the teacher’s role could be reconceptualized in order to promote the concepts of freedom, individuality, and initiative in a child-centered classroom.

2 In some ways, Miel’s ideas about caring antedated the work of Nel Noddings in this area. However, Noddings elevated this concept to major public attention based largely on feminist theory. Miel never characterized herself as a feminist scholar, but one may discern similarities to Noddings in her exploration of different types of caring that can be encouraged in children. Space does not permit a detailed exploration of Miel’s thoughts on caring, but she...
elaborates on this topic in More Than Social Studies and again in a 1981 book, Strategies for Educational Change: Recognizing the Gifts and Talents of All Children. Also, Miel's 1960 speech to the Association for Childhood Education, International, influenced by the 1959 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, illuminated her view of how education could contribute to children's rights to growth and to the development of their abilities, judgment, values, and human relationships. She identified three dimensions of the development of an educated person that schools must emphasize in order to guarantee those rights for children. First, "learning to care" meant caring about oneself, then caring about others, then caring about moral and social responsibility. Also, caring about oneself and others related to caring about ideas and their verbal and nonverbal expression. Second, "learning to make informed judgments," one of the bases of becoming a useful member of society, supplied children with pertinent information and skills necessary for caring about ideas and responsibilities. Miel argued that the school can develop power in the children to go on learning under their own direction for the rest of their lives, and that such power consists in part of knowing sources of information and useful methods of learning from each in order to solve problems, test solutions, and evaluate consequences. Furthermore, the elementary school must reinforce children's trust in themselves as independent decision makers. Third, a child must "learn to take an active role" in his or her world, using problem solving and relational skills to translate concerns and judgments into socially useful action. She said that the elementary school must help children to go the complete circle - caring about unrealized human potential all over the world, deciding what will improve conditions, and taking useful steps (with others) in creating better conditions. The elementary school's role, therefore, was to provide an education that made sense to every individual, that left a "useful residue in the form of attitudes, knowledge, and skills that make it possible and likely that the individual will continue to be a self-directed learner, and that helped each individual to be able to lead a dignified and useful life.

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The Postmodern Self and the Problem of Developing a Democratic Mind

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Abstract
This article examines the relationship between self-construction and the search for the self as problems in the postmodern condition and discusses possible consequences for the development of the "democratic mind." It is argued that modernity paradoxically stands for both, the notion of a consistent self, which seems necessary with regard to moral claims in democratic forms of life, and, at the same time, for the notion of a non-consistent and de-centered plural self that can be regarded as the psychological counterpart of the "external" (moral and non-moral) pluralism of modern societies. These different notions of the self are then described by means of two metaphors, the (modern) "master of the self" and the (postmodern) "language game player." The paper closes with a discussion on the problems of the self in appreciating the values of democratic forms of life and to get access to public life under the conditions of (post) modern mass societies.

The radical heterogeneity of today's pluralistic cultures in the domains of morals, aesthetics and sciences (Welsch, 1995), and its social consequence—the concentration on individual self-interests (Beck, 1986)—may be viewed as a threat to democratic ways of life and the rational settlement of opposing interests. It is generally recognized that in "a postmodern world characterized by competing interests, a lack of civility, and enormous diversity, democracy is an extraordinarily ambitious and difficult ideal" (Banks, 1996, xi). The following considerations focus on these issues by emphasizing the relationship between self-construction and the search for the self as problems in the postmodern condition, and looking at the possible consequences for the development of the discursive and democratic mind. In the first part it is argued that modernity paradoxically stands for both, the notion of a consistent self which seems necessary with regard to moral claims in democratic forms of life, and, at the same time, for the notion of a non-consistent and not centered, plural self which can be regarded as the psychological counterpart of the "external"
(moral and non-moral) pluralism of modern societies. Such a self might be called “postmodern”. In the second part, I describe and compare these different notions of the self by means of two metaphors, the (modern) “master of the self” and the (postmodern) “language game player”. In the third and last part, I use these somewhat speculative descriptions to discuss the potential “chances” and “dangers” of the postmodern self with regard to the development of a “democratic mind”. With this term I am referring to the question of whether or not the self-understanding of the late modern self is shaped by political concern and practice and whether or not such selves have access to public life which has traditionally been regarded as an important source of self-respect.

The Consistent Self—Great Modern Expectations

Modern individuals are expected to develop reflective identities; they are supposed to become selves who have the ability to define themselves with respect to the social and intrapersonal experiences they make. In liberal and pluralistic societies, the expectation to become an autonomous actor of one’s own life and an autonomous interpreter of one’s own experiences is crucial for pedagogical thought. The modern notions of the sovereign moral subject and the authentic person are very ambitious in that they imply the ability to enter the center of one’s own feelings and thoughts, and in that they imply the existence of such a center in the first place. The autonomous subject as the “self-law-giving” and thus “self-determined” subject must have a center: To have a center means to have control. From the Cartesian perspective, the self is conceptualized as a unity detached from the social environment. There is an essential but not necessarily logical link between conceptions of the nature of the self and the commitment to political visions. “One might believe that persons are socially constituted whilst advocating a political theory based on individual rights; just as one might be a methodological individualist who urges the forging of community” (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995, p. 9). The cultural acceptance of the individualistic and atomistic model of the self has had a great impact on the development of liberal democracy and modern ethics. In consequence, at the level of the individual to be an authentic and trans-situational consistent self has become a biographical priority and a moral and educational task.

The consistency of the self is of major importance for the self-attribution of responsibilities which appear to be a necessity for democratic forms of life. Böhme (1996, p. 332) argues that if one accepts that everything concerning the individual is changing, attitudes and thoughts included, making the individual responsible for actions he or she committed five or twenty years ago—on the one hand—seems an affront to that individual. On the other hand, it is not at all self-evident, but rather a
great (cultural) achievement that people are ready to pay for foolish actions they committed in their youth, or for their weakness and failures under a former repressive political system. The issue at stake is both of ethical and judicial relevance. Thus it appears that the educational goal of developing a democratic mind can be seen as a function of the individual, and of the cultural possibilities which exist (or do not exist) and enable the individual to become a consistent and unified self, a self which can make sense of its heterogeneous and even disconnected experiences—a self that masters itself. Developmental aims relevant to modern education such as self-reflexivity, self-transparent consciousness, ego-identity, autonomy or sovereignty are terms that describe ideals of mastery. Mastery presupposes "centeredness" (Reichenbach, 1996).

Having become an educational task, the construction of a centered self is a fragile modern undertaking with paradoxical consequences. On the one hand, the great modern narratives of truth and emancipation require the centered subject, as does the legitimation of education itself. On the other hand, it is the same modernity that provides the tools to deconstruct such an idea. Modernity stands for the validity claims of truth and justice, for science and emancipation, for unity and continuity (Welsch, 1995), and at the same time it stands for the transformation of certainties into hypotheses, of histories into constructions, and of timeless truths into temporary and local "truths" (Keupp, 1994; Giddens, 1991). The self-understanding of the modern individual as being the center of a personal life, the center of rational decision-making and optimal life-planning requires much more self-reflexivity, "introspection" and control than was the case for romantic concepts of self and identity (Taylor, 1989; Gergen, 1990). However, modern coercion towards rationality and self-transparent consciousness goes hand in hand with a loss of innocence, a loss of spontaneity, and a loss of passion (Sennett, 1974; 1994).

The individual's plans and decisions depend on what he or she perceives in the social environment (which is increasingly mediated and locally unbound). The perception and experience of radical diversity leads to the intra-individual pluralism with which most modern individuals seem to be familiar (cf. Gergen, 1990, p. 195). The effect of such societal and cultural developments is the "decentering" of the subject. Such insight and the critique of centered subjectivity has a long tradition and it is not monopolized by post-structuralist or postmodern discourses (cf. Keupp, 1994). In the twentieth century, the subject has been decentered by psychoanalysis (Holland, 1983), by intercultural research (Geertz, 1979), by systems theory (Luhmann, 1984), feminist theory (Rosenau, 1992), and the early critical theorists (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944). But the critique is older and even more fundamental. Plessner (1928/1982), for instance, who was one of the founders of modern philosophical anthropology, argued that human beings artificially create their own nature. In this view,
human beings are bound by the structural principle of their position in
the world which is "eccentric"—in contrast to the centricity of animals
"who are simply what they are as organisms in their Umwelt" (Luckmann,
1967, p. 350). The most important feature of the eccentric position is the
indirect, socially mediated relationship with the world and the self. All
experience is (situationally) mediated, and this particularly holds true for
our experience of ourselves (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 147). Such an in-
sight that seems to contradict the ongoing sense of the self (cf. Varela,
Thompson & Rosch, 1993, p. 60), was already expressed by David Hume
who wrote almost 250 years ago: "For my part, when I enter most inti-
mately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular per-
ception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or
pleasure. I never catch myself at any time without a perception, and never
can observe anything but the perception" (Hume, 1955, I VI, iv).

Social theorists and psychologists have nevertheless tried to argue
for a "deeper" self which is able to develop consistency in the interaction
with the social world. Mead and Erikson postulated psychological mod-
els of how the synthesis of a consistent and continuing identity can be
described. As Joas (1996, p. 361) points out, such models are connected to
a couple of implicit and important premises. One of them is the postulate
that it is good to develop an identity in the first place—good in the em-
pirical sense that a unique and consistent identity would result in a greater
amount of psychical health and subjective happiness; but good also in the
normative sense that the achievement of ego-identity would lead to (more)
moral autonomy. However, as for many other things, it must be said that
these notions are rooted in their time and that they have become—about
half a century later—somewhat obsolete. By looking, for instance, at the
criteria for the differentiation between "normal" and "pathological", this
becomes obvious. The criteria which were valid in the eyes of Erikson can
be regarded—from today's perspective—as a mixture of the traditional
and the modern (Böhme, 1996, p. 335). To Erikson, the significance of mar-
rying and settling down, of having children and acquiring a profession
was—with regard to the development of identity—certain. This certainty
seems lost. What appeared as "diffuse identity" in the 1950s might nowa-
days be regarded as rather "normal". Today, a self which is too sure of
itself and which shows too much certainty, a homogeneous and undivided
self, has in fact become (morally) suspect.

The modern individual of our time does not seem to feel a great ne-
cessity to integrate all his or her manifold social roles and experiences
into an unity. Rather, the modern individual has internalized and contin-
ues to internalize the external and heterogeneous pluralism of norms, be-
liefs and values. Valéry (1957, p. 992) seems to approve totally of this in-
ternal pluralism when he writes: "In every educated head the most dis-
similar ideas as well as the most opposing principles of life and knowl-
edge do freely exist next to each other. And most of us do have several opinions about the very same subject—opinions that alternate in our judgments without further ado" (cit. in Welsch 1992, p. 43, trans. R. Reichenbach). This “diagnosis” seems quite valid; how else could the strong wish of the modern individual be explained to be or to become a coherent unity which has a more or less coherent and meaningful biography? Modern individuals try to make sense of their lives because they are not at all certain what is meaningful in life and what is not.

In opposition to pre-modern epochs (or present homogeneous pre-modern-type forms of life), the “shaping of the self” in Western atomized societies is regarded as a private and highly subjective matter. However, since “one has to be a member of a community to be a self” as G. H. Mead postulated, it is crucial to discuss whether the “community” should—and still can—be a fundamental concept of educational theory and what priority status should be attributed to the dominant values of community and the individual’s rights in the face of this dominance (that is, in fact, the key issue in the debate between communitarians and liberals, cf. Marotzki, 1995). It seems appropriate to look at identity, self and autonomy as social constructions (Berzonsky, 1993) in the specific condition of postmodern heterogeneity, but this does mean that what is meant by “self” will necessarily be more differentiated than the rather undifferentiated concept of the self as it has been used in the scientific discourse (cf. Wells & Marvell, 1976, p. 231; Kaplan, 1986, p. 6).

**Modern And Postmodern Language Games Of The Self**

An important index of what is called postmodernism is the idea of culture as a system of signs (Lovlie, 1992, p. 120) and the implication that signs do not have meaning in themselves but rather by the place they occupy in relation to other signs. According to this view, concepts such as the self or autonomy, when viewed as central attributes of the modern subject, can be looked at as language products of the modern discourses of emancipation and authenticity (Taylor, 1989). “Discourses”, as Parker says, “allow us to see things that are not ‘really’ there, ...once an object has been elaborated in a discourse it is difficult not to refer to it as if it were real” (1992, p. 5). The view of culture as a net of heterogeneous and interrelated systems of signs, and the view that there is no direct or clear link between the sign and the referred object “behind the sign” have a great impact on the understanding of the educational subject and the self. Subjectivity and the construction of the self are thus part of sign systems contingent to culture and history, yet they are neither fully arbitrary nor fully determined. We may then understand the meaning of the self and of subjectivity better by looking at the use of the languages game in question—just as Wittgenstein suggested (1952): Meaning is use. Given that
the opinions outlined here make some sense, the language game metaphor seems to be an appropriate way of reflecting on educational discourse. This implies some modesty with respect to the use of generalizations: Just as there is no universal form of language there is not something common to all language games that makes them games. There is only what Wittgenstein called "family resemblance" (There might be a striking resemblance between several generations of the same family, but close study shows that there is no feature common to all in the family).

Language games are only small segments of the whole of language, and the language game of the self is only a small part of the whole of education. So-called "humanistic" or "person-centered" approaches to education, such as Carl Rogers' *Freedom to Learn* (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994), clearly seem to exaggerate their emphasis on a specific language game of the self (which of course remains an important part of educational discourse). As modernity comes to the point where one has the feeling that the time of great projects and visions belongs to the past (Gergen, 1990), language games of the self become obtrusive and even coercive because the self seems to be the only "locus of control" left to the modern individual. In consequence, the canonized language games of the self marginalizes other language games. Security, meaning and authenticity are increasingly searched for in the self. Eighteen years ago, Christopher Lasch described this tendency in *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (1979). When the social world and education are mainly interpreted in psychological terms, in terms of needs, feelings and motivation, the notion of autonomy as morality—as it is understood in the Enlightenment tradition—becomes obsolete and even implausible (Reichenbach & Oser, 1995).

However, if the subject and the self are not to be understood as (modern) monolithic entities one might conceptualize them as (postmodern) "texts". According to Derrida (1981) and Lovlie (1992), a text is a system of differences, transformations, and substitutes. The postmodern self might then be seen as a "language game player" (Meder, 1987, 1994). The language game player may also play the (modern and psychological) game of the self but she will refuse to believe in a "true" or "real" self. She doubts the necessity of trans-situational consistency in judgment and action, and is therefore not going to invest great amounts of time and energy in the search for her "real" self, the very "nature" of human beings or personal "authenticity". She knows that these notions are contingent constructs, even if more or less useful, constructs that—depending on the language game being played—do fit well, and sometimes provide an impression of truth and depth. However, the language game player may know about her decentricity, about the inconsistencies in her feelings, opinions, and values, and she may know about the relativity of making sense of life. She does not really feel that she is the very center of her life, and she does not
mourn that loss of illusion. She plays different games, which is authentic to her, and she lives in a world where heterogeneous language games are played. She defends diversity, but she is very modest when it comes to universal claims with regard to presumed fundamentals postulated as preconditions of any livable plurality.

Both, the (psychologized) "master of self" and the (postmodern) "language game player" are children of late modernity. The master of self believes in the good and the right that hide in the depth of his self, a depth that does not depend on the outside. The master of self is convinced that "good life" is within all of us, and "not something that is dependent on outside sources" as Rogers and Freiberg write (1994, p. xxv). However, depth is always homogeneous, unified, and never plural—the "true nature" and the "real self" cannot be thought of in terms of plurality. The master of the self is modern, living within the sacred framework of great narratives, such as the one of emancipation (see Lyotard, 1984), or the one of development and continuity. He feels he lives an individual and personal life. He aims at emancipation by becoming authentic. To him, emancipation presupposes the notion of centered subjectivity, either as an origin or an end (Lovlie, 1992, p. 125).

The notion of subjectivity without a center is neither compatible with the self-understanding of the master of self nor with the notion of authenticity. The jargon of the real self supports the modern individual in becoming reflective. On the one hand, this process may be valued positively; the humanistic approach to education points out the importance of self-concept, motivation and well-being in the educational process and for the appropriate understanding of the child. On the other hand, there are critical tendencies that have been described by authors such as Lasch (1979) or Sennett (1974). It is no longer obvious that there are other tasks in life than running after the real self—this search has supported apolitical consequences of late modernity and has led to a denial of the importance of the public sphere in common life (and is therefore a potential threat to democracy).

There are dark sides of the language game player too, of course. She may accept that the search for the real self is important to others. To her it is not. She might be more tolerant and modest than the master of self. However, she might slip into this type of easy tolerance which in fact is nothing but indifference and disinterest (Sennett, 1994). The language game player necessarily becomes a relativist because she acknowledges the existence of pluralism (of truth and rightness) outside and inside her person. This must effect the social and moral constitution of the subject. Tolerance as indifference seems typical for big parts of the educated class in Western pluralistic societies. From the perspective of modern theories of democracy, this attitude might be regarded as a stabilizing factor for "peaceful" forms of life—at least as long as the major needs of most individuals
are satisfied (cf. Schmidt, 1995). A common feature of both the postmodern self and the democratic mind is their closeness to an “ethos of doubt”. Doubt is per se non-fundamentalistic and anti-totalitarian, but it may not nevertheless provide a sufficient base for democratic engagement which also requires accessible public spheres (see section 3). Summing up, it may be said that there are various reasons for (moral) indifference and (political) disinterest—some may be detected in the over-powering search for the authentic self and the wish to control it, others may be motivated by a loss of meaning due to the inflation and plurality of meaning. If the “supply” of meaning is perceived as if it were some cultural supermarket in which one is to freely choose the items at one’s own discretion, the individual will finally end up in painful experiences of arbitrariness and atomization. Arendt would probably call them experiences of “worldlessness” (cf. 1958).

The Democratic Mind In Postmodern Mass Societies: Developmental Winners And Losers

It seems that The Fall of Public Man (Sennett, 1974) goes hand in hand with the disappearance—or weakening—of the community and its social cohesion. The fall of public man is also the fall of communal living. Community and the public sphere are complementary domains of human life and action, and the development of the democratic mind is strongly orientated towards and guided by two types of different but interdependent discourses: “communitarian and private” discourses on the one hand, and “liberal and public” ones on the other. One might argue from a developmental perspective that the borders between the public and the private spheres and the practice of shuttling between the two are of constitutive relevance for the development of a democratic mind. As the differentiation between these complementary modes of orientation—following Wittgenstein, we could call them “language game families”—dissolves, the self experiences arbitrariness and indifference. The self may at the same time suffer from these expressions of its atomization and enjoy them: there is not only a lack of orientation and a great amount of ambivalence but also great feelings of liberation. However, the atomized self of our late modernity is not the Cartesian self with its clear distinctions and detachments—it is not a hermit-like nucleus but rather a foggy jigsaw. Liberated from religious, cultural and political traditions, the late modern self does not know who it is—and “identity work” becomes a vulnerable developmental project. This great modern search—which seems to be very personal and individualistic but is actually quite standardized (Beck, 1986)—has paradoxical implications for the self and its “technologies” (Foucault, 1988; Taylor, 1991). The strong wish to control the self leads to its “elimi-
nation”; at the very least, it leads to a destabilization with regard to the self-attributions of moral and public responsibilities.

With the liberal educational project of moral and political autonomy one presupposes the ability of the individual to express more or less sovereign and reflective points of view with regard to these matters. Such noble aims are surely achieved by some individuals—they could be called “developmental winners of modernity”. But with the harsh “post-structuralist”, “postmodern” attack on the self as a unity, it becomes evident that the construction of the self is strongly influenced by the social context (Moscovici 1961; Farr & Moscovici 1984) and the power of its discourses (Foucault 1992). It is a hard statement to make, but it seems that there are many more “developmental losers of modernity”—selves who are indeed detached from the community and not in touch with any public sphere, foggy selves who seem neither to have the power nor the ability or motivation to gain self-respect by playing the various language games within the communitarian and/or public discourses. These selves essentially play other games, the atomized games of work, consumption and short-term happiness.

I am not criticizing these games which are important to all of us. However, when it comes to the development of the moral and political aspects of the self, it seems undeniable that only few have access to the community and/or the public sphere as important sources of recognition, that means self-respect and self-acceptance. The political domain of life—which has to be strictly distinguished from party politics—is very likely to disappear in late modern mass democracies. What has been referred to as “public happiness” (Arendt, 1958) will then be experienced only by the exclusive developmental winners of modernity. Unlike mere politics, the existence of the political domain of human life—political practice—is fragile, and it is in fact not even a necessity but an ideal: political practice is not a gift of nature, as Meyer stated (1994, p. 17). Hannah Arendt convincingly illustrated what it means to have mass democracies with much politics but without political practice, without political life (1958, 1968/1994).

So, do postmodern selves develop democratic minds? A central characteristic of the postmodern self, it has been argued, is that it has indeed accepted the existence of its internal pluralism and its internal heterogeneity’s—disconnected fragments of experiences. This does not mean that the postmodern self believes that “anything goes”—that’s just a often used, but nevertheless unacceptable modernist way of attacking the concept, rather, it means that the chances such a self has of developing a democratic mind are double-edged. On the one hand, the postmodern acceptance of radical plurality and its non-fundamentalism is simply a radicalization of the democratic ideal, as Welsch (1992, p. 41) argued. Democracy enables dissent with respect to both convictions and claims—this is what constitutes its general openness. Democratic forms of organi-
zation are in fact much more focused on dissent than on consensus. In this regard, the basic political equipment which enables the postmodern self to live out democratic forms of life is actually perfectly adequate. On the other hand, the transformation, weakening and even disappearance of the public spheres of life, of their social and psychological preconditions, respectively—leads to many selves who suffer from not having a “secure base” from where they can get in touch with the political domain of human life. These selves find no point of contact in the community or the public domain, and to feel oneself to be detached from the community and the public sphere means to be detached from one’s own self. Such selves become psychologized, and may indeed be tyrannized by intimacy (Sennett, 1974); they are apolitical and not interested in public life; nor are they interested in discovering what meaning democratic principles might have for their lives. They might enjoy the manifold pseudo-publics of TV and other media, but what they consume is interchangeable information that does not change and shape their lives; rather, it is a comfortable way to pass time. These selves—and I believe they are typical for our mass democracies—suffer from not really being in touch with (social) reality. The mass media are not able to provide a source of self-respect as does political practice. But it is in such practice where the very beginning of democracy lay, namely in the Greek polis (which was regarded as the only place of freedom). Hannah Arendt reminded us that there are certain experiences which are a part of human happiness, and which can only be made when one is politically acting in a public sphere. These experiences are not indispensable and they are not enforceable, but we know, or better: we feel, that an education in democracy which is not devoted to this human possibility is a poor democratic education; it may be morally relevant and important, but it will be an education which is missing the very point of the political life: the debate between free citizens in a public sphere.

References


TRSE Spring 1998


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Trends in *Theory and Research in Social Education* From 1973 to 1997: Implications for Goals and Process

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Abstract

TRSE is used as a source of trends in social studies education inquiry over the past 25 years. There is a 60%-30% balance between empirical research and theory articles, and 10% split between research reviews and methodological works. Quantitative research dominated early, but has waned; qualitative research has increased. Curriculum, learning, and teaching studies are roughly equal, with a recent upsurge in teaching research. Curriculum-oriented inquiry is increasingly dominated by normative theory. Learning studies aim most at intellectual development, with a recent focus on historical understanding. Teaching studies are dominated by pedagogy and methods research, with a recent emphasis on teacher thinking and perspectives. Subject matter is seen as general social studies about 20% of the time, and as disciplines about 40%, most notably history and economics. TRSE has become more international in content and authorship. There is an increase in non-refereed material, and the author urges editors to shift more space to refereed articles.

This article presents images of scholarship in social studies education over the past 25 years, the first quarter-century of *Theory and Research in Social Education* (TRSE hereafter). This journal can serve as a mirror for social education researchers. As they examine its contents they gaze at their collective reflection. Looking across time—at all 87 issues published thus far—permits a moving rather than a static picture, and suggests changes in views of what constitutes social education, worthwhile research questions, and means of addressing them. It also shows changes in conceptions of the journal’s purposes and proper means for attaining them.

Therefore, the purpose of this report is to examine how the format and relative content emphasis of the journal have changed since its inception in 1973. These changes reflect decisions made by its authors, editors, editorial boards, and readers, and reflect trends in how professional and intellectual discourse is structured in this field. They also raise value questions: Are the trends ones that should have occurred, or do members of...
this research community need to rethink and redirect them? The concluding section of this article aims to stimulate discussion of those questions.

Establishment of an independent research journal was a main impetus for the founding of the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA hereafter) of the NCSS. Nelson documented the various themes and issues confronting social studies scholars during the 1960’s and the events leading to creation of CUFA and its journal. Among the values embodied in TRSE are the notions of peer reviewed publication of original inquiry grounded in theory and empirical evidence (Nelson 1997).

Eight editors have helped manifest the CUFA founders’ vision of the journal. While their actions alone have not determined all aspects of TRSE, editors obviously have been important leaders in its directions. For that reason I have examined and presented trends according to the eight editorial periods, all of which have been three years except Fraenkel’s one of nearly five years, and present editor Ross’s, thus far just under two years.

There are difficulties in presenting the data by editor period. One relatively minor one is that the number of issues in all terms is not the same. The two earliest editors did not publish as many issues as subsequent ones; TRSE achieved quarterly publication frequency only with Volume 6 in 1978. The present editor’s period only includes seven issues, while Fraenkel’s had 19. Therefore, the “issue weight” of the eight editorships is not as uniform as the time spent. The analysis must be taken with these caveats in mind.

A more serious interpretive problem with editor periods is that longer-term historical trends in research and scholarship generally are put in the background, while in fact they have been powerful forces—no doubt much more potent than differences among editors—acting upon all educational research and its journals. Obvious examples include the shift from dependence upon a mostly psychology-dominated research agenda and methodology of the 1960’s and earlier, to a more diverse set of theoretical perspectives, research problems, and a much more balanced use of empirical research methods with the advent of widespread qualitative inquiry in education (Ross 1996). Nelson (1994) among others has scrutinized historical trends in the sociopolitical roots of social studies education which have echoes in the nature of its research. The recent emphasis on standards and testing, perhaps a reaction against progressive education, contribute to research perspectives and questions.

However, it is not the purpose of this article to interpret TRSE trends within those broad social and educational forces acting on research generally, but rather to focus and comment upon those features of TRSE, its editorial practice, and its research community in ways that might lead to discussion, decisions, and action about the kind of journal that community wants. Centering on editorial periods contributes to this focus, but in so doing the broader picture is slighted.
What follows is divided into five sections after a brief explanation of the methods used to tabulate and analyze the data. Trends in kind of article—theory or research—are examined, and then the empirical research articles are broken down into type—historical, qualitative, or quantitative. Substantive contents of the articles are analyzed along several dimensions, highlighting changing emphases across time. Growth of non-refereed material in TRSE is documented and analyzed. Editorial processes are described. Finally, I forward some opinions about the course of the journal, and make recommendations for its future.

Methods

All 87 issues of TRSE, from Volume 1 Number 1 (1-1 hereafter) in 1973 through 25-4 in Fall 1997 were used. These contain 342 refereed articles and 6,574 pages. All material in each article or item was not necessarily read in its entirety, although the author had read nearly all prior to this study. Careful examination of abstracts was supplemented with sufficient study of the entire article to make the classifications described below. The articles were not critiqued regarding their quality; this not the purpose of this investigation. Evaluations of quality can be found elsewhere, as in Wallen & Fraenkel (1988).

Trends in Kind of Article

In their succinct and still noteworthy opening statement about TRSE, the first editor, Cleo Cherryholmes, assisted by Jack Nelson, commented on the inseparability of theory and research, while acknowledging that one might be emphasized over the other by social educators (Cherryholmes & Nelson 1973). A starting point for examining TRSE trends is this dichotomy, embedded in the journal's very name. I created four categories: 1) “Empirical Research,” including all articles (including historical pieces) reporting and analyzing primary source, empirical data; 2) “Theoretical,” including analytical material, often fitting Cherryholmes' and Nelson's “careful logical and linguistic analyses of what we mean when we talk about social education” (Cherryholmes & Nelson 1973); 3) “Research Reviews,” that synthesize primary source material across primary studies; and 4) “Methods,” that investigate some methodological aspects of empirical or theoretical inquiry. In classifying each article I used only one of the four categories, even though in some cases the article contained elements of more than one. For those I made a judgment about the primary thrust and purpose of the scholarship.

Empirical research has been the predominant type of inquiry reported in TRSE over its life, with 63% of all 342 articles falling into this category (see Table 1). However, there is a marked “inverted-U” trend through
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Empirical</th>
<th>Theoretical</th>
<th>Research Review</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>N of Issues</th>
<th>N of Articles</th>
<th>% of Articles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherryholmes (1973-1975)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehman (1976-1978)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popkewitz (1979-1981)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson (1982-1984)</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larkins (1985-1987)</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clements (1988-1990)</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross (1996-1997)</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL %</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>342</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
time. Beginning with the earliest three issues over two-thirds of the material was empirical research, but the percentage declined steadily over the next three editors, falling to 43% in Nelson’s term. After this, the percentage grew again to above 60%. While Ross’ editorship represents a small number of issues—only 7 thus far—the percentage of empirical research in his tenure thus far stands at a preponderant 86%.

Theoretical research reports constitute 29% overall, and this has hardly varied until the most recent editorial period. Research reviews vary between zero and nine percent, with the overall level at 4 percent. Finally, there are four percent methodological articles in the 25-year period, but there has been much more variation across editorial periods, with none published during the tenures of Cherryholmes, Fraenkel, and Ross, and 17% under Nelson.

Within the 207 empirical research articles, there are three main types—quantitative, qualitative, and historical.6 (Where there were blends of these types, I made a single classification, based on what I judged to be the principal purpose, rather than techniques, of the research.) While for the whole 25 year period there are one-half quantitative, slightly more than one-third qualitative, and 14% historical, TRSE reflects educational research shifts generally—there has been a marked decline in quantitative articles, and a concomitant increase in qualitative research (see Table 2). Until about 1988 (the end of Larkins’s term as editor), the majority of each editor’s empirical research articles were quantitative (except for Popkewitz, when nearly one-third of his articles were historical). Beginning in 1988, the proportion of qualitative articles jumped quickly to comprise well over half, and stands at two-thirds with the present editor.

For historical articles, there is an uneven pattern across time, ranging from zero to 32% of various editors’ totals. There have been overt attempts to stimulate the reporting of historical accounts of our field, with the first theme issue (8-3), and a second theme issue (22-4), labeled “Foundations of the Social Studies”, both devoted entirely to historical research. While there is no clear trend, historical research makes up a significant part of TRSE articles, comprising 14% of the total empirical articles.

Trends in Article Content

Categorizing and analyzing the substance, or content, of the articles poses more complexities than the general orientations or research types examined above. I classified each article separately according to three broad substantive areas: “subject,” “curriculum content,” and “level”.

Subject

I developed a category system by scanning through the articles’ titles and abstracts, noting primary concepts named, and then organizing them
### Table 2

**Type of Empirical TRSE Articles**  
(Percentages of Articles in Three Categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Historical</th>
<th>Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherryholmes</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehman</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popkewitz</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larkins</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clements</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraenkel</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OVERALL %  
Total N  

### Table 3

**Content of TRSE Articles**  
(Percentages of Codings in Three Categories)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Curriculum</th>
<th>Learners/ Learning</th>
<th>Teachers/ Teaching</th>
<th>Total N Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherryholmes</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehman</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popkewitz</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larkins</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clements</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraenkel</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OVERALL %  
Total N  

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according to three groups, including "Curriculum," "Learners and Learning Outcomes," and "Teachers and Teaching". However, I excluded articles that were historical or methodological. Neither type seemed to be amenable to the content classification I carried out. For each article I used two sub-codes, if appropriate, within each of the three major groups—curriculum, learners, and teachers. For some articles only one code per group was needed; for a few, three or more could have been used, but I coded only the two that appeared primary.8

One set of images from the 25-year TRSE mirror reflects a relative preoccupation with these three fundamental content issues of social education. In Table 3 there is a strikingly even balance among them. Curriculum is the category appearing most often (39%) with learners and learning nearly even with curriculum, at 34%. Twenty-seven percent of the articles were coded in the teachers and teaching category. There has been very modest variation (excepting the current editor, who has relatively few articles), and no clear trend, in the first two categories over the life of TRSE. However, in the teacher and teaching category, there has been an overall increase in the proportion of articles. During the first three editorships, the overall percentage was only about 17%, but subsequently there was another "inverted U" pattern, where the percentage increased up to the high of 38% with Larkins, and then turned downward to 25% under Fraenkel, although this still remained well above the early levels.

**Curriculum.** Within the curriculum area, I classified articles according to nine aspects, listed here (with the percentages in parentheses):

1. Nature/Aims/Goals of & Rationales for Social Studies Curriculum (32%)
2. Scope and Sequence of Curriculum; Standards (1%)
3. Expanding Communities Curriculum (3%)
4. Social Problems and Controversial Issues, Conflict Resolution (6%)
5. Classroom/School Climate and Environment, Hidden Curriculum, Organization Factors (9%)
6. Theory-Practice Linkage—Implications of a Particular Theory for Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction (15%)
7. Textbooks Content Analysis (15%)
8. Adoption/Diffusion of Curriculum and Practices (3%)
9. Impact of a specific curriculum, unit, or non-teacher specific practice on classroom outcomes (14%)

The first category, that I have labeled previously the "normative theory" of social studies, constitutes by far the most frequent of these nine categories. Most articles with this code are theoretical, and questions regarding the aims, purposes, and rationales for the curriculum are the para-
mount theoretical issues of our field. Next most frequent are the categories of theory to practice linkages, textbooks, and curriculum impact, all at about 15%.

Given the small numbers of instances in these categories trends over time are difficult to discern. Given this restriction, and again ignoring the present editor's period because of very few articles, there are three areas with somewhat distinct change patterns. The first category, normative theory, and the fifth, classroom and school climate, have increased over time. In contrast, the sixth category, involving articles emphasizing theory-practice links, has decreased in frequency. The numbers involved are too small, and the categorization too fraught with problems, to conclude that we are emphasizing normative curriculum theory at the expense of converting theory into practice, but if true that trend might trouble many.

Learners and Learning Outcomes. The next set of subcategories relate to a focus on learning outcomes or the learning process. These include:

1. Intellectual/Cognitive Development (23%)
2. Concept Learning, Misconceptions; Information Processing Theory (13%)
3. Reflective Inquiry, Critical Thinking, Decision-Making, Problem Solving (16%)
4. Values, Moral, and Pro-social Behavior Development (12%)
5. Socialization and Attitude Outcomes (26%)
6. Gender Roles (6%)
7. Students' Liking of, Perceptions of Importance of, and Effort Toward Social Studies; Student Motivation in Social Studies Classes (4%)

The two categories that stand out from this group are those of intellectual development and socialization. In the former, there is a very distinct trend, with more recent research tracing the nature and development of historical thinking, and this is surely related to the growing dominance of history subject matter that will be documented in the next section. Regarding the socialization category, the largest proportion of articles have to do with political socialization, a theme appearing to be an important but diminishing part of our discourse over the years. The studies centered around values and moral development likewise seem to be diminishing across time. In contrast, two somewhat less frequent categories—reflective inquiry and gender roles—have grown recently (particularly during the Fraenkel editorship). Whether this is an aberration or they continue to increase remains an open question.

Teachers and Teaching. The final group of subcategories are formed under the teacher category, and consist of the following:
1. Pedagogy/Teaching-Learning Methods, Techniques, and Strategies (38%)
2. Teacher Thinking/Perspectives/Planning About Curriculum and Instruction (51%)
3. Learning Objectives and Hierarchies (6%)
4. Technology Use and Impact (3%)
5. Ethics (2%)

The first two categories comprise a large majority of codes in this group. The first, having to do with methods, techniques, and strategies, swelled to its highest level in the Larkins period, and then became less frequent over time. In contrast, there has been a sharp increase in teacher thinking and perspectives studies; during the four earliest editorships there was only a smattering of these, but from Larkins on they have become the most favored kind of teaching study reported in TRSE. This relatively recent emphasis was foreshadowed, perhaps, by the seminal review on teachers' thought processes by Clark and Peterson in the third Handbook of Research on Teaching (Wittrock 1986).

Subject Orientation

How is interest in specific subject matter orientations reflected in TRSE material? Here are the percentages by subject found in the journal:

1. Social Studies (Explicitly Non-Subject Oriented) (20%)
2. History (18%)
3. Geography (5%)
4. Government/Political Science (1%)
5. Economics (14%)
6. Sociology (2%)
7. Psychology (1%)
8. Anthropology (0%)
9. Values Education/Moral Education/Indoctrination/Nationalistic Education (11%)
10. Global Studies/Education, Peace Education, World Studies (7%)
11. Multicultural Education (5%)
12. Environmental Education (1%)
13. Citizenship Education; Civic Education (17%)

The most frequently occurring subject, explicitly "social studies," occurs mainly in studies involving the elementary grades. In spite of social education's rhetoric about curriculum being social studies, as distinct from specific disciplines, in TRSE articles researchers tend to regard the traditional disciplines, not social studies, as the relevant curricular orientation. Adding up the various specific disciplines subsumes 41% of the
articles. Within that group, history and economics dominate. It is noteworthy that history has increased dramatically during the past four, as compared to the first four, editor periods (with a corresponding drop in “social studies”), whereas economics has maintained about an even level. Scholarship whose subject focus is citizenship education has also increased somewhat over the 25-year period. There seem to be no discernable trends among the other categories—values, global, multicultural, and environmental education. Government and geography are notable for their near absence throughout the 25 years.

**Level**

The articles were categorized by grade level, (although 27% could not be sorted this way):

1. Explicitly Inclusive—K-12 (12%)
2. Early Childhood/Elementary (24%)
3. Secondary (includes middle school, junior high school, high school) (50%)
4. College/Teacher Education (14%)

Of the articles pointing to one of the four levels, half aim at secondary education, elementary has one-quarter, while college studies—mainly devoted to teacher education—appear about as frequently as those encompassing the K-12 curriculum. There appear to be no pronounced across-time tendencies within these categories, with the possible exception of an “U-shaped” trend for secondary, where the first two editorial periods showed frequent secondary articles; during the next three there were relatively fewer secondary and more college studies; and during the last three there has been an increase of secondary pieces to former high levels, and fewer college-level articles.

**International Perspectives and Authors**

Another noteworthy aspect of TRSE articles changing over time has been the increase in international perspectives and authors. During the first four editorial periods a total of only two articles were authored by non-North American scholars, and two others had international data or topics included. Beginning early in the Larkins editorship there was a noticeable strengthening of this quality: 15 articles with international authors and 19 with international content have appeared since 1986.

The internationalization of TRSE illustrates the growing strength of social education as a field of study as well as the strength of the journal itself. The same trend appears in many U.S. educational research journals. Research has become more inclusive of cultural orientations as well as individuals holding them. The field is moving away from a parochialism that
### Table 4
Analysis of TRSE Refereed and Non-Refereed Article Material

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Editors</th>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
<th>Column 3</th>
<th>Column 4</th>
<th>Column 5</th>
<th>Column 6</th>
<th>Column 7</th>
<th>Column 8</th>
<th>Column 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cherryholmes</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>83.7</td>
<td>78.3</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ehman</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>87.0</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popkewitz</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larkins</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clements</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>69.0</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraenkel</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>105.8</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>112.1</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>89.1</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- † Excludes masthead, index, instructions to authors.
- * Includes article abstracts.
was more characteristic in the 1950's, 60's, and 70's. This is a very positive trend of the field reflected in TRSE, and there is reason to celebrate it.

**The Balance of Refereed and Non-Refereed Material**

Thus far the analysis of TRSE has concentrated on the content and methods of its refereed articles. Given the various editors' statements about its purposes, these should and do comprise the largest portion of the journal. However, there has been a definite difference in the emphasis on non-refereed material for different editors, and a distinct overall trend toward more of it over time. Relevant data are summarized in Table 4.10

**Refereed Articles**

Beginning with the refereed articles, it can be seen in Table 4 (column 1) that the average number of articles per issue has ranged from 3.0 (Ross) to 5.1 (Larkins), with the overall average 3.9. There is no trend evident in number of articles for each issue. The average number of total pages in each issue (column 2) dipped somewhat after the first two editorial periods, reaching a low of 67.5 in Nelson's editorship, and has since grown to over 100 during Fraenkel's and Ross' terms. In contrast to this U-shaped trend line, the average number of pages devoted to refereed articles (column 3) has varied around the overall average of 74.5 with no apparent time pattern. Finally, the average length of refereed articles (column 4) remained very close to the average of 19 pages until the two most recent editorships, where it has increased to around 25. This is probably attributable, at least in part, to the upsurge in the relatively longer qualitative articles during the most recent times, as we saw previously (Table 2). Clements, Fraenkel, and Ross published proportionally more qualitative articles than previous editors.

**The Changing Balance**

The center column of Table 4 (column 5) is a significant one; it shows the proportion of refereed pages to total pages across time. The trend line is very clear (although the Larkin's editorship stands out as a single sharp spike to interrupt an otherwise monotonic progression). Since the origin of the journal, when 94% of the pages were devoted to refereed material, more and more non-refereed items have been added, so that at present 69% of pages are refereed. What has been added over the years to yield this result? Four things: letters and essays from and to the editor, research in progress, responses and rejoinders, and book reviews.

**Letters and Essays From and To the Editor** (column 6). Through the first five editors, these appeared to be withering away; by the time of Larkin's tenure there were essentially none. However, Clements used this feature
extensively, averaging more than eight pages per issue. During the most recent two periods about three pages per issue have appeared.

Research in Progress (column 7). Only two editors, Ehman and Nelson, used this idea, and neither devoted much space to it. It is the least frequently appearing non-refereed material, and its absence is no apparent loss.

Responses and Rejoinders (column 8). Over the life of TRSE 4.4 pages per issue make up this category, but it has ranged widely from none to 20, with some editors placing substantial emphasis on it. Because the responses and rejoinders focus on material published originally as refereed, they are closest in kind, and perhaps quality, to the articles themselves.

Book Reviews (column 9). Finally, book reviews typically take up on the average more than seven pages per issue, again with a wide variation by editor. Cherryholmes had none, although as for all the other categories, we must remember he published only three issues, and did so in the start-up period of the journal, when just beginning to line up resources and ideas for its format and contents. Nelson pushed the book reviewing section to a higher level of importance than before. The amount of book review space has become even more substantial during the three most recent editorships.

Editorial Practice

There are matters of editorial practice that warrant some commentary—the referee process, theme issues and use of guest editors, role of the Editorial Board, and addition of e-mail based listservs and the web.

Referee Process

Rigorous reviewing is an essential part of maintaining the intellectual integrity of the journal. Nelson (1997) implies that early CUFA organizers viewed this as an important way to address their concerns about the quality of published social studies material. Most TRSE editors report that they screened all manuscripts, prior to external reviewing, for relevance to social education and to insure there was a minimum quality level. Most used three referees (except Ross, who has begun to use four) who were blind to the identity of a manuscript’s author(s); Cherryholmes and Popkewitz report they used at least two referees. When there was a strong division among the reviewers, some editors made final judgments themselves, and others sent the manuscripts out to additional referees for more opinions.

What referee process is used in the case of theme issues? There seem to be two answers. When the regular editor initiates the theme issue each article is reviewed normally. When there were guest editors for theme issues, the process appeared to change somewhat, although the reports on reviewing from the regular and guest editors varied somewhat. There
was blind reviewing in all cases, either from one external reviewer plus editor Fraenkel, or by three external referees. In the case of guest editors Pang and Saxe, with their own articles published in their theme issues, three referees blind to their identities reviewed the manuscripts, but editor Fraenkel handled their reviews himself, insuring credibility.

Soliciting articles for themes and then subjecting them to rigorous refereeing can result in difficult situations and hurt feelings. One informant shared with me an anecdote about such a solicitation, that the author apparently took as the same as an acceptance. When the manuscript received negative reviews and had to be rejected for publication, the editor lost a friend through the misunderstanding. I had a similar experience involving a solicitation for a theme issue when I was editor, although eventually that manuscript was published after painful correspondence and revisions. I, too, lost the warm relationship with a colleague.

While theme issues do not present an exception to blind refereeing, other material does. Book reviews, letters and essays from and to the editor, and response/rejoinder pieces have not been reviewed beyond the editor in the past, although according to the present editor’s “Information for Authors” section, the “Right to Reply” policy does lead to the same review process as for regular articles. If my interpretation of this policy is correct, it signals a tightening of the review process by including response/rejoinder material that was previously not refereed, and is a positive move by editor Ross.

Theme Issues and Guest Editors

Thus far there have been six issues with declared themes; only three editors (Ehman, Popkewitz, and Fraenkel) have created them. The present editor, Ross, has solicited manuscripts for an upcoming theme issue, “Defining the Social Studies.” As pointed out above, the three theme issues under editor Fraenkel had guest editors, with the other three handled by the regular editors. What were the reasons for creating themes? In my own case I and others admired a panel of papers at a CUFA session on the ethics of our profession; I invited the authors to submit them as a group and after review and revision by different sets of reviewers they constituted a theme section of the issue. Popkewitz reports that he received too few submissions in the areas of history and theory, and they “...were important enough to provide some systematic attention” (Popkewitz, personal communication, August 6, 1997). Fraenkel, likewise, created theme issues based on his “...judgment about what was a current topic undergoing discussion, or [he] thought would be of interest to the profession (Fraenkel, personal communication, August 8, 1997).
Relationships with Editorial Boards

The recent expansion of and changed relationship with the board is noteworthy. Before editor Ross the board consisted of 22 individuals, and now there are 31, undoubtedly representing an increased diversity of views. More important, there seem to be changes in the role of the board. Ross seems to be relying at least in part on the board for direction regarding themes (Ross, 1996, 104-105) as well as for substantive input and advice on other matters, and in this has departed from previous editors’ practices. He reports using the board “…to make judgments about proposals for theme issues, to provide suggestions on authors to invite for the TRSE 25th year essays…the 25th year book project...discuss[ing] review procedures...[and] nurturing of beginning researchers....” (Ross, personal communication, August 6, 1997). Most previous editors reflected that they used the boards primarily as manuscript reviewers, although Popkewitz checked his planned theme issues with them, and Nelson surveyed them formally for ideas that might be enacted. Fraenkel sought their advice formally as well. Yet with the possible exception of the present editor, boards seem to have been used as reviewer pools, plus as a primarily passive, reactive group with respect to journal direction and editorial decision-making.

Electronic Supplements to the Journal

Editor Ross has instituted a listserv, TRSE-L, to foster electronic discussion of substantive issues and questions of the field. Thus far a TRSE web site has not been made public. The listserv has been relatively active since its inception, but with a small group of participants. For example the debate over whether CUFA should participate in California conferences was highlighted in one thread. This electronic extension beyond the quarterly journal and annual conferences provides a means to increase our professional discourse and sense of community. There are potential problems—uneven access to and use of electronic communications privileges some over others, and the contents of most listservs, including this one, are not subject to any review of content. Thus far, the level of dialogue on TRSE-L has been high, with none of the discursiveness and diatribes common on others in which I have participated, including one of AERA’s. In order for this to be a fruitful way for us to interact, however, there might have to be some structure, oversight, and perhaps intervention, to insure its continued quality.

Revisiting TRSE Goals: Issues for Continued Dialogue

Nelson’s recent article (1997), several others’ in the 25th year series, and the present article’s backdrop of trends in TRSE over 25 years, suggest the need to revisit the goals of TRSE. I therefore suggest several issues that should be part of this deliberation. In doing so I take a more
personal stance, making clear where I stand on the issues, in order to help stimulate the kind of discussion I believe important for the future of the journal and its organization. I realize that the data analysis above does not necessarily lead to my positions, and that my values dominate my interpretation of these questions.

**Who Have the Editors Been?**

Eight white males have served thus far. There have been female assistant editors, book review editors, and theme issue guest editors, but no female or minority has been named principal editor. This fact stands out starkly, separate from analysis of individual periods, issues, or articles. It cannot be known what impact female or minority editors might have had, or would have now, on the quality of TRSE or its trends outlined above. But given CUFA present membership—indeed, its leadership—surely the record of the next 25 years of the journal should show a balance of editors' biography. Editing the journal is a unique and important service to be performed by a more representative group of individuals than has been the case up to now.

**Relevance: What Is Meant By “Social Education”?**

By their initial screening and deciding to have submitted material reviewed and published, TRSE editors play a powerful role in shaping what constitutes relevant social education scholarship. While difficult, distinctions must be made, and lines drawn over this question. Of all the possible manuscripts, book reviews, and commentary written in the general educational research community, only a small fraction are sufficiently related to social studies education to warrant publication in TRSE.

The first editors devoted careful thinking to this problem. They stated that the journal “...is designed to stimulate and communicate systematic research and thinking in social education” (Cherryholmes & Nelson, 1973, inside front cover), and then enumerated several exemplar topics for manuscripts, all containing or clearly implying reference to social education. Then they elaborated, adding that TRSE should provide

...a means for serious and systematic communications between other professional educators. The journal will attempt to capitalize on the virtues of eclecticism, in that professional social studies educators will benefit from insights on schooling and education that spring from different disciplines and perspectives. Insofar as possible the vices of eclecticism, including diffuse and non-relevant writing, will be avoided by maintaining the focus of the journal clearly on social education albeit broadly construed (Cherryholmes & Nelson, 1973, 84).
Given this formulation, editors have the important responsibility to judge the tension between inclusiveness on the one hand, and “diffuse and non-relevant writing” on the other, and must maintain the focus on social education.

We editors have sometimes failed. I am now puzzled by the presumed relevance of a couple of the articles published while I was editor, and by others during other periods. I also regret my attempts to present “research in progress” information. It could be much better handled through newsletters, conferences, and now the electronic means of listservs and the web. I find some book reviews seem far afield as well. Some letters/essays from and to editors have, over the history of TRSE, appeared to reflect “diffuse and non-relevant writing”.

**Balance Among Kinds of Research**

Several have written about the nature and importance of theory in social education inquiry (Larkins & McKinney, 1980; Popkewitz & Tabachnick, 1982; Shaver, 1982), and others about empirical research (Cheng, Fraenkel & Grant, 1994; Nelson, 1994; Popkewitz, 1978; Stanley, 1985; Wallen & Fraenkel, 1988). As I have shown above, there has been an amazingly constant 30% - 60% balance between the two in TRSE pages over 25 years, and this reflects the healthy state of social studies education inquiry—neither theory nor research have been slighted. Within empirical research studies, there has been a marked, and I think positive, shift away from the previously dominant quantitative research and toward more qualitative work, with the most recent period containing more than 60% in the latter category. This shows the journal has reflected accurately what has become commonplace among educational researchers generally. Theory and research are both needed; likewise, qualitative as well as quantitative empirical research is needed to address the wide-ranging questions confronting the field.

Similarly, there is a near parity among articles that focus on either curriculum, learners and learning, or teachers and teaching. These three broad areas encapsulate much that is relevant in our field, and they are addressed about equally in our scholarship, with no one of them dominating at the expense of the other two.

When considering the balance between refereed articles and non-refereed material, I believe we are moving in the wrong direction. As shown above, the trend is clear and strong. Early TRSE issues contained nearly 95% refereed articles. This has declined in every editorship (with the notable exception of Larkins, and the nearly unchanged percentage in Fraenkel’s case) to the present level of about 70%. Correlated with this movement is the marked reduction in the number of articles being published. Larkins raised the average to five per issue, but this has been declining since his editorship, and stands now at three. The growth of non-refereed material, plus the recent shift toward longer qualitative articles,
has combined to reduce numbers of the mainstream articles that justify TRSE's existence.

There are competing goals and values. One function of the journal has been to foster the communication within our social education community (see VanSledright & Grant, 1991, on their useful concept of "conversational community"), and much of the non-refereed material in TRSE aims at that goal. But the journal is not a newsletter. At its core the journal's aim is "...increasing the rationality of professional activity" and was founded in order to provide us with an outlet for "...new ideas and research findings (Cherryholmes & Nelson, 1973, iii)," not available in Social Education and other professional journals. The journal was established because of frustrations over NCSS publication policies and quality (Nelson, 1997), but it can be argued that the trend is to limit TRSE issues to fewer theory and research articles by continuing to expand the non-refereed material. In so doing its overall quality is diluted. Cherryholmes and Nelson meant publishing well-grounded, peer reviewed scholarship, not editorial commentary and book reviews of questionable relevance, when they talked of increasing the rationality of professional activity.

Editors as Activists or Archivists?

One pair of polar extremes for editorial roles is activists or archivists. Of course, there is middle ground, and no editor has been or should be exclusively at one or the other extreme. With more activist editors, an important task is pushing the field in unfamiliar, but needed, directions. This is reflected in longer letters (and essays—they have recently earned that label, with their length and extensive references) from the editors, theme issues, stimulation and formalization of extensive response/rejoinder sections, and other commentary. Editor Ross has initiated the electronic TRSE-L discussion medium, and has created the "TRSE at a Quarter Century" section, and has proposed a book of notable TRSE articles. On the other end of this continuum is the archivist editor, interested primarily—perhaps solely—in publishing the best of all theory and research in the field as an intellectual outlet and archive, and skipping the rest. Guy Larkins, with his exceptionally efficient period with more than 5 article per issue, and 98% refereed material, is the exemplar of an archivist.

Each editor has to choose their own point on this continuum, and it is good that different editors have made different choices. However, I believe recent editors have gone too far toward the activist end, and in so doing have displaced potential articles from the archive. Many in the field have bemoaned the relative dearth of published inquiry on many topics and questions; editors' choices can have some bearing on this state of affairs, (although they are by no means solely responsible). I urge our editors to move closer to the archivist position, and leave some of the non-refereed TRSE material for CUFA and AERA SIG meetings, newsletters,
TRSE-L (and perhaps other) listservs, the web, and other mechanisms for stimulating our "conversational community."

These four issues—biography of editors, what is relevant to social studies, balance of kind of research, and the editor's role—need to be the subjects of discourse in CUFA.

Notes

1 I appreciate the thoughtful comments and suggestions on a previous draft of this paper from my two colleagues, Lynne Boyle-Baise and Gerald Marker, as well as the criticisms and suggestions by four anonymous reviewers.

2 I refer only to principal editors for the sake of simplicity and brevity. There have been important assistant editors, book review editors, guest theme issue editors, and others who have played valuable roles in the editing process, but they remain mostly unnamed.

3 TRSE 13-4 was never published. Editor Larkins changed the numbering system for volumes subsequent to Volume 13 in order to bring them into correspondence with the standard publication cycle of other major educational research journals and libraries. An issue was not skipped, because 14-1 appeared at the point when 13-4 would have been published (Larkins, A., personal communication, June 30, 1997).

4 Only one refereed item was excluded: the "Symposium" on "Research, Instruction, and Public Policy in the History Curriculum" in 24-4. Editor Ross had all seven parts of this section blind reviewed as a single item by four referees (Ross, W., personal communication, June 29, 1997). However, I categorized it as commentary-response-rejoinder material, given its relatively brief and opinion-based nature.

5 The unit of analysis in this table and Table 2 is the article and not the page count. I also analyzed the material with numbers of pages devoted to the various categories as the unit of analysis, but the results are very similar. For example, Table 1 overall percentages vary only 1% across the four categories when number of pages is substituted for number of articles. Therefore, I decided not to present separate tables for the two units of analysis. Percentages in all tables might not total 100% because of rounding errors.

6 Conceptually I might better have included historical inquiry as a subset of qualitative inquiry (although there are quantitative historians, I know of none in our field!) However, I thought it best to leave history as a separate and equal category to highlight the trends.

7 Table 3 contains trend data for these three main categories, but I have omitted tables with trends for the subcategories within each in order to conserve space. Those tables tend to have very low frequencies in cells because of the relatively large number of categories. I have simply interpreted the few trends that appear without presenting support in table form.

8 Therefore, in Table 3, the unit of analysis is not strictly the article because of the double coding, but rather the total number of codes used for each of the three major groups. Nevertheless, the percentages are strongly related to the articles and I interpret them that way.

9 I incorporated all three of Thorton's (1997) meanings of "method" in this category.

10 In this section I used page counts as the unit of analysis, rather than numbers of articles as in the previous sections.

11 In this section, plus those on theme issues and Editorial Board roles, I depend on personal e-mail communications with each of the former editors (and the three guest editors for the themes,) except I did not receive information from Millard Clements regarding Board roles.

12 I wish I could summarize trends in manuscript submission and acceptance rates across the life of TRSE, but the data do not exist. They were typically a part of each editor's oral or written report to the CUFA business meeting in November, but unfortunately I did not record the ones I gave, nor did I keep my notes or written reports from other meetings. I hope future editors will institute the practice of publishing these statistics annually in issue number 4, as Fraenkel did in 22-3. However, editor Ross provided me with recent figures, submissions (in parents) and percentage acceptance rates: 1991 (76) 24%; 1992 (49)

Fraenkel reports that he plus one external referee reviewed them; the three guest editors told me they used three external referees, with Fraenkel having the final word.

References


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Living, Not Practicing, Democracy at School

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Aggie Seneway
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We appreciate this opportunity to respond to a teacher describing her efforts to implement democratic practices in her classroom. Teachers rarely have time to chronicle their teaching and we need descriptions such as this one if we are to connect theory and practice. We hope that our response is viewed as part of a necessary ongoing dialogue. While this article describes a democratic exercise, we feel the view of democracy is limited. In this classroom democracy is practiced only a small part of the school day. As educators who view the classroom as a political space in which students can come to understand themselves as either active or passive participants in the creation of knowledge, our aim is to enact democracy throughout the school day. Democratic decision cannot be limited to a few minutes and aspects of one's life. Democracy must be lived, not practiced.

In our response we first want to briefly provide a rationale for a broader view of democracy in the classroom, one in which students engage in making decisions about what, how and when to learn, about standards, and about relations between students and students, and students and teachers. We will then recount some of our own experiences as elementary school teachers: the more distant experiences of the first author and the recent and current experiences of the second author.

In “Practicing democracy at school” the author describes students’ participation in fifteen minutes of parliamentary decision making one to three times per week. Student discussion focused on what “people did wrong,” “rule making,” and “problem solving,” and deciding what to play at recess, while curriculum issues, such as “attendance at lessons and silent sustained reading are not negotiable.” Our concern and experience is with students making decisions about what, how, and with whom they learn.

Theorizing Democratic Classrooms

For Dewey, students learned to be democratic citizens through participating in institutions in which students democratically make decisions
about issues important to their own lives. Dewey argued that to become effective members of a democratic community, students must be leaders as well as followers and have the “power of self-direction and power of directing others, powers of administration” and “ability to assume positions of responsibility” as citizens and workers. Further, students must have “a command of the fundamental methods of inquiry and the fundamental tools of intercourse and communication.” (Dewey, 1976)

Our own thinking reflects that of Dewey. Classrooms and schools are not politically neutral places but places in which students learn what aspects of their lives they can democratically influence and how to act democratically. Giroux writes that schools cannot be understood outside of the mediations of history, power, and struggle. Schools are both sense-making and power-bearing institutions that are actively involved in the ‘struggle to control and contribute to the social circulation and uses of meaning, knowledges, pleasures, and values. (Giroux, 1996, p. 187)

In “Practicing democracy...” students learn that they can’t make decisions about what and how they learn. Student decision making is relegated to enforcing proper behavior and deciding recess activities. Instead, we want to develop classrooms in which students learn “how to think in ways that cultivate the capacity for judgment essential for the exercise of power and responsibility in a democratic society” (Euben, 1994).

Dewey not only notes that institutions need to be democratic but that students need to learn the skills of inquiry and dialogue. In our own classrooms we aim to encourage students to use language in an authentic context. For us, a classroom in which students engage in meaningful activities promotes careful use of language.

**Implementing Democracy**

Dewey is also helpful in thinking through specific educational practices. For example, while Dewey championed classrooms in which students participated in making decisions about what and how to learn, he did not advocate adults renouncing all authority. In the examples provided below we attempt to be clear that while students are making decisions on their own and with teachers, the teachers are not absolving themselves of authority. The teachers, as adults, retain what Dewey called “natural authority”. Teachers have more experience and knowledge than students; therefore, it would be morally improper for teachers to not use that knowledge in the interests of the students. This “natural authority” can
be contrasted with "arbitrary authority" when teachers make demands of students simply because teachers have the power to do so.

An Example from Hursh's Teaching

In teaching elementary school in the 1970s, Dewey's concept of natural versus arbitrary authority was useful in my own thinking about teaching. In my multi-age, team-taught classroom we organized the school day so that students would have choices in what, how, and when they would learn. The school day was organized so that students could choose from activities that I or team teachers offered. Students might also suggest other activities, including leading an activity for other students. Sometimes the curriculum would emerge out of students' interests.

For example, one spring day a five-year-old asked me to read the book about the Grand Canyon that his father had brought home with him after hiking the Canyon. I agreed to do so and posted listening to the book as one of the morning's possible activities. Later, when I was sitting with students to read the book, I began by asking the students if they knew how the Grand Canyon was formed. The students suggested earthquakes and tornadoes as the two causes. I responded that it was erosion. After the students exclaimed that I couldn't possibly be correct, I offered to teach a unit over the next month that would demonstrate sedimentation, erosion, and the formation of canyons. If they would agree to participate in lessons over the next month, I would agree to plan the unit and begin teaching it within a few school days.

In this example the students influenced the curriculum not because they came to me and asked that I teach a geology unit, but because when we began discussing the Canyon, the conversation led to geological processes. Further, I would not agree to teach the unit without their agreeing that it was something they wanted. If they did not want me to go ahead and plan it, I wouldn't. Further, my offering to teach geology comes from my "natural authority," my greater experience and knowledge. Students did not ask me to teach geology; in fact that didn't know that such a field existed.

Examples from Seneway's Teaching

Students in my third-grade classroom have opportunities to determine what and how they are going to learn, and what relation they form with other students and me.

In thinking about how I teach and organize my classroom, I am guided by five principles. First, what goes on in the classroom should be about students and not about me. In deciding activities and responding to students I try to remember that what is important is what the students are learning, not whether they are satisfying some arbitrary demands. For example, when we
begin an activity I monitor myself not to tell them that they need to do it a particular way. Instead I ask: What information are you interested in? Where do you think you will find it? What will you do when you find it?

As I ask them questions I remind myself that while it may take them more time to figure this out for themselves, it is crucial that they do so. I am reminded of the parent who told me that she, rather than her daughter, cleans the guinea pig cage at home. When I remarked that her daughter did an excellent job of caring for the class guinea pig, she replied that she cleaned the cage at home because it was easier for her to do so. Perhaps much of what we do as teachers is because it is easier than engaging students to figure out what and how to learn.

Second, students need to drive the agenda. The students need to be able to make decisions about what occurs during the day. Third, in a classroom we all are learners and teachers. While it is clear that I know more than the students, I am continually learning about them and with them. They teach one another and me. Fourth, children need to be physically and verbally active in order to be engaged. Students learn through language and need to be provided opportunities to use language in meaningful ways. Fifth, we need to know who we are as persons: where we live, what we read, and how we spend our free time.

These principles have led to students becoming central to creating curriculum and teaching and learning from one another. In the fall of 1995 several students asked me if they could use class time to demonstrate some science experiments they had tried at home. Since I was concerned that if we only set aside a few hours for this we would not give their experiments adequate attention, I suggested that we set aside an afternoon per week. This worked well.

Soon after, we became involved in a time consuming project with two other classes. I suggested that from then on we set aside a whole day for projects. For the past three years my students have been using one day per week to carry out projects by committee. Committees form whenever a student expresses an interest in which they can interest others. After enlisting other members, they develop a goal and describe what they will learn. On committee days each committee’s goals are reviewed at the beginning and middle (“half-time”) of the day. Students ask each other to clarify what they are researching and what they think they will learn.

Committee day is a strong example of how students have input on what and how they learn. But they also lead other activities. For example, much of the math teaching focuses on the “problem of the day”. The students work in pairs to solve a problem that I give them, such as “if a parade has four children in it and they are each walking a dog, how many legs are in the parade?” I set a timer for the number of minutes that the students think they need. When the timer rings, I ask students whether they need more time. When they decide they are finished, I ask students
to come to the overhead projector in pairs to show us “different ways of answering the problem.” Students continue to present until we exhaust all the possible approaches to solving the problem. We rarely discuss whether the students arrived at the correct answer but focus on what “their head was thinking” as they thought through the problem.

Lastly, we don’t use parliamentary methods when making decisions. Rather, we use a consensus strategy of showing “fist, three fingers or five fingers.” Fist means you strongly disagree with the proposal and cannot live with it; three fingers means you are in agreement and five fingers means you strongly agree. Recently, all the students in our school building began raising money for a playground. In my classroom students had been collecting money for the rain forest for several months. A suggestion was made by a student that we donate the money we had already collected for the rain forest to the playground. Using the consensus method, the class president asked for the “fist, three or five”. Many fists were raised and those students had to explain why they could not live with this idea. Much conversation ensued and the class officers continued to find a “middle ground”. Finally one of the students said “even if we don’t give money to the playground, it will still be built and the rain forest is more important than what we need.” With that comment, those who agreed with the original proposal ended up disagreeing and all agreed to keep the money for the rain forest.

In our classrooms we live rather than practice democracy. Students make decisions about what and how they are going to learn, how they are going to evaluate their learning, and demonstrate what they’ve learned. We continue to negotiate classroom processes as students expand the range of democratic decision making in the classroom.

References
Certainly class meetings alone cannot create a democratic classroom, nor have I made such a claim. In my article, I cited a review of theory and research that outlined a complex set of characteristics associated with democratic classroom climate. I also described the open, interactive, and participatory nature of the curriculum within which the class meetings in question took place.

The teaching strategies Hursh and Seneway describe as "living, not practicing, democracy" seem highly consistent with the Montessori pedagogical principles that I have described as the social context for the class council meetings I studied. Giving students choices about what and how and when they learned, encouraging student leadership, relying on group problem-solving, and—perhaps above all—building curriculum around students' interests were principles that shaped my decisions about classroom activity. It was, in fact, the self-directed, student-centered academic climate that seemed to explain why the students in this study rarely placed academic issues on their discussion agenda. Hursh and Seneway are justified in pointing out that 15-minute meetings are insufficient for meaningful deliberations. I neglected to note that the students in this study came to that same conclusion after the first month and expanded their sessions to 30 minutes, often letting meetings run into their recess time when complicated issues required even more discussion.

The only substantive question on which I seem to differ with Hursh and Seneway is as to whether parliamentary meetings aimed at practicing self-governance are essential to living democracy. The "fist, three or five" consensus method Seneway used with her third graders sounds like one of many effective methods for helping younger students learn to participate in group decision-making. In the United States, however, we formulate public policy through parliamentary deliberation, which calls for disciplined habits of just and equitable discourse. Those habits, in my view, must be acquired through practice. Moreover, lack of consensus presents a perennial difficulty for democratic citizens; and we must help students learn to accommodate minority viewpoints so that they may become mature participants in authentic democratic processes.
We were pleased to see that the Handbook on Teaching Social Issues, a volume which we co-edited, was reviewed in Theory and Research in Social Education. The review by Grant and Tzetzo offers criticisms that are both helpful and legitimate. However, many of the features that our reviewers criticize most strongly are intentional aspects of the work, and are necessary components of issues-centered theory/practice in a social studies world currently dominated by disciplines sited at the university.

Let us be specific. Most pointedly, Grant and Tzetzo note, first, that the book gives mixed messages to teachers regarding content, teaching methods, and the very definition of issues-centered education; and second, that it leaves many questions left unanswered. Each of these observations are accurate. However, posing these observations as critiques demonstrates a misunderstanding of the broadly defined approach to social studies proposed in the Handbook, and explained in the first chapter. It is too obvious a critique to be taken seriously. It is, in fact, a “critique” we acknowledge in the Handbook (Evans, Newmann, Saxe, 1996).

Rather than “mixed messages,” we see issues-centered education as a broad and inclusive approach to social studies from a community of scholars and teachers committed to improving practice in schools. To accomplish any change, we have to be realistic about the current state of practice in most classrooms and the resistance of teachers. Hence, the Handbook includes a range of approaches, some only slightly different from mainstream practice and others that represent a full blown issues-centered alternative. The intent of the editors was to provide a compendium of state of the art practice/theory in issues-centered education, and to introduce a new generation of social studies teachers to issues-oriented approaches. We believe we have accomplished these goals.

Multiple Visions

The central critique offered by Grant and Tzetzo is that the Handbook gives readers mixed messages on several important aspects of social studies practice, and that these mixed messages will prevent the work from drawing converts to the cause of issues-centered education.

To the contrary, we believe that including multiple approaches to teaching social issues should be viewed instead as a major strength. To
decide on only one version of issues-centered education would lessen the volume's potential appeal. We believe that interested teachers will find the broad diversity of approaches to teaching social issues helpful.

The reality among issues-centered advocates is that we have internal disagreements and a continuum of positions on key questions confronting social studies. To expect uniformity is naive and unrealistic. It indicates that our reviewers misunderstand the range of ideas presented and fail to share our faith in the ability of teachers to sort through various alternatives. We never claimed uniformity in the Handbook. Yet, a general message supporting more attention to issues and reflective teaching comes through very clearly.

Grant and Tzetzo see mixed messages in several areas: First, in the content to be taught, they charge, "it appears that any content organized in any form will suffice." They summarize various alternatives for pursuing issues-centered content, from infusion of issues in discipline-based courses to creation of a fully integrated curriculum but seem to lament the fact that "there is no inherent curriculum logic or sequence" to issues-centered content. This is a truth that we should celebrate rather than lament. It offers support for teachers' freedom to develop individual approaches to teaching social issues drawing on a full universe of possibilities. To take a final position in the Handbook on the appropriate content and format for issues-centered education would be both unrealistic and counter-productive.

Second, Grant and Tzetzo argue that mixed messages also develop around teaching methods. They write, "There is great disparity in the instructional positions advocated; in fact, every method we have ever seen is advocated at some point..." This is an unfair charge. It is neither accurate nor does it reflect the tone of the book, in which the overwhelming emphasis is on reflective teaching methods. Grant and Tzetzo quote out of context to give the impression of an illogical mix advocating this and that. There is a difference in emphasis, intent, and tone between accepting the usefulness of traditional techniques and advocating "every method."

A third area of mixed messages, according to our reviewers, is the area of assessment. In general, authors of the Handbook support greater use of authentic assessment as an alternative to the pervasive use of paper and pencil tests. Given current levels of interest, it is arguable that the Handbook would be improved with more space on the topic. This was our original intent. Unfortunately, an additional contribution planned for this section did not materialize after the contributor dropped out of the project. Nevertheless, we don’t believe we will interest many teachers in changing their means of assessment without first interesting them in using more reflective and thoughtful teaching practices.

Fourth, Grant and Tzetzo see another set of mixed messages regarding the relationship between issues and "right answers." They may have
a point here. Perhaps some authors did not take pains to emphasize the
tentativeness of all knowledge. However, our rereading of the volume sug-
gests that the point is well made, and that across the Handbook, it comes
through loud and clear.

Fifth, in a related critique, Grant and Tzetzo assert that another form
of "right answer" emerges from the Handbook. They write, "The issues
that regularly surface—race, class, gender, labor, environment, power—
are clearly controversial and debatable. Yet, the voice or perspective of-
ered on each of these issues is almost always that of the political and
social left." Contributors to the Handbook do not all agree on political and
social matters. Some are further to the left than others, some are closer to
the center. In fact, one of the co-editors holds a leftist position on many
educational, political, and social issues, the other a conservative position.
Many of the writers in our field come from a critical perspective. Thus, the
examples and points-of-view presented in the Handbook reflect the beliefs
of issues-centered educators, many of whom share this critical stance.

Nevertheless, we hope our readers understand that in issues-centered
education the questions and alternatives to be explored are those that will
move students toward thoughtful deliberation and enlightenment. Diverse
and competing views are to be prized and included in the conversation,
leaving it clear that students are encouraged to draw their own conclusions.

Sixth, Grant and Tzetzo find a mix of messages regarding the definition
of issues-centered education. As the editors, we could have demanded
compliance with a rigid definition of issues-centered education. In our
thinking, issues may be focused on students and/or the community; they
may be located in current issues, and/or in the disciplines; they may be
selected by teacher or students though selection is, optimally, negotiated.
We did circulate a definition statement and chapter outline with our invi-
tation to authors. However, demanding strict allegiance to a particular
definition would produce alienation, rebellion, and defection; not exactly
what we had in mind. Again, we prefer to see our differences around this
matter as a strength rather than a liability.

Seventh, Grant and Tzetzo suggest that "mixed messages," or mul-
tiple visions, if you will, are an inevitable part of a Handbook aimed at
improving and reforming what teachers do. Yes, we think so too. So why
emphasize that in the review, as a negative. To do so implies a misunder-
standing of the multiple visions and many ways of applying reflective,
issues-centered approaches and discomfort with the messiness that is part
of educational reform.

In summary, to find apparent contradictions in a collaborative vol-
ume of this size is easy, like looking for contradictions in the work of John
Dewey, but overlooks the big picture, the main points holding these per-
spectives, thoughts, and visions together: support for curricula organized
around problematic questions; support for issues as a significant part of
the social studies curriculum; support for encouraging teachers to experiment with interactive approaches to teaching and alternative forms of assessment; support for theorists and practitioners to hold divergent views within broad parameters.

Many Questions Left to Answer.

The second major critique offered by Grant and Tzetzo is that the Handbook leaves many unanswered questions. This is so obvious an observation that it cannot be taken as a substantive critique. For the most part, claims made in the Handbook regarding the usefulness of issues-centered approaches come from a normative position, not from a research base, which is admittedly thin and inconclusive. Unlike Grant and Tzetzo, we don't find unreasonable claims being made.

By describing some of the questions they would like to see answered, Grant and Tzetzo offer suggestions for future work on research questions related to teaching, learning, subject matter, and milieu. These are reasonable concerns. However, to assert that the Handbook should provide answers to these questions is unrealistic, and beyond the scope of our intent. Many questions need research. Yes, research could help solidify some future Handbook. Completing that research will take years.

Grant and Tzetzo suggest that more research will make a significant difference, through the impact of research on practice. However, the connection between research and practice is slim, if it exists at all. We have yet to see compelling evidence of the impact of educational research on classroom practice. Meanwhile, as practitioners we have to take action, we must hold up our end of the century-long turf wars over social studies curricula. The advocates of history as core will not wait for research to be completed before taking a position and promoting an agenda, and neither can we.

Our reviewers' suggestion that research is the answer assumes a neutral playing field, in which researchers findings make a significant difference in schools. In reality, schooling is highly politicized; classrooms, especially in social studies, are contested terrain. Many teachers and the public recognize battles over what is taught and how it is taught for what they are; culture wars over the future in which "all citizens have a stake" (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 142).

Our reviewers conclude that the volume will be helpful to those already inclined to issues-centered approaches, but that it will not attract others, who may not be already so inclined. Elsewhere, the Handbook has been described as a landmark in the history of social studies (Previte, 1997). It does not stand alone, but is part of a long tradition of works by educators favoring a reflective and issues-centered approach to social studies. Unfortunately, Grant and Tzetzo fail to place the volume in historical perspective.

The intent of the authors and editors of the Handbook was to provide teachers and other educational professionals with a useful source that
would survey and revisit major works on issues-centered education and help teachers learn to apply this approach in the real world of the classroom. It was not our intent to create new methods, solve all the dilemmas of social studies, generate new research, or develop grand theory. As we revisit the *Handbook*, and use it as a text with beginning social studies teachers, we continually return to the conclusion that we did a good job, not a perfect job perhaps, but one that means the book is very helpful.

**References**


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RONALD W. EVANS is Associate Professor in the School of Teacher Education at San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182. DAVID WARREN SAXE is Associate Professor in the College of Education at Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA 16802.
In reviewing the Handbook on Teaching Social Issues (Evans & Saxe, 1996), we faced a dilemma. The Handbook has no introduction which would normally describe the scope, audience, and aims of the book. Left to infer a purpose, we assumed the editors were offering an argument for the importance of issues-centered education. That assumption led us to ask a number of questions: Is the argument coherent? Does it help us understand what issues-centered teaching and learning looks like? Does it help us understand what problems, constraints, and barriers might arise? The Handbook does offer some insights into and some resources to support an issues-centered approach. Yet, the mixed messages sent about content, instruction, assessment and the like combined with a raft of unanswered questions undercut the argument. To read now that our critiques represent “intentional aspects” and “necessary components” is surprising to say the least. Calling a sow’s ear a silk purse does not make it so.

In this rejoinder, we make two points relative to our original review (Grant & Tzetzo, 1997) and to the editors’ response above. The first point relates to the notion that the Handbook sends mixed messages about the nature of issues-centered teaching and learning. The second concerns the relationship between research and teaching practice.

In our review, we observed that, read cover to cover, the various Handbook chapters send mixed messages about the content to be taught, the methods of instruction advocated, and the means of assessment used. We also questioned what seemed like a meandering definition of “issues-centered education” and a generally leftist perspective on the issues. In each instance, we documented what we believed to be a range of contradictory positions. For example, we noted that in one chapter Evans posits that the current history curriculum must be radically overhauled while in another Saxe defends the status quo. Similarly, some authors argued that traditional methods must be abandoned while others defended those same approaches.

Though confusing, we noted that policy analysts often observe that educational reforms (i.e., arguments for changing teaching practice) can be read as offering mixed messages. As with political revolutions (Brinton, 1952), movements to make new and sweeping changes in education inevitably carry with them elements of the past (Cohen, 1989; Grant, 1997;...
McLaughlin, 1990). Knowing this, we were not necessarily surprised that an ambitious project like the *Handbook* would embody competing views.

In some sense, then, Evans and Saxe are right—our observation of mixed messages is "obvious." We were stunned to learn, however, that such messages were "intentional" and "necessary." This is an astounding claim for two reasons. First, we recall no previous instance where the advocates of an educational change intentionally inserted contradictory messages. Moreover, we can not imagine that, aware that their argument was threatened by incoherence, those advocates would think this is good. If the *Handbook* editors understood that their efforts represented conflicting views and that this was commendable, we wonder why they did not explain this paradoxical situation in an introduction and/or in the prologues to each section of the book.

We now turn to the issue of unanswered questions. In our review, we posed several seemingly basic questions left unaddressed in the *Handbook*. Based on the commonplaces of education (Schwab, 1978) we felt that questions related to learners, teaching, subject matter, and milieu should be addressed somewhere in the almost 500 *Handbook* pages. For example, we wondered: a) what background knowledge about issues do students bring to school and how does that knowledge vary across individuals and groups; b) what do teachers do if they have a standardized test hanging over their head and how do they negotiate school and community support for the creation and implementation of new, issues-centered courses; c) does it matter how teachers bring issues-related content to bear and how they negotiate the balance between students' background knowledge (the "facts") and their openness to inquiry; and, d) what does an issues-centered classroom look like and how do gender, race, and class differences affect the classroom milieu?

We understand this surfeit of questions may be an inevitable result of the thin (and generally inconclusive) research base that supports issues-centered education. In their response to our review, Evans and Saxe argue, in part, that building that base will do little good as teachers generally dismiss social studies research. We disagree. Our experience tells us that prospective and practicing teachers make a distinction between research pieces (especially qualitative) and those which offer theoretic or advocacy positions. They do not dismiss the later, but they tend to grab hold of the former, largely because it seems "real." That is, the growing body of field-based research speaks to important issues of teaching, learning, subject matter, and milieu. Teachers know that, while research can yield answers, it can also raise additional questions. They also know that classrooms are complex places and so they are wary of "literature" that advocates big pedagogical change without corresponding attention to the nature of classroom life. The fact that the *Handbook* so rarely goes beyond
theory and advocacy to talk about the kinds of questions we raise is disappointing.

We do believe the Handbook has value. The mixed messages and unanswered questions make readers work pretty hard to see that value, however. Classroom teachers are busy folks and we worry that they may lose patience trying to reconstruct this sow's ear into a silk purse.

References

What can be said about the results of the social studies research community’s efforts over the last 25 years? What impact (if any) has research in social studies had on social studies learning? on teaching the social studies? The answer (I regret to say) is, “Not much!”

Much of what we have been doing is, let’s face it, pretty trivial stuff. Most of our studies, as Jim Shaver pointed out so long ago, have no underlying rationale (other than, perhaps, the need to “get something published so I can get tenure”). Can you think of any piece of social studies research in the last ten (or even 20) years that had significant implications for teaching and learning in real-life social studies classrooms? (I doubt it, but if you can, would you please e-mail me your suggestion?)

Ask yourself this: What major contributions to actual (i.e., real-life) teaching and learning in K-12 social studies have been identified or validated through research by those of us who do research in social studies (or anyone else for that matter)? Most of the really important stuff that most of us talk about consists of some grand ideas that have been introduced by the professorate at one time or another (e.g., inquiry learning; the spiral curriculum; moral education; organizing units around concepts and generalizations, etc.). However, these remain as ideas—only. To date, none have been validated by research. We have very little in the way of actual data that shows that inquiry learning, for example, actually makes a difference (in achievement, liking for the subject, better thinking, etc.) in social studies classrooms.

Some ten years ago, in this very journal, I catalogued a host of weaknesses that characterized much of the social studies research then extant. Sad to say, almost all of the weaknesses I identified at the time (and that I later expanded on in my chapter in the *Handbook of Social Studies Teaching and Learning*) are still characteristic of the great majority of social studies research today—some 13 years later. We don’t seem to improve on what we do (we continue to use inferential statistics with convenience samples, for example). How come? I really don’t know, but I have a strong suspicion that some of the blame can be laid at the feet of our doctoral programs. I just don’t think that most of those entering the social studies research community are very well trained in research methodology. Few are philosophically inclined, that’s for sure. As proof of this, I offer the almost
total absence of planned-for (or even unplanned-for) philosophic discussions during the annual meetings of CUFA, and of philosophically-oriented (or supported) articles appearing in TRSE.

Not that there have not been a few good developments—some encouraging signs, the most obvious perhaps being the considerable increase in qualitative and historical research studies and the growing acceptance and use of effect sizes as indicators of practical significance (instead of relying, as is still so often done, on statistical significance) in quantitative research. And there has been some quite good individual work done in the field (the recent studies of Carole Hahn and Fred Newmann come to mind). But even these excellent studies have had almost no impact on what goes on in social studies classrooms.

Most damning, I think, is that we continue to ignore our main constituents—the teachers who actually teach in the social studies classrooms of the nation. Few descriptive studies of actual practice exist. We continually fail to identify really excellent social studies teachers, document what they do, and then try to investigate ways to help others do similarly.

Consider the following:

1. Why don't we go to the source? Why don't we identify excellent teachers in various schools and then describe in detail their efforts? Why don't we try to find out what makes them so successful? Identify the techniques and strategies that they use? How they plan? Why don't we record the work—via audiotape and videotape—the activities and actions—of these teachers? Teach others to do what they do? Except for a few isolated attempts along these lines, we have little in the way of research-validated answers to these questions.

2. Replications. It is a startling (but true) fact that one hardly ever sees any reports of replications in our journal. Most of us do a study (in many cases, a spin-off of our dissertation) and then never return to it again. Data once collected is data never followed up on. Why don't we replicate? This seems to me a simple matter, and one that CUFA could endorse and support (yes, support). Why couldn't a group of junior (heck, even senior) social studies researchers agree among themselves to investigate the same questions (albeit with different samples and in different settings) so as to improve the size of our sample and the potential generalizability of our results. Easy to do. Why don't we do this?

3. Difficult Settings. Occasionally I hear tales from my colleagues of a super social studies teacher in a very difficult inner-city school, one who works wonders with otherwise quite recalcitrant students. Is this true? Rarely (if ever) do we see studies that describe teaching the social studies in difficult classrooms. Why not? If such exist, we need to make them known. For they point to success in teaching social studies in very difficult settings. And if people can succeed there, they can succeed anywhere. What enables a social studies teacher to persevere—indeed to succeed in
such settings? We badly need such knowledge, but we ain't got it! This would be a suitable subject for qualitative researchers to pursue on some (any) sort of systematic basis.

4. Comparative Investigations. Rarely have I seen comparative studies of different classrooms, different schools, different school districts. Certainly this is feasible. More comparisons between classes in the same school, between schools in the same district, between districts in the same state, etc., need to be undertaken. Why not compare an inquiry vs. a case study approach, for example, in several classes in two different districts? We might find out a lot.

Well, enough. Let me end by noting that we don't even critique our own work very often. Year after year at CUFA we find the same old story—lots of papers reporting individual studies by single researchers using small convenience or purposive samples working independently of each other. Often these reports border on the irrelevant—the overlong qualitative reports that describe every detail of what goes on in a single classroom without ever explaining why this particular classroom was worth looking at in the first place is a (too frequent) case in point. Rarely do we have detailed critiques of these research efforts (poorly prepared discussants are not the same thing as well-prepared, constructive critics). Too often we don't even get papers, only comments or talks about what someone did. Again, I ask why?

Why not a symposium or two on improving the quality of social studies research? Why not workshops for junior faculty beginning their careers? Why not summations of the research in a given area, followed by a discussion or two of the implications of such research for the actual teaching of K-12 students? Why not presentations, sponsored by CUFA, in which researchers try to make clear why and how research supports (or fails to support) various methods of teaching? Why not some reports of research that actually describe in detail various teaching methodologies and why they do (or do not) succeed? The sad fact is that there is no systematic effort in the profession to build a body of knowledge. As proof of this, I ask you: What do we know now that we didn't know 25 years ago?

So, to close, I ask five questions, three for the Board of Directors of CUFA and two for the editor of TRSE.

To the CUFA Board:
- Why doesn’t CUFA (at the very least) appoint a formal ongoing committee to address various issues involving the nature of social studies research?
- Why doesn’t CUFA make it a policy to encourage social studies methods professors to collaborate with the real experts in our field—outstanding classroom teachers? To document what they do and spread the word at the annual meeting?
Why doesn’t CUFA formally encourage and solicit reports of research, on topics of interest and importance to the profession, that involve:
(a) two or more social studies researchers cooperating (the work of Brophy and Alleman comes to mind); (b) a social studies teacher and a social studies professor collaborating; and/or (c) a social studies teacher acting individually or with a team of teachers? Perhaps even give an award (annually, if possible), along the lines of the outstanding research award, for the best example(s) of such research?

To the Editor of Theory and Research in Social Education:

First, how about establishing a policy that TRSE will not publish any social studies research (at least for a while) unless it is done in a public (preferably inner-city) school, and preferably with a colleague who actually teaches in a real-life classroom?

Second, how about establishing a policy that TRSE will not publish any reports of social studies research (again, at least for a while) that have not been replicated somewhere?

Is there a chance that any of these five questions will be answered in the affirmative? Well, I ask you: Is the Pope a Protestant? (If you think the answer to any of these questions is "yes" I have a bridge I’d like to sell you!)

Author

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Introduction: Two Telling Scenes

In the movie “Educating Rita,” the alcoholic professor, Frank, tells his tutee, Rita, that although her writing is excellent, she would not likely pass the college examinations. Devastated, Rita questions her own intellectual ability. Frank assures her there is nothing wrong, and that he isn’t certain he wants her to change in order to pass a college examination. Bright and highly capable, Rita is full of the self-doubt of one whose background and formal experiences are at odds with the academic establishment.

In Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America, Nathan McCall (1994) tells about the opportunity prison offered him. “We met on the yard most evenings, after chow,” he writes, “and talked with the other guys who also did a lot of reading.” In this setting he “met some of the sharpest, most intelligent guys I’d known, then or since...most of them were dropouts who had long before lost interest in formal schooling. But once they got a whiff of some real knowledge—knowledge that was relevant to them—they educated themselves far better than any public school could have hoped to do” (p. 206, emphasis added). McCall explains that a writer’s guild was formed involving discussions of politics, world affairs, philosophers and philosophical schools. During these discussions he says he was “struck by the strange-ness of former robbers, drug dealers, and murderers standing in the middle of the prison yard debating the heaviest philosophical questions of all time.”

Both of these pieces make one “wanna holler” about what constitutes real knowledge, who determines its relevancy, and who controls the conditions of learning. Neither Rita nor Nathan lacked intelligence or a proper attitude towards learning. One wonders what relevancy national standards, assessment outcomes, or core knowledge would have for their educational possibilities.

Well-conceived and well written, Catherine Cornbleth and Dexter Waugh’s The Great Speckled Bird is an effective way of hollering. Their sym-
bol, the book's title, is intended as an alternative to the national symbol of the bald eagle and, as such, suggestive of a more inclusive way of viewing the American experience. Their book, focusing on state-level multicultural curriculum policy debates in California and New York, provides a powerful and thorough assessment of contemporary social studies on both political and theoretical grounds. Most importantly, their story telling provides useful conceptual tools for analyzing multicultural issues and identifying curricular openings for social studies educators to reclaim the philosophical grounding of their field. Yes, *The Great Speckled Bird* hollers loud, yet does so in a quiet defining way.

**The Case Studies: Two Revealing Episodes**

Discussions about multiculturalism evoke a range of issues about what characterizes us as Americans. Cornbleth and Waugh succinctly identify the central questions:

Is there one common American culture that overrides the importance of group differences, or is democracy itself strengthened by racial and ethnic variety and maintaining—even celebrating—difference? Do we honor and study difference, or by doing that do we encourage separate enclaves? (p. 60)

Curriculum policy-making episodes—like those in California and New York—galvanize positions and starkly remind us that social knowledge is value-laden, political, and highly contentious.

**California**

In the California social studies reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a relatively small group of people positioned within the educational and political establishment were able to garner support for a multicultural framework that premised the cultural unity of Americans on a common immigrant experience. A “public uproar” followed, but ultimately the Board of Regents adopted the *History-Social Science Framework* and subsequently approved a corresponding textbook series. The common immigrant theme, a conceptual category more mythic than scholarly, minimizes different immigrant experiences, especially those of enslavement, oppression, and subordination. The historical perspective remains that of European immigrants. Despite all the intellectual and emotional offensiveness of this “we are all immigrant” theme, it was attractive to key education officials, especially those with a “pennant for celebrating perceived common values, while downplaying social inequities and the racial hierarchy that maintains them” (p. 61).

Although curriculum disagreements over multiculturalism are often portrayed by the mainstream media in polarized terms, (i.e., ethno-
centrism versus cultural pluralism), a range of multicultural inclusion models exists. Cornbleth and Waugh, drawing on Banks (1987, 1988) and Erickson (1992), take pains to describe three such models—additive, revisionist, and transformative, each consistent with different ideological orientations and thus each with the potential for quite different outcomes. In challenging California’s additive approach to reform Sylvia Wynter, a Stanford professor of African and Afro-American Studies, shows how this approach “perpetuates and nurtures racism” (p. 65).

The Euro-American scholars who have written these texts, because they write from within their own experience, necessarily ask questions of the past that are limited to that experience. (p. 62)

Questions that might pierce the moral, ethical, and structural layers of social understanding cannot be framed within the existing traditional Euro-centric social-studies curriculum model. Wynter asks how the dispossession, subordination, and “mass enslavement of people of Black African Descent” came to seem as “just and virtuous”? She continues:

How does the continuance of this initial dispossession in the jobless, alcohol-ridden reservations, the jobless drug and crime-ridden inner city ghettos and barrios, still come to seem to all of us as just, or at the very least, to be in the nature of things? [And] why is this contemporary fate so lawfully and freely visited upon the three non-immigrant alter ego groups, i.e., the Reds, the Blacks and the native Chicano and correlated with their also relatively low test-performance scores and high school dropout rate? (p. 66)

Wynter admits that it is “plain on every page” that writers of the frameworks and the textbooks make efforts “to avoid ethnocentrism” (p. 62). These efforts are hardly sufficient, however, she concludes, in a curriculum that supporters and writers such as Charlotte Crabtree of UCLA and Lynne Cheney, former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), promote as a “multicultural history model for the nation” (p. 60).

New York

In contrast to California, the release in 1989 of a New York State report entitled A Curriculum of Inclusion by a special Task Force on Minorities was a “call for inclusion foremost, but in that inclusion could be seen the beginnings of a transformation” (p.97). Public and scholarly reaction against this document was strong, but especially so from Gilbert Sewall who edits The Social Studies Review, a partisan journal created and sup-
ported by the "neo-nativists network" as an attempt to provide scholarly legitimacy and policy influence for their writings and positions. With funding by private foundations (e.g., Olin, Bradley, and Donner) as well as the United States Department of Education and the NEH, this group successfully imposed itself on state and national level textbook, testing, and curriculum policy discussions, co-opted conservative historians to serve as academic mouthpieces, and made alliances with influential politicians, labor leaders, and educators to foster a Western tradition in education. Diane Ravitch, Chester Finn, William Bennett, and Lynne Cheney are among its most prominent members.

As the controversy lessened, then State Commissioner of Education Thomas Sobel and the State's Board of Regents formed a second, more "balanced" committee to study the controversy and make recommendations for a more multicultural social studies curriculum and ultimately reached agreement on a document, One Nation, Many Peoples. This report exemplifies a revisionist perspective model that, according to the authors, "went beyond the safe and the supplementary" by involving students in examining questions about the nature of being American.

After One Nation, Many Peoples was published, the committee that drafted it was transformed into a more "matter of fact, direct-following" group by the officials at the State Education Department (SED). Cornbleth was one of the few original members remaining, with the rest of the members made up of state social studies leaders who were familiar, supportive, deferential and comfortable with the status quo in social studies education as directed by SED and reinforced by New York State Regents examinations. Cornbleth's description of the controversies that arose during this committee's deliberation is not a favorable indication of the health of social education—or the views of social studies educators—in New York State. The predominant views of most committee members involved concerns for too much diversity, fears of controversial issues, and uncritical willingness to accept the scholarly-sounding criticisms of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Albert Shanker, and others in the neo-nativist camp. Cornbleth's growing sense that multiculturalism was being subsumed within the newest state reform movement, "The New Compact for Learning," which provided for decisions about a host of curricular issues, including that of multiculturalism, to be decided by local teachers and members of the local communities was in fact very accurate. Frustrated by the SED's reluctance to move One Nation, Many People forward and more generally, it's "apparent unwillingness to risk further controversy" (152), Cornbleth resigned.

Cornbleth's account of the SED's "braking" effect on the curriculum reform is strikingly similar to Fleury's (1986) earlier findings of the Department's process of constructing Regents social studies examinations. Viewed as a de facto curriculum policy for the State, the Regents examina-
tions are the result of an intricate process in which carefully selected committees, consultants, school administrators, and politicians, are involved at key leverage points over a three-year review period to ensure the release of traditional and non-controversial questions. The bureaucratic curriculum policy making process (of which the Regents examination process is a major part) ensures that transformative, critically oriented, and academically sound knowledge will be reduced to what Michael Parenti calls a “social orthodoxy.”

A Primitive Epistemology?

Cornbleth and Waugh’s case studies of the multicultural curriculum policy controversies of California and New York raise numerous issues of importance for social studies educators wishing to escape the polemics and disciplinary myopia that has defined the field for so long: the necessity of a critical pragmatism as a philosophical orientation; the use of a Black Studies perspective to provide a different historical conceptual lens; and an examination of the politics of social knowledge to help students inform themselves of the critical questions of our age. But make no doubt about it, the authors are writing about history, especially the use of history. And in doing so, they present an opportunity for social educators to wrestle with even more basic questions. These questions are seldom addressed directly. In fact, seldom do students who specialize in history have an opportunity to examine the field as an area of study. The authors state:

historians continue to dispute the nature of history, for example, whether history is any kind of narrative at all or an imposition of narrative form on non-narrative materials. The widespread public perception of history as a story or narrative, master or otherwise, may be a convenient fiction. History as a single, chronological, and linear story... may be a primitive epistemology. (p. 42)

To address the nature of history is to address the nature of scholarship. What is this activity we have cut out, categorized, and labeled? How is this activity conducted? By whom? Are the implicit values of the premises open to challenge? Are there different types of rules for conducting and reporting the results of our activities? Is the activity descriptive, explanatory, or prescriptive? Is there a master narrative transcending time and place and waiting to be discovered and disseminated? Have views towards, and procedures of this activity changed? What of the histories of language, art, drama, history, science, sport, dancing, politics? Who decides what particular history to select for the formal education of all students, and on what bases are such decisions made? What are the boundaries of this activity? How has it been used in the past? What makes this activity an academic effort? Why should a society commit energy and funds to select-
ing and using certain parts of the human experience while ignoring others? What criteria exists for making the selection and ensuring that everyone learns the same lessons? Who establishes standards? Who benefits from such standards? What difference does one's view towards history and its uses make towards how one forges a world view, a set of stable values and a conception of the nature of knowledge, learning and teaching content?

These are fundamental questions, and surely there are more.

To ask if there is a single, even multifaceted, history that can be taught begs questions about the nature of knowledge itself. Banks is cited to remind us that questions about a single historical canon are really epistemological questions: Is knowledge absolute and certain for all time? Or is it relative, dependent on circumstances, and ever-changing? The responses of social studies educators to these questions determine, in large part, their responses to other more widely discussed social studies issues such as what kind of multicultural curriculum to develop and what kind of teaching and learning is most desirable. Educational practices are, after all, prescriptively determined (Egan, 1983).

Ravitch (1991, 1997) thinks she has answers. As co-founder of the Educational Excellence Network and charter member of the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, her views have been heard through articles in the American Educator, American Scholar, Network News and Views, and Chronicle of Higher Education. She tells her story over and over, in different venues, but with a consistent message—for the health of citizenship, history needs to be reinstated as the "core of social studies." She laments history's "stepchild" status in social studies education, merely one "amongst a host of equals, including sociology, psychology... multicultural education, and so on." The bete-noir in her story is the National Council for the Social Studies has been "less than friendly to the teaching of history" and its leadership believes that "advocates of history are essentially conservative and associated with Eurocentric, white-male, backward-looking perspective ..." For this reason, she supports the revised version of the National Standards for History in the schools, believing them, though not perfect, a "vast improvement" over the social studies program found in American public schools (1997, p. 30).

Schlesinger has answers too. During the work of the New York State Social Studies Review Committee, he and Ravitch co-authored a "Statement of the Committee of Scholars in Defense of History." With over twenty scholars signing, they proclaimed themselves the proper authorities to judge what constitutes appropriate knowledge for inclusion in history-social studies curriculum" (p. 131). Ravitch and Schlesinger may be quite different in terms of their academic and political ends, but adherence to a historical canon/master narrative acts as a cohesive. These defenders of history:
focused on the question of legitimate or authentic history, implying that only such an accredited history should be taught in the schools. By their unspecified criteria, much, if not most, of the range or Afrocentric scholarship did not pass muster. They defined multiculturalism and related scholarship as something other than legitimate history...their discourse limited historical knowledge to a particular version of history and put alternative interpretations of bounds (p. 131, emphasis added).

What is inherently wrong with Afrocentric and multicultural scholarship? Ravitch has expressed her fears to the American Federation of Teachers that “appeals to race consciousness, group pride, and a multicultural, multi-ethnic society are socially divisive” (1997, p. 30). In The Disuniting of America, Schlesinger (1991) asked if we are now to belittle unum and glorify pluribus in contrast to what has been the national ideal of e pluribus unum? Will the center hold? Or will the melting pot yield to the Tower of Babel.” In contrast with Ravitch, Schlesinger acknowledges that the “debate about the curriculum” is really over what it “means to be an American.” One notes that in their use of history, historians such as Ravitch and Schlesinger sought the authoritative voice to prove, but not examine, the justification of their argument.

Ravitch and Schlesinger provide academic representation for a small group of educational politicians who have particular views of culture and history. Voices in this group have been loud and effective in making curricular gains. But are their concerns representative of professional historians?

Not Hanna Holborn Gray, Professor of history at the University of Chicago, who argues against the need for national history standards. “We are really in serious trouble,” she says, when we “attempt to define what the schools should teach the child about history” (1995, p. 27). She explains that no matter how well intentioned, a nationally certified, federally funded, consensus-laden version of history will be an invitation for political misuse. But the bigger problem with national standards is “that they exist at all...[for] they are bound to stimulate the worst kind of political discussion and even negotiation contrary to every principle that should animate the free discussion of ‘knowledge’” (p. 27). Gray fears that

history [will] become not an object of independent debate but a test of patriotism or orthodoxy, not a path to the understanding of the human condition of the institutional ends of social fabric over time, but an imposition of doctrine under the guise of consensus or official truth. (p. 27)

While this may not be the intent of the advocates of history standards, Gray warns that it would not be the first time that “good intentions
have walked around with blinders on...History is, above all, the study of complexity,” and adds that “the capacity to live and come to terms with complexity may be the hardest and most important thing we learn, and we have to learn it over and over” (p. 27).

Gray’s emphasis on complexity is reminiscent of Molly Ivin’s (1995) statement about history in her review of a novel about David Koresh. One of the characters, a frustrated negotiator in the Branch Dividian disaster, comments that “the problem is what we in the business call divergent world views. He sees what he’s doing as bringing the world to its glorious, millennial rendezvous with God, and you see what he’s doing as butchering innocent children. In divergences this extreme, normal morality doesn’t apply.” Ivins recalls, from an unremembered source, a quote she copied down years ago, that “only those of a certain mental toughness find it easy to accept the plentiful evidence that history is usually a random, messy affair; that blunder, misjudgment and ignorance often play a far larger role in it than design” (p. 18). She finds it worth remembering because it comes close to her own sense that most of history is the product of “luck, chance, accident, coincidence, and above all, human stupidity” (p. 18). Ivins would likely agree with Gray that instead of legislating agreement about a view of history, historical scholars could better prepare guidelines for studying world history to “ponder and argue” (Gray, p. 27).

Barbara Tuchman never earned an advanced degree (remember Rita and Nathan?) nor held a professional line, but her influence in the writing and teaching of history is widely recognized. She saw history as having three major areas: the investigative, the didactic/theoretical, and the communicative or narrative. She considered herself a narrator, maintaining that “research provided the material, theory certain patterns of thought, but it is through communication that history is heard and understood.” She teased professional historians by noting that communicators outside the academic world seemed to have greater success in getting to the public. There is need, she believed, to capture and hold the interest of others, a need evidenced “by every storyteller since Homer.” The teacher as communicator is not an historiographer, but a storyteller who integrates ideas and insights that somehow evolve from the internal logic of the material “in the course of putting it together.” As a communicator, Tuchman once said, “the process is more persuasive and the integrating idea more convincing...if it is discovered [by the reader, the student]” and is based on evidence. The communicator has a “feel for” (and commitment to) the subject. The myth of “pure objectivity” is laid aside if it refers to being without bias, preference and point of view. History, she argued, would “be like eating sawdust” if no bias were involved. And she warned that “bias is only misleading when it is concealed.”

Historians are more than recorders, and integrity suggest that there must be no pretense about the judgment, insight, predispositions, and
values that are constantly at work in the historical activity. In a taped radio interview shortly before her death, Tuchman reflected upon the state of history, the need to communicate in a more effective manner, and the problems she encountered as a "non-professional" historian. History in the schools cannot be separated from the activity called teaching. Most teachers are not scholars in the sense of conducting research and adding to the knowledge of the field, but they select the knowledge that others have made available. They become storytellers, and in doing this there can be no pretense of claiming objectivity, bias-free information and content, or objective selection of how stories are to be constructed, presented, or interpreted. The unexplained is sometimes as powerful as the explained, and alternative explanations prove exciting. Tuchman affirms that one's own commitment to studying and everything that studying involves is what courts sustained interest.

It is hard to see how all this could be captured in even a revised version of the National Standards for History in the Schools. What history does one teach if a teacher is, in reality, a storyteller and not a research scholar or a scholar involved in academic theory building? As Heraclitus noted, one never tells the same story twice, for both the teller and the told are changed.

The Canon, Social Science, and Social Studies

Ravitch's allegation that social studies is an "amorphous field" deserves study, but her lament that history is losing its traditional core role is misleading. The field of history has always been the senior partner within the social studies curriculum while the other social disciplines have been relegated to junior partnerships at best and, at worst, cursory mention. There is little doubt that a master historical narrative, the core of social studies education, has long-served the political socialization of citizens. Cornbleth and Waugh discuss the master narrative's allure and staying power as based on its historical promotion of American Exceptionalism (as James Loewen (1995) points out in Lies My Teacher Told Me). This theme remains central in contemporary textbooks:

The titles themselves tell a story: The Great Republic, The American Way, Land of Promise, Rise of the American Nation. Such titles differ from the titles of all other textbooks students read in high school of college. Chemistry books, for example are called Chemistry or Principles of Chemistry, not Rise of the Molecule. (p.3)

Ravitch and other like-minded critics see fundamental disagreements between the social sciences and history with regard to social study—both its means and its ends. Dorothy Ross, the Lovejoy Professor of History at Johns Hopkins, for example, provides a concise summary of the academic
issues involved. In “Against Canons: Liberating the Social Sciences,” she describes how the canon debate is peculiarly a problem of humanistic disciplines, particularly in embracing a hermeneutic method defined by a set of texts. As a result, there is no single subject of social science, but several social sciences, each having national traditions and different orientations towards the use of a textual canon. Each of the disciplines have paradigms (working narratives) that govern its scholarly work, privileging some kinds and excluding others. Although each discipline absorbed some of the biases of modern Western culture, they emerged as “secular, elite learning that proposed to understand, manage, and reform the new modern society then coming into existence.” The diversification of the narratives as well as the structural commitment of the social sciences to study the natural social world may be the distinguishing point of departure from the historical narrative of American Exceptionalism. Ross explains that in 1902, E. R. A. Seligman, President of the American Economic Association, challenged the idea that “this country has in some way a distinctive mission to perform, and that we are marked off from the rest of the world by certain inherent principles.” He argued that “we have been living in a fool’s paradise” because there is nothing inherently or permanently distinctive in our democracy, religious heritage, or love of liberty. Rather, all such characteristics are dependent “on shifting conditions of time and place” (p. 145).

Ross’s description explains how historians and social scientists seemed to take different routes. Historians maintained faith in a master narrative to keep America the same and the social sciences turned towards analytical processes espoused by science. The social sciences have had their own canonical battles, but, as Ross points out, the easiest solution to balance the bias of each canon is to diversify them, allowing marginal voices to be heard. By abolishing privileged forms of study:

What would be left is different kinds of studies...that focus on particular kinds of issues, have different degrees of generality, practice different methods, and employ different personnel...[this] would finally break open the lock that scientism has had on the social science mainstream...Social scientists would be free to cross the disciplinary boundaries of the humanities as well as the sciences and join historians, philosophers, and students of writing and languages...

She sees, dimly perhaps, some hope, some common grounding. In this she is not unwarranted. In a review of Immanuel Wallerstein’s Open the Social Sciences: Report of the Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences, Bennett (1997) finds that although several tendencies are now taking place in the social sciences, no set “core” assumes a privileged position. There is a blurring of disciplines, an increasing of special-
ties, and a welcoming of cross-disciplinary scholarship, all of which result in cooperative and complementary efforts rather than competitive or even destructive scholarship.

If Ravitch and others are dissatisfied with social studies, it may be with good reason. It is hard to imagine her welcoming an expanded concept of social studies which would open up several narratives within history itself, to see history as serving a number of different functions, including giving to and drawing from the other social disciplines. An interesting point that emerges is that many who retain history as a core speak in terms of content, i.e., people, events, texts, ideas, whereas those who challenge the role of canons speak in terms of methods—what Cornbleth and Waugh call the elements of critical pragmatism. What appears as an amorphous field to some is viewed by others as a totally different theory of knowledge.

_The Great Speckled Bird and the Capability of Students_

Cornbleth and Waugh make a tremendous contribution to social studies education. Struggles to set the agenda, frame the questions, and establish the rules of the game about relationships between knowledge and power are exposed. The stakes are high: for educational policymaking involves a diverse complex of interacting issues: economics, social contexts, political maneuvering, creative use of myths, styles of augmentation, legal constraints, values, tradition, precedence, media, corporate interests, nationalism, health, and an incumbent's advantage. The master narrative is hard to shake, especially when it is buttressed with views of fairness, truth, family values, traditional wisdom and control of symbols and language. As Cornbleth and Waugh aptly demonstrate, it is extremely hard to get a public hearing, even more so now that the information media has been re-organized by a recent surge of corporate mergers. Gulf and Western, for example, owner of Paramount Studios and Simon and Schuster has recently acquired Prentice-Hall, the largest textbook publisher in the United States, and thus has emerged as the largest publishing house in the world. Education policymaking, involving such megacorporate players, is a very serious struggle with many issues at stake and that is why the two case studies in The Great Speckled Bird are so important. Knowledge is power, that is true, but much depends on what knowledge, whose knowledge, and especially on how knowledge is used. Unfortunately, in policymaking, integrity and constructive conversation are often early casualties.

Assuming one is committed to improving the practice of citizenship education, the study of policymaking, especially policymaking aimed at the students themselves, may prove to be the most instrumental of all constructive civic education. Why couldn’t a book such as The Great Speckled Bird be used with secondary school students? Why not provide them with an opportunity to study policy making efforts that are intended to
influence what they are to think about and how they are to behave? Given that all education involves an element of risk, what has a democratic society to lose by the effort? True, it can be argued, as Schlesinger does, that students cannot handle such thinking—too much cognitive confusion. Yet it is difficult to imagine that students who successfully study calculus, chemistry, and physics would find the study of policymaking beyond their ability to understand. Are not the questions embodied in the concept of history and its use worth studying?

Cornbleth and Waugh have presented a much needed opportunity. If it is missed or ignored, the social studies as an area of the curriculum will have to resort, as usual, to the old rationalization of historical lessons to be learned by studying the past. The Great Speckled Bird is a good book, and needed. It irritates and aggravates. It lures the reader into becoming a more interested and more keenly observing spectator. It shames those of us who should be key active players and yet choose to stand on the sidelines, giving lip service, all the while escaping into a teaching role in which learning is substituted for study and simplicity masks complex realities. The book is well conceptualized. It is all there, if the reader becomes engaged and seeks an alternative and more viable social education. The main policy issue involves addressing what is America and who is an American. And there remains three questions: Who is to decide? How will the decision be made? What is at stake?

References


Seeking Democratic Possibilities


Reviewed by RAHIMA C. WADE, The University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242.

In recent years, numerous scholars have sounded a call for “democratic,” “critical,” or “empowering” education in response to the growing apathy and alienation of the American people from participation in the public sphere. David Sehr joins the many educators who believe that democratic education is a possible and even hopeful means for countering the prevailing, privatized form of democracy adhered to by most of society.

While the call may be familiar to most social studies educators, Sehr’s response, in his book *Education for Public Democracy*, advances the contemporary democratic education movement forward in new and significant ways. His ideas are well worth the attention of social studies educators at every level who profess a commitment to developing active and informed citizens.

Sehr rightly notes that most democratic educational theorists, researchers, and educators have failed to consider the complexities of how we understand democracy and democratic citizenship. Nor have most writers on democratic education developed a clear vision of the qualities and abilities necessary for effective democratic citizenship. Too often works on democratic education focus solely on particular “strategies” such as class meetings or student council or on abstract discussions of democratic themes, rather than on a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded framework useful for informing school practice. Sehr also notes that we need research studies that explore and analyze the lived experiences of teachers and students in existing schools which are trying to provide democratic education and that such analysis can only be effectively conducted through the lens of a comprehensive model for democratic citizenship.

Sehr thus takes on three ambitious tasks in his effort to “connect more directly the language of possibility in theory with a new language of possibility in democratic practice” (p. 2). First, he elucidates two competing understandings of democracy and citizenship in the United States: the dominant ideological tradition of “privatized democracy” and the alternative ideology and practice of “public democracy.” Next he articulates a vision of the personal qualities and abilities an individual would need to be an effective citizen in a democratic society and develops a model of school practices that will engage students in their learning and potentially lead to the development of the qualities and abilities he envisions. Finally, using this comprehensive framework, Sehr presents a qualitative
analysis of two inner city public alternative high schools endeavoring to put democracy in action.

Given the scope of these efforts and the brevity of the book, Sehr is remarkably successful. While at times as a reader I wanted more in-depth description or analysis, Sehr's work renewed my commitment to teaching democratically and gave me fresh ideas for teaching and research on democratic education. In this review, I address both the strengths of Sehr's work as well as possible directions for further analysis and discussion.

**American Democracy: Privatized or Public**

In Part 1 of the book, Sehr devotes considerable effort to explicating two competing ideologies in democratic theory and practice: a "privatized democracy" which has dominated society and a "public democracy" which has posed a constant challenge to the individualistic view. Sehr asserts that "for educators who wish to join the struggle for a more participatory, more just democracy, it is necessary to understand the conflicting ideas that support these competing conceptions of American democracy" (p. 31).

While Sehr occasionally gives a nod to one benefit of privatized democracy, the emphasis on individual liberties and rights, his position in favor of public democracy is clear throughout.

If the United States is to address its mounting social problems, there will have to be much broader and fuller participation in the decision-making processes that shape society. People must reenter—or in many cases enter for the first time—the public life of their society. Privately oriented individuals must become active, effective, public oriented citizens. They must organize to take control of the powerful institutions of society, or create new social institutions through which to build social justice, fairness, equality, economic opportunity—in short, the conditions necessary for the self-development of all members of society. Democracy must be revived and expanded to ensure that society's broadest possible interests will be served. (p. 55)

While Sehr's rhetoric could be seen as merely an echo of other critical or feminist theorists' (e.g. Giroux, 1988; Gould, 1988; Shor, 1992) and his treatise on the two competing democratic traditions similar to others' (e.g. Battistoni, 1985), there are two aspects of Sehr's discussion that make it more compelling than most.

First, Sehr highlights a number of ominous trends, supported by hard facts and figures, that have been created by and continue to contribute to the demise of civic participation. These include an increasing concentra-
tion of control of the nation's wealth, the shrinking of the middle class and the growth of the lower class, a shifting of the tax burden from the wealthy to the middle and lower classes, increasing homelessness, and the explosion of the American prison population. He further exposes how our capitalist political economy has focused persistently on limiting participation of the masses in an effort to protect the power of the elite.

Proposed policies are always evaluated on the basis of their potential effects on corporate profits. This means that virtually any policy that proposes to provide a public good at the expense of corporate resources or freedoms, unless it offers clear benefits to corporate interests, faces an uphill battle for passage. In the United States, this produces a political landscape which is inherently sparse in its policy offerings for low-income and working people. Such a political landscape offers little to encourage the participation of these inactive citizens. The political alienation of these people is therefore further enforced (p. 55).

The second unique aspect of Sehr's discussion of democratic practice in the United States is the extent to which he draws upon and synthesizes the works of a widely divergent group of educators and theorists. His analysis of the competing democratic traditions is informed by significant historical influences (e.g. Dewey, the Federalists, Jefferson, Locke, Madison, Mill, Rousseau) as well as contemporary critical, feminist, and multicultural theorists (e.g. Apple, Aronowitz, Giroux, Gould, Fraser, Marable, Mills, Gilligan, Shor). Sehr's framework is influenced by many of these scholars as well as the work of democratic education organizations in the United States (e.g. Coalition for Essential Schools, Educators for Social Responsibility, the Foxfire Network, Institute for Democracy in Education, Rethinking Schools).

A Framework for Democratic Citizenship

In the final two chapters of Part 1, Sehr lays out a comprehensive framework for the development of democratic citizens through public education. The first part of the framework consists of a list of values, attributes and capacities needed for public democratic citizenship. The five major elements in this list are: 1) an ethic of care and responsibility as a foundation for community and public life; 2) respect for the equal right of everyone to the conditions necessary for their self-development; 3) appreciation of the importance of the public; 4) a critical/analytical social outlook; and 5) the capacities necessary for public democratic participation. The latter category includes skills in speaking, listening, and thoughtful analysis as well as knowledge of constitutional rights, political processes, and major public issues.
The strong influences of critical theorists and feminist scholars on Sehr's thinking are quite evident in this list as is Sehr's optimistic yet practical approach in considering the desired outcomes before the means by which to accomplish them. He asserts that, "The principal characteristics of the ideal public democratic citizen serve as a compass to orient the work of educators who wish to teach for public democracy" (p. 81) and then proceeds to outline specific school practices to promote the skills and values in the framework.

While some might question whether the public schools can indeed fulfill the "countersocializing" function evident in the framework, Sehr notes that "schools have always been sites in which relatively small numbers of progressive and radical democratic educators have prepared young people for active, critical, publicly oriented citizenship" (p. 83). Indeed, a number of recently published books on democratic education center around the stories of such educators' efforts (Apple & Beane, 1995; Beyer, 1996; Goodman, 1992; Shor, 1996; Wood, 1992). Thus, Sehr's optimism for "the potential of more such work to be done in schools" (p. 83) is not unfounded.

Drawing heavily on Newmann's (1992) work on student engagement, Sehr posits that schools who take seriously the task of preparing students for democratic citizenship will have little success unless students are fully engaged in the school's educational program and community life. In Chapter 5, Sehr provides the following summary of characteristics of school life likely to engage students: 1) an atmosphere in which students feel a sense of belonging or membership in the school community; 2) a feeling of students' safety, both physical and emotional/psychological; 3) schoolwork with intrinsic interest for students; 4) schoolwork that is meaningful not only for school purposes, but also in the real world outside school; and 5) a sense of student ownership of their school.

The final part of Sehr's framework is a list of five school practices for nurturing public democratic values and attributes. Sehr has been careful both to align these practices with the values, skills, and capacities in the first part of the framework and to resist offering just a list of simple strategies such as class meetings or decision-making through consensus. As is noted in a further section of this review, Sehr developed this list of practices in concert with his experiences in two democratically oriented schools. Sehr's five broad categories for school practice include: 1) creating opportunities for students to explore their interdependence with others and with nature; 2) encouraging study of issues of equality and social justice; 3) encouraging discussion, debate, and action on public issues; 4) encouraging students to examine and evaluate critically the social reality in which they live; and 5) developing students' capacities for public democratic participation.
While Sehr briefly describes some specific applications for each of these practices (pp. 90-105), as a democratically-minded teacher, I wanted more. This part of the book could have been ably expanded to provide educators with more detailed descriptions of how to involve students in the study of social issues, community service-learning, cultural studies, advocacy projects and the like. I am hopeful that the future will find Sehr, and perhaps other democratic educators as well, further developing specific applications of the five practices for schools and classrooms at all educational levels.

**A Study of Two Schools**

Part 2 of the book focuses on a qualitative study of two urban public high schools. Sehr’s description of his approach to conducting this study is worthy of quoting at length here as it may provide a model for researchers of democratic education considering similar pursuits.

The framework for analysis was not simply imposed a priori on the study. Naturally, I went into these schools as a researcher with some general, preconceived ideas about what constitutes democratic citizenship and democratic education. But a conscious effort was made to record students’ and teachers’ accounts of their school experiences, not in terms of my ideas on democratic education, but rather as they saw and interpreted them in their own terms. Only after most of the field work was completed did I begin to construct the theoretical framework for analyzing the school data. This was a dialectical process. It drew both on the focused readings of democratic and educational theory discussed in part I, and on insights provided by the school data, which forced important additions and modifications in the emerging theoretical framework, as new or more precise analytical categories suggested themselves. (p. 109)

Sehr is clear that his work is not an attempt to provide a thorough ethnographic description of the schools, but rather “to analyze selected formal and informal features of the schools in some depth, to see what can be learned about the complexities of creating democratic education” (p. 109). In this more limited effort, he is largely successful. Following a brief description of each school setting, Sehr highlights aspects of each school related to student engagement, school size, advisory systems, class size, physical space, physical and emotional safety, promoting an ethic of care, and the academic curricula.

Of particular interest is Sehr’s discussion of how one of the schools limited the development of democratic capacities by providing no structure for student involvement in school governance as a whole. I also greatly
enjoyed Chapter 8 which focuses on two classrooms, one in each school, as the level of analysis. Student quotes and vignettes in this chapter provide a picture of the richness of interaction and ownership among students in the two schools.

While the school-based research provides a groundedness for Sehr’s framework often missing from other published works on democratic education, I was concerned about his choice of schools. Both are very small (100 students in one school, 450 in the other) alternative inner city high schools that belong to a progressive network, the Coalition of Essential Schools. While Sehr does not pretend that these settings are the norm in American society, he also does not give adequate attention to discussing how the aspects of these schools contributing to the development of democratic citizens could be replicated or adapted to more traditional high school settings. This core issue is taken up only in the last two pages of the book. Again, my hope is that Sehr and perhaps others will continue the effort to make democratic practice a real possibility for more students and teachers in schools at all levels. Clearly, Sehr has made a major contribution toward this goal in *Education for Public Democracy*. When many more educators, including many social studies educators, join the call for democratic practice in our nation’s schools, perhaps we will come closer to fulfilling Sehr’s vision to

remake public education to prepare young people to build a new public life and begin to reshape American society into the kind of place we’ve always been told it could be: a place of tolerance, care, justice, individual and social responsibility, and equal opportunity for all our citizens to develop themselves fully and prosper. (p. 180)

References


Dewey’s Relevance to Schools of Today


Review by STEPHEN J. THORNTON, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

I suspect anyone teaching the educational thought of John Dewey sooner rather than later encounters a student who asks, “But what do his ideas look like in practice”? Anyone wishing to answer that question could profit from Laurel N. Tanner’s new book, Dewey’s Laboratory School: Lessons for Today. Tanner takes us behind the classroom door at Dewey’s celebrated Laboratory School at the University of Chicago. She persuasively argues that Dewey’s mature educational thought was in large part shaped, in both its theoretical and practical dimensions, during the years from 1896-1904 when he directed the school. Tanner seeks to reclaim the legacy of Dewey’s experimental method in education for the improvement of schooling today.

Tanner describes how Dewey sought to align child development with the curriculum, teaching methods and school organization. She documents both his missteps and his successes. Tanner underscores how Dewey wisely saw that tinkering with teaching while ignoring the curriculum, or attending to the needs of the child while insulating the school from the surrounding society, and so forth, were partial solutions to more complex problems and, thus, inherently flawed. Although the Laboratory School never attained perfection, Tanner accurately notes that educational practice there was significantly in advance of most educational practice in American schools since. In today’s era of often highly specialized educational research, the broad purview Tanner brings to this book is refreshing.

Two interrelated decisions on this book’s focus, however, may well determine how readers react to it: Tanner informs the reader at the outset that “my book is not intended to be a history; its concern is now” (pp. xii-xiii). According to the cataloguing information, the Library of Congress does not agree with Tanner, and I expect many others who read an account of events in the past will regard this book, at least in large measure, as “history.” I found myself wondering why Tanner added her disclaimer. After all, as historians do, she has examined primary and secondary sources, selected those she considers significant, and compiled them into an account of what happened at the Laboratory School.

Apparently Tanner wants to view the historical elements of her book as mere illustrations of present problems and possibilities in schooling.
But it remains that she selects parts of history which hold "lessons" for the present. Is not that what all historians do when they seek a "usable past"? Does anyone write about past events which they feel have no relevance to the present? I suppose what Tanner means is that she has made no attempt to provide a "comprehensive" or "narrative" history and, in and of itself, that causes no problem. Nevertheless, I would have felt more comfortable if she had forthrightly taken responsibility for the many historical judgments made in this book.

The second issue, Tanner's insistence that the book concerns "now," also significantly shapes it and may affect how readers respond. Indeed, how Tanner deals with "now" is arguably the book's greatest strength or weakness, depending on one's point of view. Tanner eschews a chronological narrative and the chapters are organized by topic designed to speak to educational issues such as "The Teachers Speak" and "Administration and Supervision." Within each chapter, however, she breaks her text into small sections, with an effect akin to the organization of articles in practitioner-oriented journals with many subheadings such as in Social Education or Phi Delta Kappan.

Response to these numerous subdivisions of the text into almost self-contained units may depend on the purposes the reader has in using the book. This form of organization makes it easier to find information on any given subject. On the other hand, it is difficult for the reader to become absorbed in the flow of the argument when it is so fragmented. Whatever else, the numerous small sections seem to encourage repetition of certain central threads of Tanner's argument. For example, I gave up counting in how many sections we are told this particular "lesson" had been learned (or not learned) by educators today.

As in any book as wide-ranging and ambitious as this, readers will find points on which they may not be convinced. For example, on page 8 she seems to be saying that Dewey's ideas on curriculum and instruction are primarily applicable to early childhood and elementary education whereas on page 38 she implies that Dewey would have seen his ideas as equally applicable to secondary education. It seems to me that in Dewey's writing he was chiefly directing his work at early childhood and elementary education, and if Tanner believes otherwise I did not see any evidence to persuade me. Similarly, I found Tanner's contrast (pp. 2-3, 5-6) between an allegedly dominant "ethnic separatism" among 1990s multiculturalists and Dewey's focus on what "unites" people too quickly skirted over to assess her argument on such a controversial and sweeping claim.

In sum, however, Tanner reminds us why Dewey was, and remains, controversial. He resisted the quick fixes to educational problems in which so many Americans, including education professionals, have placed, and continue to place, their faith. The importance and timeliness of Tanner's
book is her reminder that Dewey was not merely a critic of educational theory and practice—a group as numerous in Dewey’s day as in our own. He was also not afraid to get his hands dirty in educational experimentation that would demonstrate tested alternatives to the educational panaceas of the day. In this respect, Tanner is surely correct, there is a lesson still to be learned.
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Theory and Research in Social Education is designed to stimulate and communicate systematic research and thinking in social education. Its purpose is to foster the creation and exchange of ideas and research findings that will expand knowledge and understanding of the purposes, conditions, and effects of schooling and education about society and social relations. Manuscripts reporting conceptual or empirical studies of social education are welcomed.

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