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From the Editor

E. Wayne Ross
Re-segregating Schools in the Name of Educational Reform

Features

Walter C. Parker
Toward an Aristocracy of Everyone: Policy Study in the High School Curriculum

William Zumeta
Policy Study in the High School Curriculum

Kathy Bickmore
Elementary Curriculum About Conflict Resolution: Can Children Handle Global Politics?

Rahima C. Wade
Voice and Choice in a University Seminar: The Struggle to Teach Democratically

Dialogue

Neil O. Houser
Saving Us From Ourselves: The Limits of Policy Study in the High School Curriculum

Walter C. Parker
Rejoinder to Houser

William Zumeta

Viewpoint

David W. Hursh
The Struggle for Democracy in South Africa: Race, History, and Education

Book Review

Andrew Dean Mullen
Teaching and Learning History in Elementary Schools

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

Volume 27 Number 1 Winter 1999
Table of Contents

I. Ideological and Historical Concerns.
   1. Perceptions, Ideologies and Approaches within the Social Studies.
II. The Subject Fields and Disciplines of the Social Studies.
   4. Important Subject Fields of the Social Studies: Economics, Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology.
III. Preparation for Effective Instruction: Student Needs, Technology, and Motivation.
   5. Meeting Needs and Providing Effective Instruction.
   6. The Appropriate Use of Classroom Technology.
   7. Motivating Student Learning.
IV. Identifying Instructional Goals and Design Models for Course, Unit, and Lesson.
   8. The Identification and Formulation of Instructional Objectives.
V. The Selection and Organization of Subject Matter Elements: Concepts, Skills, and Values.
   10. The Elements of Knowledge.
   11. Skill Development.
   12. Education for Values.
VI. The Selection or Development of Classroom Strategies, Activities, and Materials.
   13. Instructional Strategies and Activities.
VII. Effective Instructional Assessment Strategies.
Appendix A: A Lesson Plan Design Workshop for Teachers.
Appendix B: Unit Planning Workshop for Teachers.
FROM THE EDITOR
Re-segregating Schools in the Name of Educational Reform
E. Wayne Ross

FEATURES
Toward An Aristocracy of Everyone: Policy Study in the High School Curriculum
Walter C. Parker & William Zumeta

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Kathy Bickmore

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Rahima C. Wade

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Saving Us From Ourselves: The Limits of Policy Study in the High School Curriculum
Neil O. Houser

Rejoinder to Houser
Walter C. Parker & William Zumeta

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David W. Hursh

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Current efforts to reform public education are driven by a fervent desire to improve student test scores. For many states and local school districts the only thing that counts when judging the effectiveness of schools is the scores students produce on standardized tests. Just as elites and the media would have the nation’s economic health judged solely on the Dow Jones Average, judgments of school effectiveness have been reduced to test scores. The pernicious effects of this myopic approach to public school reform include: undermining local control over curriculum, the de-skilling of teachers, and now, segregation of kids and teachers by race.

In the pursuit of higher test scores, a Long Island, New York school district has instituted a tracking system that unfairly segregates kids and teachers by race. The latest “Amityville horror” was concocted in a secret meeting of the seven member Amityville school board and the district superintendent last August and implemented in the fall without input from the public or teachers. The tracking scheme sorts elementary and middle school students into low, regular, and high achievement tracks based on standardized test scores, a practice condemned in a recent report by the National Research Council (Heubert & Hauser, 1999).

In a district where 68 percent of the students are African American, 16 percent Hispanic, and 16 percent white, the “low-skills” classes enroll 91 percent minorities, while the “high-skills” classes enroll only 60 percent African American and Hispanic students. The Amityville tracking system doesn’t stop with students. Although there are 18 African American teachers in grades affected by the plan, only one African American teacher has been assigned to teach a higher-skills class.

In addition, the Amityville scheme denies students in the “low level” track access to instruction in social studies and science, as well as classes in library, band, orchestra, and chorus. The district defended its tracking system by claiming the intent was to increase the district’s below-average test scores and that instruction in any area other than reading and math would be a distraction from this goal.

Parents and teachers have responded to the plan with justified outrage. Hundreds of parents protested the plan at board meetings in the fall. District Superintendent Dean F. Bettker responded that kids would be moved to higher tracks as their performance improved, but teachers reported only two instances of students moving out of low track classes in the fall semester; both were white children.

Over thirty years after residents sued to force the integration of Amityville schools, the Amityville Teachers Association and the Long Island

* A different version of this essay was published as “Re-segregating Schools” in Z Magazine, April 1999, 12 (4), 8-10.
branch of the N.A.A.C.P. have joined a group of parents in a $5 million fed-
eral lawsuit against the district, asserting that the tracking system is racially
discriminatory and unconstitutional. For its part, the district has maintained
that the system is justified in an effort to improve test scores and that it is
based on assessment of students’ skills not race. The school district took out
a full-page ad in a local newspaper, which was also mailed to residents, claim-
ing that the “real motive” of the Amityville teachers in protesting the track-
ing system was to get more money for greedy teachers.

Unfortunately, Amityville is not an isolated case of re-segregation in
the name of reform. Charter schools are being touted as a way to improve
public education, but evidence indicates that, at least in some states, these
schools are more racially segregated than adjacent public schools. Charter
schools are publicly funded but free of many of the regulations that govern
the operation of public schools. Proponents claim that charter schools pro-
vide greater accountability and school choice as well as freedom for educa-
tional innovations, higher efficiency, and competition that will stimulate
changes in public schools. Charter schools are now legal in 34 states.

Two years ago, as North Carolina considered charter schools legislation,
many feared a repeat of the “white-flight academies” that emerged from deseg-
regation efforts of the 1970s. To avoid this possibility a diversity clause was in-
serted into the charter schools bill requiring the schools to “reasonably reflect”
the demographics of the local public schools. Ironically, and despite the diversity
clause, 13 of the 34 charter schools that opened in the state in 1997 were dispro-
portionately African American, compared with their public school districts. Ac-
cording to the North Carolina Education Reform Foundation, nearly 40 percent
of the state’s 60 charter schools violate the diversity clause and all but one of
these enroll more than 85 percent African American students. More than half of
all students attending charter schools in North Carolina are African American,
although the school age population of the state is only 30 percent black. Now the
North Carolina Association of Educators, a teachers union, and the black caucus
of the state legislature are calling for the legislature to force the segregated schools
to diversify in the next year or be closed (Dent, 1998).

Recent studies in California and Arizona find similar patterns of racial
and ethnic segregation in charter schools. There are nearly 50,000 students in
150 charter schools in California, with 200 new charters expected in the next
two years. Drawing on case studies of 17 charter schools from 10 California
school districts, a recent UCLA report found that charter schools were more
likely to be accountable for how money is spent than for educational attain-
ment (Wells, 1998). This study concluded that California is not enforcing its
requirement that charters achieve a racial and ethnic balance reflective of the
local school district’s population. In 10 of the 17 schools studied, at least one
racial or ethnic group was over- or under-represented by 15 percent or more in
comparison with the local public schools.

Arizona is home to nearly one in four charter schools in the United
States. An intensive study of the racial and ethnic composition of over 100 of
Arizona’s charter schools reveals that nearly half the schools exhibited evi-
dence of substantial ethnic separation, however, unlike the North Carolina
charters, a greater proportion of white students were enrolled in Arizona
charters (Cobb & Glass, 1999). In comparison to their public school neigh-
bors, Arizona charter schools enrolling a majority of ethnic minority students
tended to be non-academic schools, that is either vocational secondary schools not intended to prepare students for higher education or “schools of last resort” for students expelled from traditional public schools. The authors of this Arizona State University study concluded that the degree of ethnic segregation in Arizona charter schools is large enough and consistent enough to warrant serious concern among education policymakers.

In the current discourse and practice of educational reform, test scores are understood as the repository of educational value. This fetishism is so strong in mainstream reform efforts that virtually any practice thought to increase test scores is justifiable, even the re-segregation of schools. The challenge for people concerned about equality, democracy, and social justice in schools and society is to both resist and re-direct the educational reform movement—a movement that currently promotes standardization and re-segregation while diverting attention away from the conditions of teaching and learning that must be changed if the public schools are to be transformed, such as inadequate and inequitable funding, and lack of local control over budgets, staffing, scheduling, curriculum, and assessment.

To be successful in this effort, educators, parents, students, and other members of local school communities must rescue the educational reform discourse from its obsession with testing. One promising path for educational reform is through grassroots organizing. Communities and schools are both strengthened when the resources of universities, schools, and neighborhoods are combined to tackle social and educational problems that inhibit meaningful learning and educational achievement. University faculty can contribute to this effort by providing technical assistance and support to schools, neighborhoods, and families as well as by advocating for those who experience isolation, segregation, and oppression. This kind of work is underway in places like Detroit, where Inclusive Community and Democracy serves as an umbrella for various grassroots efforts. With more efforts like these, the deleterious effects of test-driven educational reform can be replaced by education aimed at achieving democratic, inclusive learning experiences that foster social and intellectual growth for all individuals and their communities.

For our part, we must consider how CUFA and NCSS can be mobilized to assist grassroots efforts and to re-claim the educational reform movement in the name of the highest standard: empowering citizens for life in a democratic society.

E. W. R.

References
Toward An Aristocracy Of Everyone:
Policy Study In The High School Curriculum

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Abstract
We propose a course of study that would have high school students study and practice a public policy analysis model used by public policy professionals. Presently elected for study by graduate students in public affairs departments, rigorous policy study is saved for the tiny few. This in turn supports a form of democracy where the many are excluded from popular sovereignty. We elaborate the meaning of and rationale for public policy analysis and present a detailed conceptual framework. We argue that competence in this activity by the citizenry as a whole will strengthen popular sovereignty, and we suggest that research and extant curriculum resources generally support the effort.

Introduction

We propose that high school students learn and use a model of public policy deliberation (PPD) practiced by public policy professionals working for cities, counties, states and other organizations. We propose it for two social studies courses typically offered in the high school: American Government and Contemporary World Problems (sometimes called Senior Problems or Current Events). We do not suggest that the curricula of these courses be changed radically to admit instruction on the PPD approach; our idea is modest, that these courses might productively admit PPD as a strand or unit, one among others already in place. The rationale for our proposal is that public policy deliberation is the basic activity of self-government—of creating and sustaining democratic life—and that the particular knowledge and habits unique to it should be the possession not only of professional policy makers but citizens as well.

We proceed in four sections. The first, “Curriculum for Democracy,” introduces the idea of gearing the school curriculum to democratic citizenship outcomes. Here we deploy Thomas Jefferson’s notion that education is the linchpin of a sustainable democracy and
that "we the people" are more a mob than a public without it. The second section, "Curriculum Deliberation," describes the activity of curriculum making and its main decision point: content selection. In the third section, "Public Policy Analysis," we turn to a detailed explanation of an eight-part model of public policy analysis. Threaded through the model is an example of policy analysis dealing with the perennial problem of citizen apathy. In the fourth section, "Discussion," we suggest ways to think about planning a PPD curriculum. Criteria for problem-selection are identified and a prosaic citizen model of PPD is distinguished from the professional model. As well, empirical support for our proposal is marshaled and curriculum resources are identified.

These, then, are our central purposes: to theorize the connection between the school curriculum and democratic societal aims, to propose one portion of that curriculum project that is based on what public policy professionals actually do, and to show that this portion, while ambitious, is workable. We leave out numerous topics that are important to these purposes. We do not address teacher education or the broader project of transforming the whole social studies program, K-12, toward PPD or, beyond that, the entire school curriculum. We deal with instruction and implementation problems, but only peripherally to our central purposes. These are important matters, we know, and we would rather not slight them; our focus is narrow, however, so that we might go into considerable depth within its boundaries. As for these other concerns, we refer readers to scholars who have taken them up head-on.¹

It should be apparent to readers familiar with the issue-oriented social studies tradition (e.g., Oliver & Shaver, 1974) that our conception of PPD relies on that literature. However, as this article should make clear, PPD relies on a different tradition as well, one found in the professional field of public policy studies (e.g., Stone, 1997; Weimer & Vinning, 1992; Wildavsky, 1979).

This is an interdisciplinary effort. One of the authors (Zumeta) teaches in the department of Public Affairs and the other (Parker) in the department of Education, both at the University of Washington in Seattle. Our audience is academics working in departments of public affairs and education as well as high school teachers and members of school curriculum committees.

Curriculum For Democracy

Democracy is one among several competing ways to determine public policy and conduct public affairs. The prevalent alternative to democracy is authoritarianism of some sort: rule by a monarch, a dictator, the rich, a family, a party, the generals. Democracy's most essential
defining attributes are popular sovereignty (i.e., self-government) and elections. There are other, more elaborate definitions as well. One of the most rigorous is from The Freedom House (Diamond, 1996), which uses several additional criteria in its periodic classification of the world's nations. For example, does real power lie with elected officials rather than unaccountable internal actors (e.g., the military)? Are cultural groups prohibited from expressing their interests in the political process or using their language? Are electoral outcomes uncertain?

Definitions matter in practical ways. Some states are democratic according to the minimalist definition given first but not according to the criteria used by the Freedom House. Turkey, India, Sri Lanka, Russia, and Colombia are five democracies on the first analysis; none is on the second. Yet, as historian Robert Wiebe notes (1995), the two attributes of the minimalist definition run through all the more complex definitions; they are critical and distinguishing attributes not to be dismissed.

History gives democracy no advantages. “To ask why democracy does not exist at a particular time or in a particular country is on the face of it a distorting question,” Wiebe writes (1995, p. 9-10). “Its absence does not compel explanation. Nor does any nation have a special claim on its future. Appreciating its historically contingent nature allows us to recognize how breathtaking its arrival was, how extraordinary its spread has been, and how uncertain its prospects are.” Democracies, in other words, generally are weak and their incumbencies brief. The collapse of the Weimar Republic with the rise of the Third Reich provides an object lesson on this point, and there are others. As we write, the new democracies of Europe face uncertain futures; Hong Kong, which was somewhat democratic, is now controlled by a party dictatorship that promises “two systems,” both non-democratic. Indonesia makes moves toward democracy but could end up a revised tyranny.

All democracies are young and most of them minimalist: Representatives are elected by adults who vote, and whose votes count equally; individuals, generally speaking, have rights. Furthermore, many people in these democracies live at the margins of the unum, and those who are included in the unum do not so much govern as they are governed by power elites who were elected and, in the case of the United States, elected by expensive telemarketing campaigns linked to a continuous stream of opinion polling. Ordinary citizens' civic competence goes undeveloped or, if nurtured to some extent somewhere along the line, atrophies through disuse. “The people” have the vote, perhaps, and therefore considerable power, but not the deliberative dispositions or conditions whereby they can think and talk with one another about the power they exercise (Fishkin, 1991). The consequence is the deterioration of the “public square”—the very
idea of shared and open government. Deliberation on the common
good is replaced by what Mary Ann Glendon (1991) calls “rights talk,”
which celebrates rugged individualism at the expense of the civic cul-
ture—the social infrastructure—needed to secure it.

Because deliberation with others is reduced, so is concerted at-
tention to all the public problems that deliberation tries to grapple
with—crime, racism, sexism, water and land use, the distribution of
health and wealth—and to the salutary unity/diversity tension that
inevitably arises in the public square when a society is trying to be
both democratic and pluralistic. Diversity by religion, race, class, gen-
der, language, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and so on, is a fact of life
in modern democracies; yet no modern democracy, whether Switzer-
land, Japan, England, Costa Rica, or the United States, has yet real-
ized e pluribus unum. They all “tolerate” some degree of pluralism and
have achieved a limited unity, yet to one degree or another they
marginalize or repress the former and, therefore, can barely claim the
latter. Democracies are not utopias, of course, and they must be con-
tent with “limited” this and “barely” that; however, there is ample
room for progress, and it is our moral responsibility to pursue it. This
was Martin Luther King, Jr.’s, point when calling due that “promis-
sory note” in his March on Washington address in 1963.

Perhaps because democracy is fragile and underdeveloped, edu-
cators are asked perennially to be its chief stewards and champions.
“The influence over government must be shared among all the people,”
Thomas Jefferson wrote in (1787, p. 148), and for this reason “their
minds must be improved to a certain degree.” He argued, therefore,
for an amendment to the Constitution that would aid public educa-
tion. Benjamin Barber (1993) clarifies Jefferson’s idea of the role of
education in a democracy, contrasting him to James Madison, and
suggests the title to our article:

Give the uneducated the right to participate in making
collective decisions, and what results is not democracy
but, at best, mob rule: the government of private preju-
dice once known as the tyranny of opinion. For Jefferson,
the difference between the democratic temperance he ad-
mitted in agrarian America and the rule of the rabble he
condemned when viewing the social unrest of Europe’s
teeming cities was quite simply education. Madison had
hoped to “filter” out popular passion through the device
of representation. Jefferson saw in education a filter that
could be installed within each individual, giving to each
the capacity to rule prudently. Education creates a ruling
aristocracy constrained by temperance and wisdom; when
that education is public and universal, it is an aristocracy
to which all can belong. (p. 44)
Educators hoping to nurture this democratic filter in students and thereby prepare them for the role of thoughtful citizen rather than apathetic spectator or aroused bigot face a daunting problem space. There are countless ways to interpret and parse it, bringing some problems to the fore, bracketing others, and ignoring others. The particular problem that was tackled in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the “popularization of education” (Cremin, 1990). This was the battle to provide young people with equal access to school buildings, trying to get poor and culturally marginalized children into schools. Busy on this front, fighting this battle for school access, a good number of educators did not concern themselves much with what went on inside schools—with the school climate and curriculum. Nonetheless, there were individuals, committees, and commissions that attended to these things and attempted to give birth to education for democracy. The 1916 Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association, for example, developed a Community Civics course and the better known Problems of Democracy (Commission, 1916). Harold Rugg (1939a & b) searched beyond isolated courses and proposed that the whole social studies curriculum be geared to problems of industrialization and democracy. Also, among the several projects of the Progressive Education Association was the Eight-Year Study (Aikin, 1942). One of the largest and most important curriculum research and evaluation studies ever undertaken in the United States, it put practical community problem solving at the core of the secondary school curriculum.

Social Aims

Returning to the definitional problem, it is necessary to ask to what particular vision of democracy the school curriculum should be aimed. “Since education is a social process,” John Dewey reminded us, “and (because) there are many kinds of societies, a criterion for educational criticism and construction implies a particular social ideal” (1985, p. 105). Teachers and curriculum planners must do what no one else in education has to do: specify a social aim sufficiently to make it a reasonably distinct curriculum target, one that will justify selecting this content over that, these materials over those, these instructional methods, these modes of classroom interaction. Does the curriculum center on a vision of the citizen as a spectator? voter? legislator? consumer? taxpayer? Is it a vision that fears diversity? fosters it?

Minimalist democracy is only one social aim, as we have seen. Stronger forms of democratic life can be imagined to which curriculum planners and teachers might aspire and which might incline them to revise the curriculum in the direction of preparing students for participatory citizenship generally and thoughtful public policy deliberation in particular. The stronger forms converge on the moral conviction that the democratic project can and must be deepened and
extended. We now specify this vision by visiting two key ideas: citizenship and diversity.  

Democratic Citizenship. Liberal democracy sets up a form of human coexistence that celebrates the rule of law, equality before the law, individual liberty, popular sovereignty, and civil rights. It separates public from private life and civil law from religious law. These are the salient contributions of classical liberalism to modern democracy, more-or-less guaranteeing a social space in which, theoretically, a free people can do all that freedom allows as long as they don’t harm one another or the common good. But, liberal democracy’s reliance on representative government is so complete that active citizen participation in political life becomes almost superfluous. Voting is what matters instead. Ironically, voters choose the people who act like citizens. Citizens talk about public problems, they argue, they make politics and policy, they create the social conditions and institutions within which people live their lives.

The most compelling democratic alternative to weak democracy is a vision of public life that takes popular sovereignty—and preparation for it—more seriously. It asks people to enter and develop the citizen identity more often, mainly by talking more often and more completely with other citizens about shared problems. These “other citizens” are other members of the public, which means they are often beyond one’s kin and maybe one’s ken. Such talk nurtures democratic publics, for its topic is a shared problem and its reach is inclusive of cultural differences. It is what David Mathews calls choice work: “careful deliberation with others about a range of options or ways of approaching difficult issues, such as how a community can support troubled families” (1997, p. 743). This vision of public life does not ask people always to engage in choice work—always to occupy the citizen role—but to be citizens often enough. “Often enough” is a slippery admonition, to be sure, but it indicates the two unacceptable extremes: never and all the time.

Multicultural Democracy. The second idea raises the democratic standard in another way. It challenges the persistence of racism, religious intolerance, sexism, and other bigotries and forms of discrimination in diverse societies that otherwise enjoy significant liberal democratic gains. It also challenges the defensive stance toward diversity typical in modern liberal democracies, a stance that confuses diversity with balkanization.

Modern democracies are culturally diverse societies—some more than others, of course (Canada and the U.S. more than Japan and Denmark), but this is a matter of degree not kind. Ethnic and racial diversity in the United States is growing so rapidly that within forty years there will be no majority culture. Everyone will be a “minority” (Garcia & Gonzalez, 1995). What the second idea, multicultural democracy,
contributes is the principle that pluralism needs to be taken more seriously than heretofore in liberal democracies. It rejects the tendency of liberal democracy to hold pluralism as a central principle of public life while at the same time denying or punishing diversity.

How is the contradiction managed? The first way is to confuse an ideal for an accomplishment. In the United States, *e pluribus unum* is often treated as something that has already been gained: The key benchmarks were the Federalists’ brilliant constitutional formula for controlling majority factions, numerous 18th and 19th century extensions of political equality, and the Civil Rights movement. Any serious attention in the schools to diversity today, the argument goes, now that the envelop has been pushed as far as it can go, will result in ethnic nationalism and what Arthur Schlesinger (1991) called “the dis-uniting of America.” (This is mainly a misconception. “The claim that multicultural education will divide the nation assumes that the nation is already united” [Banks, 1993, p. 23].)

Second, liberal democracy’s version of individualism is highly abstract and impersonal. It is necessarily “difference-blind” (Taylor, 1993): Its citizen is a character of indifferent sex, race, social class, religion, national origin, and, in some polities, sexual orientation. This is liberal democracy’s neutrality premise. The state is and should be neutral on matters of religion, gender, race, and so on. In societies where group identities are politicized, however, and matter greatly in the conduct of public affairs, indifference tends to serve the interests of whichever groups presently enjoy positions of power. That is, pretending neutrality reproduces the status quo, and the failure to acknowledge this fact tends to intensify its effect.

Liberal democracy’s basic tenets of individual liberty, law, human dignity, equality, and popular sovereignty need to be preserved, certainly, but extended and deepened. A more robust conception of citizenship could be forged in young people. It aims to embrace individual difference, group difference, and an overarching political community all at once. In order to do this, democrats will not be able merely to replace liberalism’s excessive individual self-interest with a new politics of group self-interest (that would be no gain). Rather, they need to recognize individual and group identities without worshipping or reifying them and to unite them horizontally in a political community that secures them. Here is Dewey’s (1927) vision of a “larger public” that embraces the “little publics.” The larger one is not a broad-based cultural comradeship. In modern, culturally diverse societies, this is both unrealistic and undesirable. When pursued by dominant groups, the wish for cultural bonding usually becomes a repressive ambition to make everyone take up the cultural norms of the dominant group. History stands witness: the Fatherland under Hitler, Pol Pot’s and Stalin’s murderous attempts to eradicate diversity, the Bosnian and
Rwandan debacles, the multitude of ways women are expected to mimic men, and so on. The vision of a larger, transcendent public is instead a moral grid that binds citizens together in a broad "we-ness." This we-ness is a political union that appreciates diversity as a democratic virtue. Democratic education, then, seeks to form citizens who embrace, in Michael Walzer’s terms, political oneness alongside cultural manyness (1992). This is not easy work, but it is difficult to imagine a suitable alternative in a society that wishes to be both democratic and diverse.

Curriculum Deliberation

Let us to turn from specifying a social aim for the curriculum to an examination of curricula relevant to that aim. To begin with conclusions, the field of study most relevant to cultivating strong democrats is the one known for centuries as the practical. Its subject matter is public problems, its method is deliberation, and its aim is right action. A curriculum for deliberation is required because the aims discussed above specify citizens whose main task is not the rule-bound reproduction of what has come before but a principled, practical reasoning—identifying and negotiating problems as they arise, building and applying ideas, recognizing and easing out of conceptual ruts, and working toward solutions that are revised and clarified in the course of working toward them. The centerpieces of such a curriculum are study and practice. Democracy is what is studied—its variety, history, principles, tensions, and the conditions that strengthen or undermine it. And, democracy is what is practiced—framing and deliberating public problems with the intention of deciding on right action under conditions where action is needed.

Curriculum deliberation is, to be sure, its own form of public policy deliberation. It is discussion with an eye to deciding what should be taught in school. “What schools do,” wrote Maurice Holt (1994), “is solve curriculum problems, using curriculum in the broad sense of all the programs and encounters, whether intended or otherwise, that constitute the experience of schooling. And these problems require that we link thought with action—that we bring about desirable practice by linking theory and practice in ways appropriate to the nature of these problems.” As such, curriculum deliberation is a subset of the ordinary practice of deliberation, which is the method by which everyday, shared problems are identified and addressed through discussion.

Content Selection

To the extent educators can find time to deliberate curriculum issues, they set about deciding what they want to accomplish and select a sample of content (subject matter) that arguably can help get
them there. When planning a course oriented to the deliberation of public policy, advice on content selection is available (e.g., Massialas, 1996; Oliver, 1957). Some of the best came in the first decades of this century, as we mentioned above, when the progressive education movement tried to focus a portion of the school curriculum on the new public problems that accompanied industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. The Problems of Democracy course was launched and became for decades a common twelfth-grade course offering in school systems. The 1950s through the early 1970s were what could be called the golden age of public issues instruction. Maurice Hunt and Lawrence Metcalf (1955) outlined a curriculum in which students examine social taboos and other controversial topics. Massialas and Cox (1966) blended inquiry and issues when they invited teachers and students “to participate in the process of inquiry in order to grow in their predisposition and ability to explore and validate alternatives” (from the Preface). Donald Oliver and Fred Newmann (1967) introduced teachers and students to the “jurisprudential framework” and distinctions among several kinds of issues that arise in discussions of public problems (definitional, empirical, ethical) and taught them strategies for moving such discussions forward—for example, clarifying an issue, stipulating a definition, and drawing analogies.5 Newmann (1975) later developed a “citizen action” approach which taught high school students to exert influence on public affairs.

Recent work has built on this foundation. Education for Democratic Citizenship (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), the Handbook on Teaching Social Issues (Evans & Saxe, 1996), and Preparing Citizens (Miller & Singleton, 1997) are useful resource books for public issues curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The recent National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education, 1994) expects students to be able to “evaluate, take, and defend positions” on numerous public issues. In 1998, the National Assessment of Educational Progress began to test students’ ability to do just that (National Assessment Governing Board, 1997).

Multiple Objectives

Whatever the particular emphasis of a PPD approach, there are two types of content objectives to which more-or-less equal attention needs to be paid: topics and intellectual frameworks. In Oliver and Shaver’s terms, content selection “involves two major decisions: What topics will one choose as the basis for selecting specific materials of instruction? What intellectual framework will be used to guide the teacher and, in turn, the student in handling these materials?” (1974, p. 59) Content selection must occur deliberately on both fronts; yet, the goal for daily teaching and learning is an artful synthesis of the two.
Regarding the first category, the main topical area in the public issues approach from the 1916 course through today has been public conflict and related policy controversies. Research methods and findings from the social science disciplines are involved as well, but as resources rather than the primary objects of study. Oliver and Shaver's work (1974), for example, emphasized six areas of public conflict: racial and ethnic conflict; religious and ideological conflict; security and the individual; conflict among economic groups; conflict over health, education, and welfare; and national security. Note that each problem area is perennial; each contains potentially many cases across time and space. Careful selection of analogous cases from different historical eras and cultures but within a single problem area should help students understand that publics across time and space have had to deal with similar problems.

The second category of content objectives, the intellectual framework, must clarify what is otherwise the black box called "deliberation." Needed is a conceptual framework in which these problems are to be identified, clarified, and deliberated with an eye toward making and evaluating policy decisions. In the next section, we turn to the field of public policy analysis for such a framework. First, however, we look briefly at the content decisions in the "Problems of Democracy" course (Commission, 1916).

Problems Of Democracy Course (POD)

Like most curriculum programs that have been developed in the United States, this course did not take seriously enough the brute fact of diversity generally or the pervasiveness of bigotry in particular. However, it did treat democracy as a creative, participatory endeavor, and it did develop the concept of citizenship education further than it had been before. POD was designed by a 1916 commission of the National Education Association that was convened to attempt a sensible articulation of college and high school curricula. Its work soon broadened to a reformulation of the entire secondary curriculum. A subcommittee assigned to "social studies" worked out a comprehensive curriculum for grades seven through twelve ending in a "culminating course...with the purpose of giving more definite, comprehensive, and deeper knowledge of some of the vital problems of social life, and thus of securing a more intelligent and active citizenship" (Commission, 1916, p. 52). This became POD. It would rely heavily on what students had learned in a course of study called Community Civics (CC) taken in grades seven through nine and in history courses (European and American) taken in grades seven through twelve.

Careful to mollify the social sciences competing for legitimacy in the secondary school curriculum, the planners clarified that POD would not "discard one social science in favor of another, nor attempt
to crowd the several social sciences into (POD) in abridged forms.” Rather, it would have students “study actual problems, or issues, or conditions, as they occur in life, and in their several aspects, political, economic, and sociological” (Commission, 1916, p. 53). In this way, students might “acquire the habit of forming social judgments” (practical reasoning), which would necessitate “drafting into service the materials of all the social sciences as occasion demands for a thorough understanding of the situations in question” (p. 56). Here, well-stated, is the disciplines-as-resource concept.

The problems recommended for the POD course required for their competent deliberation knowledge formulated by historians and social scientists as well as the students’ own critical judgment. Judgment is needed because disciplinary knowledge cannot speak for itself or leap up and apply itself prudently to policy alternatives. Rather, citizens do this. Furthermore, problems had to meet the committee’s twin criteria for problem selection: immediate interest to the class and vital importance to society.

Problems were to have been studied “in some of their aspects and relations” in history and CC courses, but they “may now be considered more comprehensively, more intensively, and more exhaustively” (Commission, 1916, p. 54). In particular, they would be studied “from different angles,” which were disciplinary vantage points. For example:

1. Economic relations of immigration:
   A. Labor supply and other industrial problems.
   B. Standards of living, not only of the immigrants, but also of native Americans as affected by immigration.

2. Sociological relations of immigration:
   A. Movements and distribution of population; congestion in cities.
   B. Social contributions of immigrants; art, science, ethics.

3. Political and governmental relations of immigration:
   A. Political ideals of immigrants; comparison of their inherited political conceptions with those of the United States.
   B. Naturalization; its methods, abuses. (Commission, 1916, p. 54)

While POD exemplifies looking to society’s problems for topical curriculum content, it skirted the second category of objectives—the intellectual framework—except to specify that this is where the disciplines become pertinent. The task of specifying and elaborating this framework for pedagogical purposes was left to the projects in the
aforementioned "golden age"—to the inquiry and jurisprudential pio-
neers (e.g., Massialas & Cox, 1966; Oliver & Shaver, 1974). We turn
now to a version of the intellectual framework that has grown up next
door to departments of education in the field of public policy analysis
and that is practiced widely by professionals in that field.

Public Policy Analysis

Well beyond the boundaries of the secondary school and the so-
cial studies curriculum, intellectual developments were taking place
that are relevant to the education of high school students, though they
have been to date little applied to this purpose. We refer here to the
emergence of the field of public policy studies and particularly policy
analysis. Policy analysis is now taught in colleges and universities
from the bachelor's to the doctoral level, and in a considerable range
of academic units, from political science departments to business and
other applied professional schools (e.g., urban planning, public health,
education, environmental studies). Entire degree programs in the field
of public policy have sprung up over the last 25 years or so, with most
of these granting the M.P.P. (Master of Public Policy), or a similar de-
gree. Also, public policy analysis is now often a several-course require-
ment and/or a specialty track within the hundreds of Master of Pub-
lic Administration (M.P.A.) programs in the nation's colleges and uni-
versities. The field now has its own scholarly journals (e.g., Journal of
Policy Analysis and Management, Policy Studies Journal) and professional
organizations (Association for Public Policy Analysis and Manage-
ment, Policy Studies Organization).

We believe concepts and procedures drawn from this field can
play an important role in providing high school students with an in-
tellectual framework for considering public problems. Now, selecting
this framework is not a straightforward process for the term policy
analysis has appreciably different meanings to different groups of prac-
titioners and these differences are illuminating. Let us look at three
groups. Academic political scientists tend to define the term as the
social-scientific study of the determinants of policies and the processes
of enacting and implementing them. This includes the study of whose
interests get served by public policies and how this comes about. Sec-
ond, practitioners in and around government and the academics who
teach them tend to see policy analysis in more pragmatic, problem-
centered terms: the practical application of an analytic framework and
research techniques to identify and address social problems—poverty,
for example, or environmental degradation, or drug-related crime.
Finally, a small but hardy band of activists seeks to include both of
these dimensions in their work while also seeking explicitly to de-
mocratize policy-making processes. This group tends to reject the no-
tion lingering from policy analysis’s historic roots that there are optimal public policies to be found and the corollary that analysts should seek to manipulate political processes to get these implemented once discovered. Rather, this group advocates strong democracy—participatory politics—and seeks to bring the analytic framework and research techniques of the field to bear in its support.

A bit about the intellectual roots of the public policy analysis field should be helpful before we outline the basic intellectual framework. The field originated not primarily as an offshoot of democratic theory but from the development and application of systems analysis and operations research techniques to military problems during World War II and in the Defense Department of Robert McNamara in the 1960s. By the later Lyndon Johnson years, some of the models at the root of these techniques were being applied to public policy and management problems outside the military sphere. Examples can be found in the War on Poverty effort (Williams, 1971); in the policy evaluation efforts of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Planning and Evaluation in the old Federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) (Lynn and Seidl, 1975); in the efforts to apply the Defense Department’s Planning-Programming-Budgeting System (PPBS) to the entire federal government (Schick, 1973); and in the management of the University of California under the leadership of President Charles J. Hitch. The results of these early efforts to apply analytical methods to problems of government management and public policy were in many respects disappointing. These methods tended to be reductionistic. They assumed a simple, rational political system that was responsive in predictable ways to various inputs and manipulations when in fact the system was anything but simple or rational and seemed instead to operate according to its own, indecipherable rules (Lindblom, 1980; Wildavsky, 1966).

Some leading political scientists took an interest in the field and began to shape its evolution in a direction that honored analytic frameworks that were practical and political instead of (or in combination with) those that were idealistic and rationalistic (Wildavsky, 1979; Stone, 1997). This approach foregrounds political community—the polis—where, as Deborah Stone writes, “individuals live in a web of dependencies, loyalties, and associations, and where they envision and fight for a public interest as well as their individual interests” (1997, p. x). With this background, then, we are ready to outline the basic policy analysis framework in use today.

**The Policy Analysis Approach**

The intellectual framework we present is a conceptual and procedural tool typically set out in eight or nine steps beginning with problem identification and ending with “solution” implementation (University of British Columbia, 1976; Weimer and Vining, 1992; Bardach,
We will use an eight-step model, which unites problem identification and diagnosis in a single step (see Figure 1). Each "step" can be thought of as a window through which participants can see particular aspects of a problem and see it from different vantage points. While the verbal presentation of any procedure is necessarily linear, the procedure itself is best described as iterative for it is necessary to return to each window as more is learned about the problem. To do that in our presentation of the model would be confusing, so we only suggest it at key points. As well, emphasizing the iterative nature of the model is likely to be unhelpful to students who are being exposed to the model for the first time, that is, to novices; accordingly, we recommend scaffolding students into the framework, beginning with the linear approach then gradually letting go of the linearity of the model and, perhaps, if real skill in deploying the model is developed, of the model itself. This is kin to the old adage in language instruction—teach the rule before the exception—and is supported anew by recent work on scaffolded instruction (e.g., Brown, 1996; Wertsch, 1991).

Like any model, this is an ideal-type framework. No argument is made that it is sufficient, let alone complete or omniscient. It is not a description of reality. It does not replace observation or insight. It certainly does not replace the good or bad judgment of its users. It is a tool, a mental tool, and its purpose is to help citizens participate more competently in democratic government by clarifying and acting on problems. Its claim to helpfulness is that it directs users’ attention to a broad array of phenomena (i.e., problem dimensions) and perspectives (i.e., subject positions) that otherwise may be ignored or slighted. Furthermore, it helps clarify a problem space that otherwise may seem such a tangled mess as to be unworkable—not only unsolvable but unfathomable. The tool’s purpose, then, is to disentangle the mess somewhat while affording a degree of analytic power and clarity missing without it.

The model needs to be grounded in real public problems, of course, for dealing with real problems is the model’s purpose. We thread through the presentation of the model, beginning at step 2, a problem of special interest to readers of this journal: citizen apathy. Also, we mention others that should be of special interest to high school students: crime, illicit drug use, sexual harassment, and urban homelessness.

1. **Identifying and diagnosing the policy problem.** The most basic idea at the first “step” is that a problem is a gap between a social system’s actual and desired level of performance. This initial phase of the model has students imagine a better world and clarify just where, how, and at whose expense we are coming up short. This is likely to imply negatively valued “social indicators” (low voter turnout, increased number of hate crimes or sexual harassment reports, rising teenage sui-
cide rate, increased pollution, growing income inequality) and resulting complaints from citizens to which policy makers feel some pressure to respond. But this is just a starting point. In the pragmatic tradition of modern policy analysis, not all problems are subjected to policy analysis (Dery, 1984). Some processes that create negative consequences for citizens, such as certain life-span processes (people grow old and die) and child-behavior problems (toilet training), may best be addressed within the family or community institutions such as churches and temples, and might not be tackled by public policy action simply because to do so appears a priori to be ineffective or a violation of public values such as liberty and privacy.

This is a slippery matter, to be sure. Determining the suitability of a problem for public (common; shared) policy analysis and action is a contentious problem in actually existing democracies. Nancy Fraser (1997) looks into the matter using sexual harassment as her problem and the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings before Congress as her case. Generally, she examines the social construction of the boundary between “public” and “private” problems. “There are no naturally given, a priori boundaries” between publicity and privacy, she writes. Rather, “what will count as a matter of common concern will be decided through discursive contestation. It follows that no topics should be ruled off limits in advance of such contestation. Democratic publicity requires positive guarantees of opportunities for minorities to convince others that what in the past was not “public” in the sense of being a matter of common concern should now become so” (p. 86). Domestic abuse and workplace sexual harassment are illustrative cases today, slavery and child labor in the last century.

Once a problem is identified as a matter of public concern, problem diagnosis involves investigating the potential causal variables at work in the social system that encompasses the problem’s symptoms and moving toward the development of a causal theory. This theory shapes the work done at each subsequent step, as we will see, for it explains the problem. It tells the story of the problem’s rise and persistence and, perhaps, foreshadows its resolution. When developing alternatives to resolve the problem, for example, those alternatives will be relevant and attractive to the extent they “make sense” within the causal theory developed at this point. We shall wait until our explanation of step 2 to introduce the citizen apathy example. Suffice it to say here that if theory does not enter the mix at step 1, if economic theory is ignored, for example, then critical issues of social class may not enter the diagnosis of citizen behavior and identity.

2. Mapping participants or stakeholders. The window on society afforded at this step brings competing interests and perspectives into view. Now the deliberators determine who has a stake in the problem or its resolution and is likely to be active in the policy making process.
Steps in Policy Analysis

1. Problem identification and diagnosis

2. Mapping of stakeholders

3. Formulating policy goals and criteria for evaluating options

4. Developing policy options

5. Assessing consequences of policy options and evaluating tradeoffs

6. Selection of a policy option

7. Political analysis

8. Implementation analysis

and also who has a stake but does not realize this or is only weakly represented. Examples of the latter situation might be people whose health is affected by environmental problems that are not well understood, or poor or minority communities whose representation in decision making processes is limited. Many professional policy analysts consider it their obligation to see that such interests are taken into account, at least in government-sponsored analyses and scholarly studies (Jenkins-Smith, 1990).

It is necessary here for analysts to map out stakeholders' interests, their definitions of the problem (including how these definitions arose), their prior positions and likely future positions on the problem and possible solutions to it, and their power and resources and willingness to use them. Such things were often taken as static "givens" in the early days of the policy analysis field. Today they are generally treated as constructed (historical: circumstantial); ana-
ysts are required, therefore, "to account for where people get their images of the world and how those images shape their preferences" (Stone, 1997, p. x).

Stakeholder analysis also involves sizing up the arenas in which important decisions will be made (executive agencies, legislative committees, fiscal committees, blue-ribbon commissions, the courts, etc.) and assessing how and where diverse stakeholders will likely seek to make their influence felt. The research at this step needs also to be directed toward assessing how different decision-making arenas might favor certain groups. Citizens occupying different status positions in society are not equally comfortable in council chambers, Rotary luncheons, or public hearings.

An example should be helpful. Social educators perennially have identified lack of vigorous and intelligent citizen participation in politics and public affairs as an important problem and one that school policy can and should do something about. Problem diagnosis on this matter has pointed to multiple causes: government corruption ("Why participate when officials will do as they please?"); rational choice ("The system is entrenched, and my participation will make no difference."); materialism, religion, television, gender, and family income.

Students who attempt to survey the social landscape and identify the stakeholders on this problem may begin with the simplistic politicians-versus-taxpayers map currently popular in political campaign ads and talk radio shows. The concept citizen may not be part of their mental toolbox even, ironically, in a government course. With coaching and research, they may develop a more textured representation of the stakeholder scene that is related to the hypothesized causes of the problem. If the mapping at step 2 lacks complexity and nuance, often a return to step 1 for another try at theorizing the problem is helpful. Some students may, as a result, begin to think that low participation isn't a problem after all because, they contend, it is caused by the legislative system working rather well. Others may determine that despair and hopelessness drive citizen apathy. Others may look at methods to raise civic consciousness among the working poor, in which case "the working poor" (and with them the issue of wealth distribution) enter the stakeholders map. This is an important modification of the map, for once social class has been recognized then "the rich" may be mapped as another stakeholder group. This iteration between steps 1 and 2 should develop the map nicely.

3. Formulating policy goals and criteria. After identifying and diagnosing a policy problem and mapping relevant stakeholders and their interests, analysts are in a position to formulate goals or objectives for policy. Of course, the basic goal usually is to solve the problem: to reduce crime or increase the political participation of citizens. This is
not usually as simple as it sounds, for there are multiple dimensions of the problem (e.g., crime in different neighborhoods, crimes of varying severity; citizens who want only to be service recipients, entrenched politicians who need high levels of citizen apathy) and there are multiple stakeholders with differing priorities among the different goals.

Values analysis is part of every step of the model. At this goal-setting step, it needs to become more explicit. There are some general values goals, such as fairness, equity, liberty, respect for democratic processes, preservation of individual liberty, and staying within legal and budgetary limitations, that usually apply to the consideration of any policy action. These values goals make analysis more complex and so, to simplify, they often are treated as constraints. This means that in many problem situations one is not seeking to promote individual dignity or freedom or fairness so much as trying to attack some other problem (e.g., crime; citizen apathy) without sacrificing system performance on public values. Communities seeking ways to reduce crime usually do not consider adult curfews or legalizing illicit drugs though doing both would surely lower the crime rate. Similarly, no polity in the United States requires citizens to vote or pays them to do so though doing either would probably increase voter turnout. In each case, widely held public values constrain policy options that would surely get results. Goals (problem solution) and constraints (public values) thus interact in policy formulation in order to shape policy that achieves results without violating widely held social preferences, and this interaction is brought to the surface in this phase of the model.

Eventually, deliberators must move from general goal statements to developing benchmarks for assessing the extent to which policy proposals achieve the goals. At this point, the analyst has moved on to the stage of formulating criteria for evaluating the merits of policy alternatives. This process is analogous to program evaluation, but it occurs before implementation. Instead of asking if a program already in place has achieved its goals—the driving question in program evaluation—the policy analyst seeks to assess to what extent a proposed policy alternative is likely to achieve its goals (without violating the constraints) if put into operation. In preparing to weigh alternatives for increasing the civic participation of citizens, the analyst would seek to develop indices of civic participation (e.g., voting, membership in community action groups, attendance at public meetings, competence in discussing public issues with diverse others, participation in campaigns) and then assess the efficacy of the different approaches by estimating their ability to affect these index values. These criteria become tools for weighing alternatives and communicating about them in meaningful terms to various audiences.

4. Developing policy alternatives. Policy alternatives are the potential actions, and combinations thereof, available for addressing the
policy problem and achieving the goals. Logically, these ideas should derive from previous steps—problem diagnosis, stakeholder mapping, and goal formulation—but when it is time to proceed to developing concrete details of various alternatives, probably most relevant among the earlier steps is problem diagnosis. If this step has led to a broad and workable understanding of the causes of the problem, then it should also lead to ideas for interventions that could solve or ameliorate the problem without violating deeply-held values.

Returning to the problem of citizen apathy, students initially may suggest paying people to vote, requiring them by law to vote, providing for mail-in voter registration, or dropping advanced voter registration altogether. A return to step 1 to open a bit further the problem diagnosis window should help students perceive a broader array of indices of participation and causes of behavior. Their initial concentration on voting might be broadened to include interventions that work directly on the civic culture. For example:

- building a democratic climate in schools
- requiring civics/government courses in the schools
- joining clubs and other voluntary associations to more frequently talk with people outside one’s family and work/school circles
- recruiting poor and minority group members into these associations
- public financing for these organizations—study circles, health clubs, granges, conferences, and other “public spaces” in the community where citizens will cross paths
- decentralizing: encouraging neighborhood planning
- reinstating federal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps in order to bring unemployed men and women to sustenance and public work
- rotating legislative posts among citizens like jury duty
- increasing the size of the middle class through higher minimum wage laws, college tuition subsidies, progressive taxation, etc.

Or, consider the problem of urban homelessness and its spillover effects. Diagnosis may have produced the finding that three important classes of homeless individuals are substance abusers, women and children fleeing environments plagued by domestic violence, and runaway teenagers. On this diagnosis, policy interventions might well include strategically located treatment centers for the first class of individuals and specialized shelters and family intervention programs for the latter two. This example also points up the fact that the focus
in policy analysis is necessarily on those variables in the problem system that policy can influence rather than on variables that are beyond policy control. Increased homelessness caused by a national recession, for example, would clearly be beyond a city's control. If the diagnostic analysis suggested that this was the primary cause, then the analyst might well conclude that the problem was not a useful one for further analysis at the city level (except perhaps to gauge the need for purely reactive services).

Stakeholders are an important source of policy alternatives. Interviewing them in order to discover their suggestions and positions is thus both useful and revealing. Being close to the problem and to earlier efforts to ameliorate it, they may have practical ideas that are helpful and vested interests that skew their vision.

5. Assessing consequences of policy options and evaluating tradeoffs. This step is in some ways the analytic heart of the policy analysis framework. The idea is to use the most powerful inquiry methods available, within time and resource constraints, to evaluate each alternative against each of the decision criteria. Ideally, such assessments are based on well-tested models or even policy experiments. When time and resource limitations preclude this, analysts use other means: searching the literature for results of similar policy approaches already tried elsewhere; interviewing experts and stakeholders on the various outcome dimensions of interest; and relying on their own informed judgment.

The analyst's responsibility does not end with assessing the consequences of policy alternatives. Since policy analysis is a normative undertaking, analysts must illuminate tradeoffs: how different valuations of particular goals relative to other goals might affect the choice among alternatives. Taking citizen participation as our sample case again, consider that increased voter turnout (whether the result of paying voters, requiring voting, easing registration difficulties, or redistributing wealth) can backfire: Citizens may participate more, but the upshot of that participation may be to reject governance altogether. Term limits and simplistic ballot initiatives indicate increased participation, true, but a retreat from governing. At least this is the view of stakeholders who, like Jefferson, Madison, and King, argue against majoritarian domination. They argue for citizen participation, yes, but enlightened, deliberative participation. Hitler's thugs "participated." Klan members "participated." A good deal of the current participation debate turns on this distinction (e.g., Fishkin, 1991; West, 1993).

Usually, one alternative performs better on some criteria (e.g., justice) while another does better on other criteria (e.g., efficiency). Some rigorous analysis of tradeoffs is therefore a valuable contribution to a well-informed decision.
6. **Selection.** At this step, one or more alternatives are selected for implementation. In the policy analysis field, selection is understood to occur in two social arenas: organizations, such as a government agency or other stakeholders in the decision making space (e.g., the water department; a school district; National Council for the Social Studies), and broader systems, such as a legislature or task force. When a policy analysis is organizationally based, selection can be aided by the analysis of consequences of each of the leading alternatives and an assessment of the tradeoffs involved in choosing any one over the others. In this case, the analyst is the organization’s designated expert in the problem area and may be asked to make a recommendation as to the most desirable option to select. Organizational politics will usually play a role in selection, however, as powerful parties push their favorite options regardless of analytically-based rankings. Politics will usually also play a role in policy choices made by broader groups, such as blue ribbon commissions (e.g., those which have produced curriculum standards for civics, history, and social studies) and interagency groups in government (e.g., those which deliberate urban homelessness and illicit drug use). The stakeholder mapping at step 2 can be helpful in predicting some of this political struggle, which takes us to step 7.

7. **Political analysis.** The analyst’s goal in this phase of the model is to infuse creative thinking about politics *per se* into the design and selection of policy alternatives (Meltsner, 1972; Stone, 1997; Weimer, 1993; Weimer and Vining, 1992). We use the terms *politics* and *political* in the traditional way: power struggle among stakeholders, conflict over alternatives, the actual on-the-ground activity of self-government when something that will be binding on all must be decided.

Politics generally eschews metaphysics and first principles in large part because the stakeholders cannot agree on them, at least not as regards the real problem at hand. Political struggle starts where philosophy leaves off. Republican government—constitutional democracy—is itself an admission of this fact. Politics pervades the entire model we have been discussing, for politics deal with the domain of necessary public action—not arm chair problems but actual ones on which some decision is needed, and soon. Politics deals with the question, “What shall we do when something has to be done that will affect us all, and we wish to be reasonable yet we disagree on means and ends and are without independent grounds by which we might arbitrate our differences...?” (Barber, 1988, p. 206; see also Gutmann & Thompson, 1996)

One often-useful approach in this phase of policy analysis is to evaluate the political feasibility of an otherwise promising policy option. Once the option’s likely political hurdles are identified, these can be used to modify the option, enhancing its feasibility while doing as
little damage as possible to its promise. In this way, practical understand-
ing of the political environment is used to frame analytically de-
sirable alternatives in ways that move them toward selection. Beyond modifying the alternative to make it more feasible, practical understand-
ing of politics is also helpful in devising political strategies to move desirable alternatives toward selection.

Returning to our group of students who have been analyzing the problem of citizen apathy, perhaps they decided from the alterna-
tives they had generated to propose to the school board that students turning 18 years of age be required to register to vote as a condition for receiving the diploma at the end of the year. Considering the po-
itical environment, particularly a locally-active chapter of the Ameri-
can Civil Liberties Union, the students then decide to retreat some-
what, working to secure the school's main office as a site for voter registration of 18-year-olds, but not requiring registration. Planning ahead, they figure that once the main office has become a smooth-
running registration site, then they will take on the matter of requir-
ing registration as a condition for graduation.

8. Implementation analysis. Implementation generally refers to the efforts that occur after selection/enactment of a policy in the course of getting it up and running and operating more-or-less smoothly in the field. As with political feasibility issues, policy analysts have learned the hard way that they must take implementation issues into account in their analyses. Many case studies have shown that enact-
ment of apparently sound policy ideas is no guarantee of their suc-
cessful implementation and operation in the field (Bardach, 1977; Levin and Ferman, 1986; Nakamura and Smallwood, 1980; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). As with political feasibility, implementation consider-
ations should be taken into account in the initial development of alternatives (which displays, again, that the model is linear in one sense and recursive in another). A student council that recommends voter registration in the main office of the high school certainly will need to craft strategies for pulling this off. Procedures and people are involved, habits and feelings, time and energy. It is best if students aren't allowed to blithely pass these worries on to school administra-
tors and office secretaries.

Discussion

First a summary, then several suggestions. Summarizing the model first: A public problem is tackled. Strategic attention is paid. A concept-
tual-procedural model is brought to bear and wielded, tool-like, to open windows on a public problem—to achieve greater clarity and scope—spreading deliberators' attention across the multiple dimensions of the problem space and the multiple perspectives of stakeholders. The model
we presented is an authentic one, widely taught and used in the policy analysis field. It is a linear model in one sense (good work at earlier steps pays off at later steps), yet recursive in another (as a new view of the problem is achieved at a later step, earlier steps must be reworked). It is a political model, too, hence its interest in positionality (mapping the stakeholders) and its presumptions of disagreement, struggle, and irrational alongside rational conduct.

Summarizing the need for adding this to an already crowded high school curriculum: There can be no democracy without democrats, and democrats are made not born—"their minds must be improved to a certain degree," as Jefferson put it in 1787. To think otherwise is to ignore history. The schools can play a role in this improvement, but the specification of the school's role requires some specification of the kind of democracy that is desired. Put too simply, should educators attempt to cultivate citizens for strong or weak democracy? We prefer a strong model, which embraces social as well as political diversity and defines a broader and deeper role for citizens in popular sovereignty. "Rights talk" and spectatorship, after all, need no special training; the civic culture of weak democracy reproduces them without much trouble. We believe students can be educated to participate more substantively in democratic civic discourse—to talk about shared problems with others who are culturally, racially, and ideologically different, and to labor together to build and maintain a hopeful, imaginative public square.

In order to educate students to participate in public policy deliberation, content selection needs to proceed on at least two fronts. In terms of the multiple objectives discussed earlier, these are deciding which problems students should deliberate (the topics) and which intellectual frameworks should shape their deliberations; in other words, what should students be asked to think about and with what should they think about it. Suggestions were made for both. For the controversies themselves, the 1916 "Problems of Democracy" course, recall, had two selection criteria: immediate interest to the class and vital importance to society. Later programs developed other criteria. For the intellectual framework, we looked to the field of public policy analysis and presented in considerable detail an eight-part model.

There are difficulties on both fronts. We venture now some suggestions that may serve as a platform from which other curriculum theorists can launch more incisive plans. We begin with criteria for problem selection then modify the intellectual framework, then we turn to the question "Can it be done?" where we look at empirical support for our curriculum proposal.
Problem Selection

As for selecting the problems, the two criteria given for the 1916 POD course strike us as necessary but insufficient. "Immediate interest to students" is important, we believe, but problematic. One can imagine problems in which students are interested but probably shouldn't be, and problems they should be interested in but are not simply because they lack the information and experiences that could breed enthusiasm. And "vital importance to society" is too blunt, for there will be too many problems that meet this criterion. We recommend, therefore, modifying the first of these and replacing the second with four criteria that are more specific. Then, we add a sixth that increases the implementation feasibility of the whole effort.12

1. **Interest**: select problems in which students are or are likely (with coaching and experience) to become interested.

2. **Authenticity**: select genuine public problems—ones that an identifiable public is actually facing. Examples: The people of Colorado decide whether to allow physician-assisted suicide. The people of the United States decide whether to use taxation to redistribute wealth. The people of Seattle decide whether to enforce a youth curfew. The members of National Council for the Social Studies decide whether to hold the annual meeting in a state that lacks affirmative action policies. Members of Mrs. Paley's kindergarten classroom decide whether to have the rule, "You can't say you can't play." The people of the world decide whether to require illiberal cultures to adopt liberal norms as a condition of financial aid.

3. **Value conflict**: select problems in which value conflicts are vivid so as to encourage values analysis throughout the model (i.e., the needed decision requires students to examine alternatives that express diverse and competing values).

4. **Pluralism**: select problems in which the pluralistic nature of American society is evident (i.e., there are multiple and competing cultural and political perspectives on the issue and, therefore, the opportunity to adjudicate competing perspectives while examining firsthand the pluralistic nature of society and politics).
5. **Perennality**: select problems for which analogy cases are available (i.e., the immediate policy question is an instance of an enduring public issue that publics across time and place have had to face, thereby encouraging cross-case comparisons).

6. **Curriculum materials**: select problems for which thoughtful prepared instructional resources are already available.

**Intellectual Framework**

As for the intellectual framework brought to these identified problems, we presented a model used by professional policy analysts. Its advantages are artifice and authenticity. The artifice of models—by which we mean their refusal to entirely mimic reality by, for example, blurring boundaries or admitting exceptions—is their helpfully sharp edge when they are employed as mental tools to examine actual problems (see Vygotsky, 1978). As tools, they artificially clarify boundaries and skirt exceptions. It is a model’s artifice that structures a problem in a particular way and, thereby, directs students’ attention toward particular aspects of the problem space that otherwise might be ignored (e.g., implementation analysis) or rushed (thinking deeply about a broad array of stakeholders). On the other hand, the authenticity of the model affords an issues-deliberation framework actually used by practitioners in the policy field to consider real problems faced by real publics. These practitioners are not working in utopias, but in actually existing democracies where political struggle is the norm.

It should be clear by now that the model’s idealized nature is not, for us, a problem; rather, it is a strength of any tool. However, we must ask to what extent is a professional model appropriate for citizens at large? Surely elements of it can be appropriated, but what modifications might be helpful? What simplifications? Expert models typically assume levels of complexity, competence, and resources that exceed reasonable expectations for us lay people. This is true in medicine, law, farming, and school teaching, for example; surely it is also true in public policy. The agent in the eight-step model we presented was, recall, “the analyst”—an expert. The “analyst” reports to policy makers who then decide. Surely the analyst role is somewhat different from the role of “citizen” in which one often serves as one’s own analyst. In either case, the activity of deliberation must include the activity of analysis in some form. Analysis informs deliberation, and visa versa; these activities and their corresponding roles go hand in hand.

Generally speaking, then, what is needed are courses (e.g., American Government; Contemporary World Problems) and other school settings (e.g., class meetings; student councils; clubs) in which stu-
Figure 2
Phases in Deliberating a Public Controversy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Model</th>
<th>Citizen Model</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Problem identification and diagnosis.</td>
<td>A. Identifying and understanding public problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mapping of stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Formulating policy goals and criteria for weighing options.</td>
<td>B. Developing and analyzing policy options together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Developing policy options.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Addressing consequences of policy options and evaluating tradeoffs.</td>
<td>C. Making policy decisions together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Selection of a policy option.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Political analysis.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Implementation analysis.</td>
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... (continued text)
agents rather than spectators in policy making—to compose a public not a populace—and the enlightenment of citizens so that their deliberations are for the better, not worse. While there are long-standing suspicions that “we the people” simply cannot rule wisely (see Plato’s in The Republic, Madison’s in the “Federalist No. 10”, and Schumpeter’s in Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy [1950]), there is evidence to the contrary. Recent studies indicate that public agents come into being through collaborative policy deliberation (Evans & Boyte, 1992; Harwood Group, 1993; Putnam, 1994) and that engagement in this activity enlightens their deliberation: it changes participants’ perceptions of one another, the problem, and the array of policy alternatives (Doble, 1996; Farkas & Friedman, 1996). These are two powerful effects.

Second, can teachers do it? A main finding of socio-cultural theory is that typical performance should not be confused with optimal performance (e.g., Brown, 1996; Wertsch, 1991). Teachers evidently do not typically lead students in the kind of intellectual work PPD involves (Goodlad, 1984; Hahn, 1996; McNeil, 1988; Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1979); yet, teachers—whether a few, some, or most—are probably capable of doing so. Case studies of exemplary teachers (e.g., Bickmore, 1993; Hess, 1998; Miller & Singleton, 1997; Rossi, 1995; Wineburg & Wilson, 1988) show them to be well engaged in several aspects of PPD (e.g., leading discussions of controversial issues; helping students weigh alternatives and adjudicate multiple perspectives). Furthermore, research done with the school or department as the unit of analysis (rather than individual teachers) indicates that, despite obstacles, sophisticated teaching and high-quality student achievement does occur (Hill, Pierce & Guthrie, 1997; Meier, 1995; Newmann and Associates, 1996). These studies generally, and best-practices research in particular, have established “existence proof” for those practices, which in turn helps clarify what is possible given supportive conditions. Still, we are in no position to assure readers that teachers generally possess sufficient understanding of policy analysis or pedagogy to teach or lead PPD. Knowledge matters in teaching (Shulman, 1986) and there is every reason to believe that this is true also of teaching PPD.

Third, can students do it? For students as with teachers, typicality and capability should not be confused. Knowledge of what students are and are not capable of knowing and doing cannot be gleaned from assessments of students at work in task environments where they are not expected to achieve at high levels of quality nor assisted skillfully in reaching them (Brown, 1996; Wertsch, 1991). Various studies have shown that junior and senior high school students can and do reason well on public issues when given ample support (e.g., Levin, Newmann, & Oliver, 1969; Oliver and Shaver, 1974; Parker, McDaniel, Winter 1999
& Valencia, 1991; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989). When the scaffold is strengthened to include a classroom climate that welcomes discussion and disagreement, students generally respond with more capable consideration of the controversies at hand (Blankenship, 1990; Ehman, 1970; Hahn, 1998; Hahn & Tocci, 1990). Whether or not students, in the best of circumstances, can capably deliberate public policy in the fullest sense, working systematically with the aid of a comprehensive analytic model, remains to be seen. The best circumstances do not always obtain, obviously (Kozol, 1992; Onosko, 1991). But there is, again, “existence proof” that favorable circumstances exist for at least some students at some times, and it is on this basis that we remain hopeful that PPD can be attempted with promising results.

Fourth, are there resources? Among the barriers to creating the sorts of thoughtful classrooms PPD requires, three loom large: broad and superficial content coverage, low expectations of students, and lack of teacher planning time (Onosko, 1991). Each of these problem areas, we believe, becomes workable—not solved, but more manageable—with adequate curriculum resources.13

Thoughtful, policy-relevant resources are needed especially if public policy deliberation is to rise above “current events” instruction, which often relies on daily newspapers and weekly magazines and lacks both perennial problems and a challenging intellectual framework. Fortunately, numerous resources are readily available that meet most of the criteria suggested above. Several are reviewed in the materials and resources section of the Handbook on Teaching Social Issues (Fernekes, 1996) where they are grouped for government policy-making, international relations/foreign policy teaching, domestic economic policy, global/environmental issues, and so on.

We are impressed particularly with the classroom materials published by the National Issues Forum (NIF).14 They have been extensively field tested with thousands of high-school aged youth, both in classrooms and non-school organizations (particularly in 4-H clubs), and on this basis are often revised. These materials feature authentic public policy controversies and highlight the value conflicts that make them difficult. Each unit in the program centers on an NIF issues booklet, familiar to the many adults who participate in NIF “deliberative forums” in libraries and service clubs. These booklets provide background information on the problem, then present three or four distinct policy options. In this way they draw participants into the deliberative choice-work that is the essence of the policy deliberation effort we recommend. One booklet, called People and Politics: Who Should Govern?, deals with the issue that we threaded through our presentation of the model of policy analysis above: citizen participation in government. An opening chapter, “Citizens and Politics: A Severed Rela-
tionship," introduces readers to the issue. Four chapters follow it, each presenting an alternative course of action for students' consideration:

- **Choice 1**: The campaign finance system—Cutting big money out of politics.
- **Choice 2**: Fundamental political participation—Exercising the right to vote.
- **Choice 3**: Citizen self-government—People producing politics.
- **Choice 4**: Confronting responsibility—Profiles in courage.

NIF materials have been used in one-semester courses devoted entirely to public policy deliberation. These courses begin with a preparatory unit introducing students to public controversies—how to define, research, and discuss them. The class then selects four or five of the available issues booklets (there are fifteen in any year) for in-depth study of about two weeks each. In that two-week period, the class studies the issue and the given policy options, conducts interviews and other research, and takes relevant field trips. The culminating activity is a deliberative forum, at which time class members clarify and argue the options and, perhaps, reach a decision. Having been through four or five such policy studies and forums, students are themselves ready to develop one. They have been scaffolded up to the task. Now students identify and clarify a problem, research the background information, frame three or four divergent policy options, and create a briefing booklet.

Other curriculum materials are helpful in roughly the same way, but for global rather than national problems. *Choices for the 21st Century* are a variety of briefing booklets published by the Center for Foreign Policy Development. Each booklet provides three to four policy options along with background information. As with NIF materials, this presentation of the issue through policy alternatives engages students in the kind of deliberation that has been associated with key outcomes: public building and development of participants' understanding of one another, the array of alternatives, and the problem itself (Doble, 1996; Farkas & Friedman, 1996).

Using NIF or *Choices* materials, teachers can orchestrate student practice on either the "professional" or "citizen" model. This strikes us as pedagogically feasible because the task requirements have been simplified: The authors of the materials have developed the policy alternatives. Consequently, students are given (and don't have to generate) grist for the analytic mill. They can evaluate the authors' diagnosis of the problem and their stakeholder map, and they can hold a series of discussions (what NIF calls "forums") to
select from the options given and analyze their selection's political and implementation feasibility. The provision of alternatives by the authors scaffolds the task in a helpful way, modeling what an alternatives array looks like and allowing students to labor as policy analysts on other parts of the model. Following NIF guidelines, the scaffold is then removed in the culminating activity, as we saw above.

We cannot get excited about curriculum innovations that require super-human teachers or excessive time and costs. Even exemplary curriculum materials are no panacea, for teacher knowledge of these materials—how they can be orchestrated with textbooks, references, and primary sources; why they are designed as they are with the emphasis on policy alternatives—all this must be understood. (In Shulman's [1986] pantheon of knowledge needed for teaching, "curricular knowledge" is ranked at the top with "subject matter content knowledge" and "pedagogical content knowledge." *) We search, therefore, for an approach to PPD education that is achievable by mere mortals, like us. NIF and Choices materials help pedagogically by doing some of the analytic work for students and a good portion of the materials-assembly for teachers.

**Conclusion**

A curriculum proposal is a unique social text. It is at once a pedagogical theory, a moral argument, a political claim, a problem frame, and an action plan. It is itself a policy alternative on a central educational problem: What should students learn at school that will help them become citizens capable of self-government?

Let us reiterate that the PPD model we are proposing is only part of the larger project to cultivate democrats. It is not by itself adequate. It does not replace values education, for example (though it incorporates it somewhat), nor does it replace a caring school environment, an open and inquisitive classroom climate, a law and government curriculum, or a demanding liberal arts education. PPD is only one tool and, as such, only one part of the puzzle. Moreover, we certainly have not covered all the theoretical or practical ground needed to form and justify a curriculum alternative. We have not touched upon the American pastime of reforming the school curriculum again and again (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) or the problem of allocating curriculum space to all the contenders (Martin, 1994), and we have not dealt adequately with the teacher-curriculum encounter (Ben-Peretz, 1990) or implementation challenges (Newmann & Associates, 1996; Onosko, 1991).17

Still, we hope we have gotten reasonably close to our point: Rigorous policy study and decision making, what we have called public policy deliberation, is directly relevant to the practices of democratic
citizenship; and teaching it to students in the high school makes good sense on two assumptions. First, the practices of democratic citizenship require education. They apparently do not flower on their own, particularly not in a radically diverse and consumer-oriented society where the common citizen identity can be difficult to discern. Second, all citizens in principle are obliged to participate, not just a tiny few. It makes no sense to offer policy study only to graduate students who elect it as a career track; the strong model of democracy requires the citizenry as a whole to display this competence. With greater citizen involvement—with more people being on the governing end of the system rather than always on the receiving end of others’ governing—democratic practice is made still more democratic, more voices are included in the mix, fewer people are disenfranchised and the stakeholder array is broadened.

These two assumptions together provide the meaning for the play on words in our title, “An Aristocracy of Everyone” (see Barber, 1992). Education is needed because democratic citizens require cultivation. Education thus creates a ruling class to which, when that education is public and universal, all can belong.

This is the now familiar rationale for citizenship education in the strong sense. But what is the unique contribution of PPD to this goal? We believe PPD to be a precise and powerful tool for thinking and acting with others on public problems. Touring the galleries of issues-oriented curricula, the observer sees an array of tools focused on different aspects of policy analysis. In the “jurisprudential” room (e.g., Oliver and Shaver, 1974), teachers and students clarify public problems. In the “inquiry” room (Massialas & Cox, 1966), they form and judge alternatives. In the “taboo” room (Hunt & Metcalf, 1955), they identify and diagnose problems that lurk beneath the surface of public discourse. In the “multinational” room (Parker, Ninomiya & Cogan, in press), they deliberate multinational problems identified by multinational committees. And so on in the “decision-making” room (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), the “just community” room (Kohlberg, 1980), and others. The PPD room looks and feels different. There, city managers, legislators, and county council members are apprenticing teachers and students into their particular ways of understanding and acting on public problems. Whether the eight-part professional model or the three-part citizen model is taken up, and whether it is taught as a unit in a high school government course or as the centerpiece of a “Problems of Democracy” or “World Problems” course, the model’s sweep and conceptual rigor combined with its out-of-school authenticity argues for its consideration by curriculum planners and its use by more than the few graduates of university departments of public affairs. Clearly, it can be combined with techniques drawn from the other rooms. We believe this is a good idea but one deserving a paper of its own.
Notes


4 The following section draws from ”Advanced‘ Ideas About Democracy” (Parker, 1996b).

5 See also Newmann and Oliver (1970) and Oliver and Shaver (1974).

6 Bickmore (1993) draws a helpful distinction between “conflictual content” and “conflictual pedagogy.”

7 See particularly the chapter, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” on the shifting boundaries between public and private problems. See also Iris Marion Young (1996).

8 This is the very problem to which our curriculum proposal is addressed.

9 One of the authors noticed that high school students in a Law and Society course regularly used the term “taxpayer” for “citizen.” Asked if there was a difference, they could think of none. Such confusion may be learned from televised political ads where “viewers” are addressed as “taxpayers.” See Kemmis (1995).

10 Typically, goals and objectives are used interchangeably in the policy literature.

11 The language used here may suggest an emphasis on quantification. But in cases like this example, the estimated index values may not go beyond “higher,” “no change,” and “lower” simply because theory and evidence do not permit more. Note also that there are dangers in limiting one’s consideration to the most readily measurable dimensions. The value of the exercise is readily evident when used, however: it forces some comprehensiveness into one’s thinking about the elements of the problem and potential solutions even if the assessments on particular dimensions are crude.

12 Readers may wish to compare our criteria to those in Massialas (1996) and Oliver (1957).

13 Clearly, adequate curriculum materials require adequate school funding. “Savage inequalities” among schools (Kozol, 1992) will burden especially those innovations, like PPD, that require knowledgeable teachers, supportive communities, and better curriculum materials. Jean Anyon (1997), for this reason, suggests the best way to improve inner-city education is to end inner-city poverty.

14 National Issues Forum in the Classroom, a program of the Kettering Foundation, is available from Kendall-Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa. See also the policy analysis materials for students, Active Citizenship Today (Chicago: Constitutional Rights Foundation and Close Up Foundation, 1994).

15 Washington state, for example, has a “Contemporary World Problems” course and New York a “Participation in Government” course. NIF materials have been used in both. In Seattle, NIF has been used in all nine city high schools.

16 Choices is available from the Center for Foreign Policy Development, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912. See also Great Decisions by the Foreign Policy Association, 729 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10019.

17 See note 1.
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References


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Abstract

Children can develop their capacities to handle both social and interpersonal conflict in elementary school, without sacrificing attention to academic achievement. This case study, based in one grade four and five classroom with a diverse population, shows how a curriculum focusing on the concept of conflict was tied tightly to social studies and other subject area learning goals, and woven around instances of global as well as interpersonal problems. Complex social or political material, which is frequently avoided in the elementary classroom, served to strengthen the curriculum’s conceptual framework and to provide entry points for diverse students to comprehend the sources and management of conflict. The paper presents analysis of descriptive vignettes, selected to represent evidence of curriculum process and content and students’ developing understandings of conflict.

Pluralist democracy depends on diverse citizens’ development of capacity to think independently in the face of conflict. Conflict management, an important ingredient of democratic education, is increasingly taught (explicitly) in public schools. However, these lessons are often marginal to the core curriculum, and often conflict lessons emphasize interpersonal communication and impulse control instead of broader concept development. Complex or controversial and larger-scale human conflicts are often ignored, especially in elementary social studies (Hahn 1996, Houser 1996, Soley 1996) and in conflict resolution programs (Carruthers et. al. 1996, Johnson & Johnson 1996, Noguera 1995). In this postmodern world — involving instant mass communications and diverse cultural identities — is it appropriate to assume that children are more capable of learning about interpersonal conflicts than inter-group conflicts (Elkind 1995)? Especially in multicultural classrooms, children may draw from a wide range of global as well as local knowledge to understand human problems. Conflict education should be broadened and brought in from the margins, as one key component of education for democratic citizenship.
This paper explores the ways diverse elementary students may come to understand and to constructively handle social and interpersonal conflict, in the context of an implemented social education curriculum unit in one public elementary classroom. In this classroom, conflict education was integrated with other academic subject-matter, especially language and social studies. The lessons were organized around key ideas for understanding conflict, based on conflict resolution theory (Curle & Dugan 1982; Deutsch 1993; Kriesberg 1982), using both familiar and unfamiliar examples of conflict at various stages. The class studied situations such as the Hutu-Tutsi conflict in Rwanda and Zaire, bullying and exclusion conflicts on the school playground, conflicts over the appropriate development and use of water resources, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Pedagogies brought in the children's diverse experiences through drama, examination of literature and geography, small group tasks, and open discussion. The young people in this classroom showed their interest in a broad range of conflicts, well beyond the skill-based interpersonal conflict resolution often offered in elementary schools. This exploratory study develops a conceptual framework for understanding and conducting conflict education, within a broader academic curriculum aimed at preparation for democratic citizenship in pluralistic contexts.

Following a review of related literature and a description of research methods, the paper presents a series of vignettes illustrating particular lessons and the student work they inspired. The analysis focuses on the processes and subject-matter through which students developed understandings about conflict and conflict resolution. The study substantiates the idea that young children are indeed able to handle complex political and international conflicts. In fact, their conceptual sophistication for handling interpersonal conflicts seems to be enhanced by their work making sense of these intergroup conflicts, in the context of social studies and across the curriculum. The case study demonstrates how potentially controversial lessons regarding social diversity and conflict can enhance students' preparation for managing both interpersonal and social conflict.

Conceptual Framework

Conflict is a powerful organizing idea in social education: understanding the concept of conflict is useful for learning to manage interpersonal and social problems (Deutsch 1993; Kreidler 1990), and thus important for democratic citizenship participation (Bickmore 1997, Hahn 1996). Because conflict is a natural element of human life, it intersects with the key ideas and knowledge-building processes of any curricular subject, and especially the social studies (Bickmore 1999). Conflict education's major elements include:
• understanding the causes and forms of conflict (diverse human needs and wants, violence and nonviolence),

• understanding the role of conflict in human relationships, especially the notion of contrasting viewpoints, feelings, and interests,

• understanding how conflicts present choices, and capacity to evaluate the positive and negative consequences of such choices,

• capacity to apply conflict resolution processes, to create and evaluate multiple potential responses to problems.

It is possible and desirable to integrate these concepts into the academic curriculum. Conflict is a prime example of a thematic focus that connects school subjects to one another and to 'real' democratic life (Carruthers et. al. 1996). Curriculum integration builds in multiple applications of concepts, and extends developmental time, to improve students’ capacities to generalize and to transfer school knowledge to new uses (Taba 1963). Authentic and democratically-oriented intellectual work in social education involves analysis of problems, interpretation of viewpoints, and negotiation of meanings, in ways that connect ‘academic’ questions to real experiences and social problems, that is to students’ present and future roles as citizens (Scheurman & Newmann 1998). Integration of conflict in the curriculum stimulates thinking and makes school knowledge more meaningful for young learners. Where curriculum avoids or censors conflicts or controversies, classrooms become apparently safe but complacent environments: these offer little opportunity to learn, to include marginalized students, or to develop interest in school or citizen action (Houser 1996, Mellor 1996).

The notion of 'expanding horizons' is alive and well in North American public school curricula. Conflict resolution lessons, like much else in the social studies, are still generally sequenced in a linear fashion — beginning young children with the small, local, familiar, and non-controversial, and moving in later grades (if at all) into wider global or political arenas. The assumptions underlying this curriculum pattern are flawed. First, such curriculum assumes that people’s minds develop in concentric circles, that young children are more interested in familiar neighbors than in the strange and peculiar (Egan 1986). Worse, it relies on an assumed cultural common ground that does not take into account students’ diverse life experiences. It ignores the experiential knowledge of children brought up in contested regimes, or in rapidly-changing circumstances such as immigration.
or cultural border areas, which may be very useful for understanding inter-group conflicts (Anzaldúa 1987; Merelman 1990).

The notion of 'developmental appropriateness,' upon which the expanding horizons approach is based, can be a cover for educators' own fears of handling potentially-controversial topics (Miner 1998, Soley 1996). Limiting elementary students' horizons of exploration risks rendering school knowledge irrelevant to the lived concerns of today's children. In conflict and social education, an overly-cautious expanding horizons approach misses the powerful motivation embedded in children's imaginations and in their media-fed awareness of the wider world.

**Research Method and Setting**

This single case study investigates curriculum development regarding conflict education, and diverse students' responses to the learning opportunities thus created, in one social context. Following an adaptation of the grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967), I collected detailed descriptions of conflict education activities, including formative assessment tasks, in one multicultural elementary classroom. Data collection was interspersed with analysis, conducted independently and in frequent dialogue with the teacher. This resulted in refinement of conceptual categories and further elaboration — first, of the conflict education curriculum-in-use in this context, and second, of the more general understanding of social education for conflict resolution toward which this study is reaching.

Throughout the process, I was an engaged participant observer, drawing insights from my extended direct involvement with one teacher and her students. Evelyn Fox Keller calls this stance dynamic objectivity: it "aims at a form of knowledge that grants to the world around us its independent integrity but does so in a way that remains cognizant of, indeed relies on, our connectivity with that world" (1985, p.117). While sweeping conclusions would be unwarranted from such a small study, this kind of research deepens our understanding through direct engagement and collaborative dialogue in a particular context.

The site for this research was chosen purposively, as a setting that embodied many of the questions and possibilities embedded in the research effort. In this combined grade four and five class in an urban public school, well over half of the 33 students were recent immigrants, with diverse language abilities and cultural backgrounds. The class included 24 (73%) in grade four, and 9 (27%) in grade five who had been with the same teacher the previous year, heterogeneously grouped in terms of achievement. The class had 14 girls (42%) and 19 boys (58%). More than two thirds of the children were first or
second generation immigrants, coming mostly from the Middle East, India, China, Somalia, Trinidad and Tobago, Greece, and the earlier European migrations to Canada. The teacher, Ms. Alison (a pseudonym), had considerable confidence, skill, and flexibility, rooted in 24 years of teaching and educational leadership. Conflict resolution was one of a small number of cross-curricular "theme" units offered that year, which emphasized social studies, arts, and language arts.

I was regularly involved in the life of Ms. Alison's classroom during the conflict resolution theme unit, from October to March (1996-97) and for a few days in June (1997). I observed more than 30 hours of classroom lessons, including approximately 18 hours that I co-led or assisted with Ms. Alison. Outside of class time, I met with Ms. Alison for 12 hours of analysis, discussion, and joint planning. Ms. Alison taught essentially the same group of students the following year in grades five and six; we held a follow-up discussion a year after the study (March 1998). In addition, I was regularly involved in this school as a whole throughout the school year, in relation to other conflict resolution and teacher education responsibilities. (Pseudonyms are used, details about individual children have been masked, and formal assessments [grades] were not recorded in research notes.)

The main research question asks what conflict education would look like, if it included global as well as interpersonal topics, integrated into an upper-elementary curriculum (in an urban classroom with a diverse multicultural population). Two related questions elaborate the particular concerns of this study:

• How could conflict education be woven together with academic achievement? That is, how could children develop their capacities to handle the concept of conflict, while at the same time pursuing core curricular objectives, especially in language and social studies?

• What might constitute an alternative to the expanding horizons approach to conflict studies? Would complex social or political material present a more difficult developmental challenge to young learners than interpersonal topics?

These questions are addressed through analysis of descriptive vignettes (taken from field notes and identified by indented text below) regarding the classroom's curriculum-in-use, selected to represent evidence of curriculum process and content, and students' developing understandings of conflict.
Findings

The following vignettes were chosen to reflect the three major themes in understanding conflict that emerged in Ms. Alison’s curriculum — (1) What is conflict? (2) Sources of conflict: How do conflicts reflect different human needs and perspectives? (3) Managing conflict: What are the consequences of different choices in handling conflict? Each of these themes builds upon the preceding theme, gradually elaborating the children’s understandings of the concept.

Report cards sent home to students’ parents in early February emphasized “Conflicts in school, Ontario, and the world” as the major cross-curricular focus of the first semester. Ms. Alison’s assessments emphasized social studies, language arts, drama, and fine arts outcomes. In relation to the first theme, understanding conflict, curriculum expectations (from the school board’s version of the Ontario Common Curriculum) included:

- listen for information to understand others’ experience;
- speak with growing confidence to inform, question, and understand others’ experience in a variety of school situations;
- explain the relationships between present actions and preferred and probable futures;
- investigate fictional and real relationships, feelings, and experiences through role play and presentation;
- use appropriate language to [identify and] resolve conflicts;
- express personal views through art work;
- demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of diverse people through the direct experience of drama and music.

In relation to the second theme, human needs and perspectives as sources of conflict, curriculum expectations included:

- recognize that an event can have more than one cause;
- identify sources of conflict in the school, community, and society and suggest appropriate ways to deal with them;
- read fiction, news articles, and other informative materials ... that reflect diversity of Canadian and global society;
- analyze how media influences our perceptions about other people;
• use inclusive and bias free language and explain its importance;
• describe a variety of perspectives on an issue, and explain how perspectives are shaped and how they are changed with new information;
• write in role;
• locate significant places in Canada and in world events;
• identify situations in Canada and the world where resources are distributed unequally.

In the second semester, Ms. Alison extended the concept of conflict to include math and science in addition to arts, language arts, and social studies. In particular, the class studied bullying on the playground, and human interaction with the water cycle, locally and in relation to an area study of the Middle East (water was also another theme unit treated separately). In relation to the third theme, managing conflict, additional curriculum expectations included:

• describe cyclical occurrences and changes in the natural world which affect everyday life;
• apply mathematical concepts to new situations and other subject areas [e.g. creating pie charts and graphs depicting uses of water];
• examine different explanations of and solutions to a problem, determine their validity, and apply the most appropriate solution;
• discuss how ... technological developments are human endeavors and are influenced by all the factors which affect individuals and society;
• make informed reasoned judgments about what is fair in particular cases.

The social scientific concept of conflict thus provides a connection among knowledge and skill development opportunities in several different curriculum areas. The vignettes proceed chronologically, reflecting the conceptual organization of this curriculum, and are interspersed with commentary to show how data were analyzed. Other lessons are summarized briefly, to give a sense of where the vignettes fit in the whole curriculum strand. The final vignette revisits the first theme, to show the students' development of understanding over the eight months of the study.
What is Conflict?

The research began on October 21 (and ended in June) by asking students to define conflict, by generating examples of conflict and contrasting these with non-examples. The children gathered in a circle. Ms. Alison introduced me to the students, saying that I would be joining the class for some new activities. I told the group that I was interested in how young people (such as themselves) learn to handle conflict, problems, and peacemaking. Ms. Alison asked the class to, “Think of a word I already know,” that would describe all the following examples.

“Just now [as the class gathered on the carpet], somebody said ‘the boys always get the cushions.’ That’s an example. Today, our class and another class arrived at the library at the same time [while there was room for only one class].... Earlier, we talked about the General Motors strike.... Dr. Bickmore said ‘problem’ a moment ago; that’s a hint. What do we call problems or disagreements? What’s a synonym?” Nine or ten students made guesses, most of them not even close. Ms. Alison started spelling out the word CONFLICT on the chalkboard; she got all the way past L before anybody guessed the word. Ms. Alison wrote the word CONFLICT, pronounced it aloud, and asked, “How many know that word?” Eleven (of 33) students raised their hands. Ms. Alison asked them to give an example: five or six successfully gave examples of conflicts.

This initial unfamiliarity with the term “conflict” is less surprising when one recalls that English was a second language for almost two thirds of the class. Language proficiency ranged from basic oral functioning (and almost no literacy) to well above grade level in fluency and vocabulary, among both monolingual English and ESL speakers. From the blank looks on their faces and the unevenness of their explanations and examples, however, it is clear that the difficulty was not merely vocabulary. The concept of conflict was initially unfamiliar to most of the students. However, the experience of conflict was familiar, and in the passage below one can see that some of the students were beginning to connect their experiences with the concept. The concept-building process continued for about an hour that day, with students presenting many examples and thinking aloud about why each one might be (or might not be) an instance of conflict.

I prompted for personal and interpersonal conflicts, asking students to recall and imagine decisions they made, or problems they encountered, at various stages of the day (‘When you got ready for
school this morning ... Conflicts that have happened here at school ...
Problems you have had after school...'). Gradually, the children’s ex-
amples became more frequently correct applications of the term con-
flict, such as: whether to wear a jacket, not wanting to get out of bed
but not wanting to be late to school, disagreement with mother re-
garding what to eat for breakfast, problems with pushing or sharing
toys at recess, arguments with siblings. With some direct encour-
agement of a few quiet students, eventually every child offered an ex-
ample of a conflict in which they had been a participant.

Later that afternoon, I asked the class for examples of con-
flict in books they had read, to see whether they had be-
gun to understand that conflicts could take other forms
beyond the intrapersonal or interpersonal. This question
didn’t provoke much response. When Ms. Alison re-
minded the class of the Little House on the Prairie book they
had read together recently (Wilder), one confident child
answered that there was a conflict between the Indians
and the Pioneers over control of the land where the story’s
main characters settled. To end the lesson, Ms. Alison
asked the class to synthesize: “What do all these conflicts
have in common?” Three or four students offered the fol-
lowing characteristics: people wanting different things,
(sometimes) anger, a problem having two or more sides.

In the space of an hour, most of Ms. Alison’s class developed a
rudimentary understanding of the word conflict, as it applied to the
individual level. The lesson took place during the last hour of a school
day, and an hour is a long time for young people to concentrate on
one topic. Thus students’ relative silence regarding larger-scale con-
flicts may have resulted from not understanding the connection, or
simply from getting tired. Clearly, the conceptual connection between
extended intergroup conflicts (such as Native North Americans ver-
sus European-origin Pioneers over land) and short-term interpersonal
conflicts (such as disagreements with a parent over breakfast) was not
immediately or fully clear to everybody in this class. Conflict as a con-
cept was relatively unfamiliar, as this curriculum began.

To reinforce the applicability of the conflict concept to social as
well as interpersonal disagreements, a homework assignment and sub-
sequent lessons invited the class to investigate diverse opinions associ-
ated with the ‘Days of Action,’ a series of local work stoppages protest-
ing provincial government policies (in relation to funding for social ser-
vices and education) that were affecting many students’ families at the
time. Students wrote in their own journals about who was involved,
what opinions various actors held, and how the media portrayed the sources and symptoms of the Days of Action conflicts. Most students showed that they were beginning to sort out the idea that there can be different viewpoints regarding the ‘same’ event or problem.

**Sources of Conflict: Human Needs and Perspectives**

An extended series of lessons guided students to describe a variety of basic human needs, to distinguish needs from wants, and to analyze the ways unmet needs might be sources of conflict. For example on October 28, the children brainstormed and then developed drama skits in assigned (heterogeneous) small groups, depicting conflicts over meeting people’s needs. Students chose and presented the following skits:

- There was not enough clean drinking water for everybody.
- There was a traffic accident because a driver (with no education) couldn’t read a stop sign.
- One family was homeless because they had no money for rent, while another family had a comfortable space.
- Two people had food, two others were hungry, and one decided to share.
- A person received good medical care for a broken leg, but another student played the role of the Premier, saying he was cutting the hospital’s funding.
- Three friends disagreed about whether to give away a coat to a person who had insufficient clothing and was cold.
- The air was so polluted that the actors coughed and gagged: they couldn’t figure out who was to blame for this problem.

It was clear from the students’ presentations that social and political conflicts were indeed part of their repertoire of experiences and concerns. Earlier class discussions about the Days of Action protests were evident in some groups’ ideas. After each group presented, their classmates guessed (accurately) which needs and conflicts were involved. They had come to understand that the term ‘conflict’ applies to both intergroup or political and interpersonal problems.

In the brainstorming session preceding this small group work, I had prompted for less visible human needs (such as respect or affection) that would be familiar in interpersonal relationships. However, the examples students chose to develop were not interpersonal: they
were social and even controversial issues. In subsequent lessons, students drew pictures reflecting conflicts over unmet human needs: again they all chose social conflicts regarding pollution and resource distribution, rather than small-scale personal conflicts. Physiological needs, and the conflicts that arise from those needs not being equitably met in our society, were tangible and meaningful to these children. Questions of psychological needs in interpersonal conflicts were either too complex or too emotionally risky to discuss here, so the students chose not to pursue them at this point. The models the students did present, and the discussions that followed, provided insights into conflict that might have been missed in a curriculum that avoided complex or politically-charged issues. This insight is significant for other areas in social education beyond conflict resolution: local, family, and home concerns are not necessarily simpler or more accessible to diverse young students than broader social concerns that have clear tangible elements (such as land, water, food, weather events, or dramatic human actions).

Ms. Alison's curriculum pursued these social and global connections in the following month, extending students' understandings of the sources of conflict and developing the idea that conflict involves different viewpoints or perspectives.

On November 6, Ms. Alison showed each student a dramatic photograph, cut from a recent newspaper, showing two hungry children reaching out for food in a refugee encampment in Zaire. She asked, "What do the people in the picture really need?" She guided the class to interpret visual clues and to distinguish the main need — food — from various "wants." Then, "Who are all the different people involved in this problem, even though they're not necessarily shown in the picture?" Ms. Alison prompted the class to imagine who was "behind" the picture, in particular the aid worker toward whom the children were reaching. "What is the problem?" Reading the caption, a student answered, "There are not enough protein biscuits to go around, and they're hungry."

Ms. Alison directed the class to act out what she called a 'tableau.' First (to all of the students, standing spread around the room), "You're the aid worker. Go around distributing food, distributing food, then you run out. Freeze. How do you feel?" Second (again to everyone), "You're a hungry person, lined up for food, waiting, the food's coming around, then they run out. Freeze. Show
how you feel.” In de-briefing the exercise, students put their wide-ranging responses to the conflict into words, including embarrassment, fear, frustration, envy, misery, and resignation.

Here, the class worked together to describe a human conflict of crisis proportions, and to articulate the ways various participants in that conflict might have thought and felt about the problem. Most members of the class showed by their serious dramatic poses, and by the vocabulary they used afterwards, that they could imagine themselves into the perspectives of participants in this conflict. This is not to say, of course, that either the teachers or the students really understood the many perspectives or complex sources of this whole conflict, as it would have looked on-site to participants in Rwanda or Zaire. In fact, it was the unfamiliarity and distance of this particular situation that made the broad outlines of this refugee food problem seem clearer. The news photograph presented only a snippet of a complex situation, and therefore presented an opportunity to highlight two key ideas in understanding (interpersonal and social) conflict — the notion of human needs, and differing viewpoints regarding what to do about those needs.

The class pursued the question of human needs and wants as a source of conflict, and the question of incompatible perspectives as an element that defines conflict, in various ways over the next month. For example, the class learned vocabulary such as “refuge” and “refugee” in relation to a school Remembrance Day program, and continued to read about and discuss the situation in Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire as it emerged in the daily news. Several of the children’s families had come to Canada for refuge from difficult situations in their own countries of origin, so these lessons served to label and clarify concepts with which some students were already familiar. Rather than raising troubling controversy (as it could have), the relevance of this curriculum to some students’ “real” experiences appeared to give several quieter and newly-arrived immigrant students a reason to speak up, and their confident/settled peers a reason to listen to what they knew. By the end of November, virtually every student could describe a conflict (depicted in a picture, poem, or story), discuss who was directly or indirectly involved in that problem, and figure out what thoughts and feelings might be associated with each party’s viewpoint.

This is an example of the kind of curriculum Jerome Bruner has advocated: one that helps children to interpret an essential idea that, “when fully developed, ... is worth an adult’s knowing, and ... having known it as a child makes a person a better adult” (1960, p. 52).
Instead of assuming that the global and political dimensions of conflict over human needs would be inaccessible to these young children, Ms. Alison's curriculum translated this complex concept into dramatic and simplified forms that connected with the children's diverse life experiences and ways of thinking.

Managing Conflict: Choices And Relationships

The next challenge in Ms. Alison's thematic unit was to extend students' understandings of conflict, applying the concept more directly to their own roles as participants in their communities. Beginning in December, a few lessons addressed the idea that participants in a conflict have choices, and that the consequences of each possible response to the conflict can be predicted and evaluated.

The Rwandan troubles again presented an opportunity to step outside of the complicated here-and-now. Ms. Alison brought in an article by Anne McIlroy in the Globe and Mail: "Hutus returning home to find Tutsi squatters," and read it in class with the students on December 2. The journalist personalizes the problem of competing claims on a homeland, by telling the story of a Hutu family of eleven who managed to get back from the refugee encampment to which they had fled during the violent outburst between Tutsis and Hutus, only to find a Tutsi family living in 'their' two room house. They ended up sharing the house, with the Tutsi family in one room and the Hutu family in the other. The journalist writes, "last night, a rock came through the window." It was not clear from whom the assault had come. The class began to define the problem, and to discuss the different ways that the people involved might handle the situation.

The next day, the class was arranged in two lines facing one another (one line acting as Tutsis, the other side as Hutus). With the children's eyes closed, Ms. Alison reviewed the story, ending at the moment the rock came through the window. She reminded the children to stay in place in the line, while everybody acted this out at once: "Imagine that you ran outside your room to see what was the matter, and found yourself face to face with your Tutsi (or Hutu) neighbor — the person standing across from you. When you open your eyes, tell or show your neighbor what you want, and what you are going to do. When you hear the rattle, freeze." The class acted out, observed,
named, and discussed the various responses to conflict that emerged. We led the class to look for patterns in the types of choices represented — avoid [postpone or run away], fight [use violence], or try to resolve.

The homework was a language arts 'benchmark' assessment task, writing in role. Students each wrote from the point of view of the Hutu or Tutsi person they had represented in the role play. Their assignment was to describe the best solution to this conflict from the Hutu's or Tutsi's (imagined) point of view, and to explain why by predicting the consequences of that choice. Later, the class shared and summarized the many responses to this conflict that various students had imagined:

- Rivalry forever—keep fighting - might have another war
- Some people make peace
- Escape/ run away/ hide
- Ask what happened: who threw the rock?
- Help the other family to build another house
- Divide the rooms and the food, share the land
- Attack back (die or be trapped), destroy the house
- Say this is 'my' house, make the other group get out
- Negotiate—we will leave if you help us build more houses
- Get somebody to give us another bed and room
- Call for help—are there police?
- Vote on two presidents for the country—one Tutsi, one Hutu
- Split the country in half

First, the class reviewed the distinction between avoidance, using violence, and confronting the conflict, and students categorized the above responses accordingly. Next, students predicted the consequences of each response, and labeled them Win-Win, Win-Lose, or Lose-Lose.

The dichotomous categories of "win" and "lose" are simplified schema used often in conflict resolution education, even though of course they do not map perfectly onto these real human scenarios. Students agreed unanimously that some of the responses to this conflict were Lose-Lose or Win-Lose choices. On other responses, however, students disagreed about the consequences they predicted: some students' views were more pessimistic than their classmates.' I could identify no clear pattern regarding which students had which views
— recent and long-settled immigrants, and boys and girls, were distributed quite evenly among the optimists and pessimists. Their fervent discussions about these predictions served as a think-aloud exercise, in which children modeled for one another how various actors might respond to various conflicts, and how to predict and evaluate the results of such actions. This conceptual framework was applied, in subsequent lessons, to conflicts in various children’s stories.

Managing Conflict Extended: Choices And Relationships In Bullying

In January and early February, Ms. Alison directed the class’s attention to a kind of conflict that occurred much closer to home. Through art, language, literature, and social studies lessons, the class applied their new vocabulary regarding conflict to the problems of teasing, bullying, and exclusion, emphasizing the ways these problems occurred on and around their own school playground. The key ideas studied earlier — human needs, different perspectives, choices and consequences in handling conflict — were now applied at a more complex (though local) level.

Bullying/exclusion problems are challenging instances of conflict for young students like Ms. Alison’s class, for various reasons. First, bullying and exclusion are complex conflicts because they involve unequal power, and shifting relations of power as groups reform and target various individuals. Second, these problems were complex for these students because many of them were direct or indirect participants — the conflicts involved themselves or people they knew, about whom they had complicated feelings. Third, bullying conflicts are qualitatively different from the conflicts discussed earlier, because the human needs at their root involve intrapersonal conflicts over intangibles such as self-respect and friendship, rather than involving clear disagreements regarding how to handle a visible problem. Thus this locally-familiar problem was a more difficult application of the concept of conflict.

Most of the children were by now eager to talk about these problems. The foregoing months of concept-building provided a crucial foundation for their discussions.

On January 7, Ms. Alison invited students (in small, mixed groups) to imagine and draw pictures of bullies. Later, she asked students to add words: “What would the bully be saying?” Debriefing with the whole class, Ms. Alison asked, “How would you describe these bullies?” Students described a single big, strong, rude, male. Some students also described individuals who were ‘dumb,’ wore torn clothing, and spoke slang.
Ms. Alison asked, "Who usually gets picked on?" Students listed smaller people, younger children, disabled people, and people who seem different from the norm. When the teacher asked, "Who has ever felt like they wanted to bully somebody?" about twenty students raised their hands (many of them tentatively, waiting to see what peers did, first). "Why?" Ms. Alison asked. Children mentioned having been hurt themselves, either by the same person or by somebody else.

The similarity of the students' initial images of bullies to prevailing cultural stereotypes suggests that these conceptions are not necessarily well-rooted in the children's own experiences. Some children's images carried unconscious social class bias — emphasizing characteristics such as worn out clothing, colloquial speech patterns, rude manners, or failure in school. This notion of the bully is common in some children's literature; thus students may have been opening the conversation with the 'school knowledge' they imagined the teacher wanted to hear.

As the students became more comfortable discussing the issue, and more skilled in applying new vocabulary to their own experiences, a different image of bullying emerged. Later class discussions, as well as the research literature on bullying, generally describe groups of children (of either gender) picking on or excluding another child, rather than single 'bad boy' individuals terrorizing weaker peers (Pepler & Craig 1994). Just as students had initially understood 'conflict' simplistically as fighting or violence, students initially understood the term 'bullying' as referring to individual 'bullies.' This simpler conception may have allowed the children to externalize the problem (blaming it on 'bad people'), but even so almost two-thirds of the class was willing to admit that they had felt the inclination to bully others.

To begin a lesson the following week (January 14), I read aloud another children's book: Name Calling, by Itah Sadu. As usual, I stopped frequently to invite students to interpret various characters' feelings, to predict consequences of various actions, and so forth. The new element in the curriculum, raised by this story, was the idea that the conflict 'escalates,' in this case by compounding the misunderstanding and adding more children to the group that was picking on a schoolmate. The class discussed the phenomena of groups picking on individuals and of conflict escalation, comparing these with their earlier conceptions of bullying.
Next, Ms. Alison brought out an essay from a recent newspaper, called “Four-season games for girls.” She read aloud, “The high school football season is coming to an end, but the games that girls play go on for all seasons. ‘Target’ is a favorite sport of adolescent girls. It requires no skill, no strength and no brains. The strategy is to single out one particular girl to humiliate and isolate” (Bonenfant 1997, p. A16). Ms. Alison noted that the article was about older girls, but that she thought it also would sound familiar to this group. She asked, “What kind of games might this be?” After a couple of minutes of thinking aloud, students made the connection to the book they had just read: “target” referred to picking on people, bullying.

“Why would we say that calling people names is like a game?” Ms. Alison asked. Several students volunteered immediately that picking on somebody could be fun, and that when bullying with a group, “You’re like, protected.... You feel strong.” Other students noticed that bullying, like many games and some conflicts, involves winning and losing. “Who has been picked on, a target?” At least 25 of the 32 children present raised their hands. “Who has been part of a group that picked on somebody?” Fourteen raised their hands. The discussion continued, probing the feelings of various children when they ganged up on somebody or were picked on. In asking students to predict the consequences of such bullying or targeting, the teacher reinforced the concept of conflict escalation.

It is evident that nearly all of the students were beginning to demystify the concept of bullying, connecting it to their own experience. Most were apparently able to identify (to varying degrees) with ‘bully’ as well as ‘target’ experiences. The following week, students in small groups wrote and acted out bullying skits, showing (by their inclusion of feelings and reasons for the problem) that they understood bullying situations to be a type of conflict. Their scenarios included: stealing a target’s lunch money, calling a target a nerd for reading during recess, forcing a target to do others’ homework, and exacting revenge for a target having bullied someone’s little brother. Most groups demonstrated escalation in their skits, without having been prompted. The class discussed the problem that conflicts involving several people, once they had escalated, were very difficult to resolve.
Over the next few weeks, most students thoughtfully considered the complex nature of bullying, and their own roles as potential or real participants in these kinds of conflicts.

In a second writing-in-role assignment, Ms. Alison gave the class a general scaffold for including all of the characters and different viewpoints in a story about bullying. All but two (of 30 handed in) showed that they could write fairly coherently about a complex conflict from the point of view of one of its participants. Almost equal numbers of students chose to write from the role of bullies (13, including 9 boys) as of targets (15, about equally boys and girls). (Two did not clearly write in role.) Of those who wrote in the ‘bully’ role, most (10) described themselves as followers, rather than ringleaders, of bullying activities. I have selected two sample stories written in the role of targets, followed by two in the role of bullies. I chose these examples to show the group’s range of feelings, typical explanations for bullying and typical ways they handled the problem. (Children were instructed to make up pseudonyms; I reproduce the children’s original spelling, some of which they corrected in later revisions. The stories with all female characters were written by girls; those with male or mixed characters were by boys.)

- Sarah has been targeted by Victoria, Linda, and Judy, because Sarah is a Chinies and Victoria, Linda, and Judy are English. Sarah dose not know how to speak English because she is Chinies. She also has black hair and looks different. Victoria, Linda and Judy calls names, like there is baddy. Victoria is the leader. I am Sarah. Sarah is always been picked on.... She feels very sad and lonly and having no protection.

- Monttey has been targeted by Kam, San, and Mickey because he has dark skin, glasses and he can’t speak english well. Every day Kam, San, and Mickey want 25 cents from Monttey. Also they beat him up. Sometimes at school they blame stuff on him. I am Monttey. He doesn’t like what there doing to him at all. Every day he get’s scared and sometimes he doesn’t even come to school. Every day he cries and gets mad but he doesn’t tell teachers.

- Wendy has been targeted by me, Cable and Dinar, because we saw my sister getting beat up by Wendy. I’m the leader. Me, Cable, Dinar beat her up and We felt tough. We said to our selves that it felt good beating her up. But I was worried she was going to get her gang but she told the teacher and we got in trouble.
- Lida has been targeted by Angie, May and Tina, because it took Lida 20 minutes for her to answer a math question. Angie is the leader. I am May. At first it felt good to pick on someone, but then I realized that Lida hadn't done anything to hurt me or my feelings and then I remembered I wasn't so good in today's math session either.... In a way me and Lida are exactly alike. We dressed alike, we think alike, we're both horrible at math and we both loved to read. If Angie and Tina hated Lida so much why didn't they pick on me?

It is no surprise that children cited perceived difference (including immigrant status, racial characteristics, and level of academic success) as a major reason for bullying conflicts (one story involved a student being targeted for being a 'nerd,' while several targeted a student with academic difficulties). Many bullies enjoyed feelings of strength and power, at least temporarily, while some felt confusion, remorse, empathy for the target, or fear of retaliation or punishment.

Most of these young students, in this and further lessons through January and early February, showed that they had come to understand many of the subtleties (not just the symptoms) of conflict and conflict management. By applying the concept of conflict (developed earlier in relation to complex but distant social problems) to the personal phenomenon of bullying in their own schoolyard, students deepened their understandings of the major elements of conflict, including: point of view or perspective, the uneven relationship of feelings to actions, the idea that participants in conflicts have choices and the idea that their actions have consequences for self and others.

**Managing Conflict Further Extended: Conflicts Over Resources And Land**

In the term beginning in February, the conflict theme was extended to embrace math, science, and technology in addition to social studies and language, particularly through the study of water cycles, waterways, and human uses of water. A series of lessons and projects in March and April reviewed and extended students' understandings of human needs, wants, and conflict by focusing on global and local disagreements over the uses of water resources. In May and June, the class embarked on an area study of the Middle East. They identified conflicts over water scarcity, control of land and oil resources, and poverty, as well as ideological and religious differences, as focal points for the study of that region. In pairs or threes, students examined particular Middle Eastern countries, and contributed to a wall chart com-
paring geographic, demographic, and cultural data from the various countries.

In June, the whole class sat in a circle to discuss their deductions and interesting findings regarding the people of the Middle East. Students showed their understandings of conflict in comments such as the following, regarding government spending priorities.

- If a country, such as Saudi Arabia, made a lot of money from selling oil, then why is the health care so bad [referring to high infant mortality rate of 59 per 1000]?
- If a country has a lot of oil, the government could pay for good services like health care and schools. Some countries do this more than others.

As often happened in this class, initial participation in this complex thinking-aloud process was fairly small, involving mostly five or six students, but as children got more comfortable with (and thus interested in) the ideas, involvement rose to include about twice that many active voices. About half the class was attentive but noticeably quiet, even when encouraged or cajoled to participate.

**Summing Up: What Is Conflict And What Are Its Major Elements?**

June 19 was the last research visit, taking place only a few days before the end of school. The activity was set up to see how the students might answer the same question addressed at the beginning of the project: What is conflict?

Ms. Alison asked the students to once again assemble in (assigned heterogeneous) small groups, and to show what they understood about conflict by dramatizing a "real-life" conflict, either one that had happened to somebody in their group or one they had read about. Each presentation included a narrator, who described the setting and introduced each character. After each group performed their skit, the rest of the class worked together to identify the cause of the conflict in the skit ("what is the problem?"); the various viewpoints ("Who is involved and what do they want?"); and the form taken by the conflict ("what happens?" - "Was there escalation or violence?"). Last, each small group improvised and then evaluated possible solutions to each conflict (win-win, win-lose, or lose-lose and whether the solution seemed feasible and sustainable).
• One group acted out a bullying situation, in which one child was picked on by schoolmates and blamed for something he hadn’t done. Classmates identified the different viewpoints of the various characters, labeled their feelings, and described the escalation of the problem. The group invented several solutions that involved gathering further information, negotiating, and getting help.

• The second group presented a sibling conflict, in which a child was frustrated about his younger brother’s continual interruptions and disturbances. Classmates again correctly interpreted the characters’ viewpoints and escalating anger. They worked out a complex integrative solution, in which parents agreed to entertain the little brother for a short time, while the older brother found a quieter place to sit and agreed to play with his little brother later.

• The third group presented a skit in which several boys were teasing a girl who couldn’t kick the ball very far during a recess kickball game, while other characters stood by and did not intervene. The class identified the sense of male superiority experienced by those doing the teasing, the hurt, embarrassment, and empathy experienced by the bystanders, and the misery of the target. The girls, in particular, talked about the ways that they, too, felt targeted, because they felt that many girls were teased frequently. Their solution was to band together, get another ball to use in a different part of the schoolyard, and coach one another to improve their strength and ball-handling skills in a less-competitive atmosphere.

• The last group presented a complex conflict over resources, specifically “who gets the land,” in Israel/Palestine. The skit included a lot of dialogue that escalated into name calling, stone throwing, and rubber bullets. The children playing Israeli Jews described their worries about security in what they saw as their homeland; the children playing Palestinians described their sense of loss, outrage, and insecurity about not controlling what they saw as their homeland. The class recommended peace talks, negotiating a fair division
of the land, and building houses somewhere else rather than on disputed land.

To sum up, Ms. Alison and I led the class to compare the ways each of these and other scenarios exemplified different types of conflict, and the ways each conflict had various causes, contrasting viewpoints, choices and needs involved, and possibilities for solution.

The students’ work showed phenomenal variety and depth of understanding. I cannot verify from this scant evidence that every child understood every element of conflict, nor that the understanding they did develop improved their long-term success in social education or in democratic citizenship. However, the year’s activities and the final presentations demonstrated that most of this class of 9 and 10 year old children had developed a remarkable familiarity with and capacity to use some major concepts and generalizations associated with conflict, conflict resolution, alternatives to violence, and the social contexts that give rise to particular kinds of conflicts. Every child in the class was involved in presenting a conflict scenario, and every one made a few coherent comments about each of the other conflict scenarios presented. This shows that they had some understanding of the causes and forms of conflict, the role of conflict in human relationships, the ways conflicts may present choices, and the range of possible conflict resolution processes.

A Partial Conclusion

This research connects two major components of democratic social education—social relationships in a particular learning climate, and inclusion of conflict in the content of academic lessons. The relationships among the diverse members of this class, and thus their opportunities to safely practice managing conflict, were facilitated by multiple communication strategies such as artwork, drama, writing, and respectful small or large group discussions. The academic world was unlocked, and fused to students’ lives and interests, through concentrated attention to the concept of conflict. This powerful and motivating theme provided meaningful applications for core curricular ideas and skills, especially in language arts and the social studies.

Ms. Alison’s students benefited from the inclusion of far-away and large-scale, as well as local and interpersonal, problems as learning opportunities. The non-linear approach to the social studies concept of conflict, including the early and frequent inclusion of politi-
cally controversial or complex international material, seemed to enhance these children’s learning experience by providing multiple representations and many entry points for understanding main ideas. Each child handled the ideas raised in class at their own developmental level, drawing upon their own diverse experiences to make sense of what was unfamiliar. Conflict is pervasive in social life, so conflict appeared in a very wide range of their interpersonal and academic endeavors during the months this curriculum unit was conducted. This global and local conflict education helped them to connect their multiple worlds to the fabric of school knowledge (Phelan et. al. 1991). Thus the time spent on conflict management enhanced, rather than replaced, their academic learning. Conflict learning was indeed woven together with social studies and language achievement.

The most important contribution of such an exploratory study is to highlight questions for future discussion and research. The most troubling question highlighted by this research is by no means new. This is the problem of inclusivity and success for all (e.g. Bergsgaard 1997; Bettman & Moore 1994; Bickmore 1996; Means et. al. 1991). In most of the lessons I witnessed in Ms. Alison’s class, it was clear that the children all found conflict study to be intrinsically interesting. Many, but not all, of the children who were unaccustomed to being deeply or confidently involved in their public school education (that is, who were withdrawn in Ms. Alison’s other lessons) were drawn in by the content and pedagogical processes associated with conflict-embracing education. The children seemed to develop their confidence and understanding through the active processes of thinking aloud, discussing, and acting out a wide range of conflicts. The question is, what was learned by the quieter and more passive students in this class? If inclusive conflict education is essential to the development of democratic citizenship and civic culture, then even Ms. Alison’s brilliant class illustrates the pitfalls and partiality where such learning is not completely inclusive. The content regarding conflict, and the pedagogical emphasis on drama and discussion, did show some hopeful signs of beginning to address this challenge, but it did not completely solve the problem of inclusivity in the learning process.

A limitation of this study is that it is based on only one case, in a relatively unusual elementary classroom. It demonstrates possibility, not typicality. Ms. Alison’s extensive wisdom of experience, and the presence of an extra adult to think and plan with, made it possible for her to overcome obstacles to innovation that might have been much more difficult for another teacher. In particular, Ms. Alison had remarkable skills in using drama and the arts to strengthen academic curriculum and to make it more accessible to students with limited English proficiency. Equally important, this school’s and school board’s emphasis on conceptually rich thematic curriculum, rather than on a
more linear approach emphasizing history or geography information, gave Ms. Alison the space to focus on the conflict as a social concept for several months of a school year. The existence of a small but significant problem with bullying and fighting in this school’s playground provided a rationale for making time to address conflict and conflict resolution. This large class of 33 students at two grade levels, many of them recently arrived from different parts of the world, was a challenging context that paradoxically made more traditional approaches to social education unlikely to succeed, and thus strengthened the rationale for trying something different. This observational study was not designed to substantiate the success of this curriculum in terms of individual students’ learning outcomes, but it does show these diverse students engaging in learning opportunities in ways that should encourage future experimentation and research in this area.

This study presents a challenge to some conventional approaches to both elementary school conflict resolution and social studies education, by refuting the ‘expanding horizons’ assumptions upon which much of it is often based. Generalizations and comprehension of concepts tend to be sounder when they are based on a wider range of contrasting examples (Taba 1969). Thus, when young people study community and global (as well as interpersonal) conflicts, their eventual understanding of conflict is thereby refined and clarified. The contrasting examples in this extended unit on conflict resolution provided points of entry for the insights of children with diverse life experiences, thus enriching the learning resources available to the whole classroom group. The powerful themes of social, political, and interpersonal conflict enhanced the breadth and depth of these young students’ involvement in social education. Yes, children can handle global politics, and doing so can help to increase their capacity to handle both interpersonal conflict and academic skills.

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69
Voice And Choice In A University Seminar:
The Struggle To Teach Democratically

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Abstract
This action research study focuses on my attempt to teach a graduate social studies seminar democratically. The discussion of two key themes, voice and choice, highlight the issues that emerged in my efforts to share power and decision making with the students in the course. My struggles led to understanding various forms of resistance that mediate against democratic teaching in many university settings. Findings point to the importance of teachers’ clarifying their conceptions of democratic education and developing "practical theories" of teaching democratically for higher education settings.

“I can now invite you into my thinking, reminding you that I know more than I can describe and can speak about things that I do not yet fully understand...What follows is a sometimes awkward search for meaning, the kind that can only be found when we have the courage to face ourselves” (Battaglia, 1995, p. 88).

During the Spring of 1996, I had the opportunity to teach a graduate social studies seminar on "Education in a Democratic Society," a perfect occasion to study my ability to "walk the talk" of teaching democratically. Like many other social studies educators, I was well versed in the literature on democratic education and shared a growing concern with youth apathy and alienation from civic involvement for which democratic education is often touted as a potential cure. Yet until I taught this course, I had only dabbled in trying to put my belief in the importance of democratic teaching into action. This action research study is the story of my efforts, the struggles, questions, and sometimes successes of my attempt to model democratic practice in a university classroom.

I begin with an exploration of various theories of democratic education, for it is these ideas that informed my attempts. Following this analysis is a description of the context for the study, including the
action research methods I employed to systematically study my practice. I then highlight two key aspects of democratic teaching with which I struggled: voice and choice. These reflections juxtapose my own experiences with those of other educators’ attempts to teach democratically. Finally, the conclusion centers on the usefulness of existing democratic theories for practice, the development of “practical” theories of democratic teaching, and recommendations for democratic teaching in a university setting.

Theories of Democratic Education

In-depth examination of the writings on democratic education reveals that democratic education theories over the past fifty years vary more in emphasis than content. Almost all include the following features: the importance of democratic values, factual knowledge about democratic ideals and society, the study of societal problems and issues, reflective decision making skills, collaboration skills, and civic action in the school and/or community (Apple & Beane, 1995; Battistoni, 1985; Beyer, 1996; Dewey, 1916/1966; 1938/1963; Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Newmann, 1975; Oliver & Shaver, 1966; Parker, 1996; Rimmerman, 1997; Sehr, 1997).

While most theories recognize the essential integration of skills, knowledge, action, and attitudes, differences in emphasis are evident. For example, some proponents stress the importance of thinking about social problems (e.g. Engle & Ochoa, 1988; Hunt & Metcalf, 1955/1968; Oliver & Shaver, 1966; Rugg, 1921) while for others direct participation in the public sphere is the central feature (e.g. Freire, 1970; Newmann, 1975; Rimmerman, 1996). Other scholars emphasize students developing skills in collaboration (e.g. communication, listening, cooperation, collective decision making) as the most vital component of educating for democratic citizenship (e.g. Becker & Couto, 1996; Smith, 1994).

Divergence among the theories is also found in the area of values. Some educators advocate developing in students a strong belief in democratic values (e.g. Apple & Beane, 1995; Parker, 1996; Sehr, 1997) while others assert that students should be free to evaluate the workings of society based on their personal values and experiences (e.g. Kohlberg, 1976; Smith, 1994). Similarly, some scholars believe that controversial or current issues in U. S. society should form the basis of the curriculum, while others advocate the importance of student interest in the topics under study (e.g. Dewey, 1916/1936, 1938/1963; Smith, 1994). For some contemporary educators, issues of diversity, social justice, and equality are central (e.g. Parker, 1996; Rimmerman, 1997; Sehr, 1997), while for several earlier scholars these concerns are almost invisible (e.g. Rugg, 1921; Griffin, 1942).
Given the differences among theories of democratic education, it is important that I define for the reader my conception of democracy and my definition of democratic education. First, I adhere to Dewey’s associationist view, in which democracy is seen as “a mode of associated living.” This view has been conceptualized more recently by Barber (1984) as “strong democracy” and Lappe and Dubois (1994) as “living democracy.” Drawing largely on the participatory-republican tradition, the emphasis is on a democratic community of members as equal partners who engage in mutual deliberation, decision making, and action toward the common good.

This view of democracy transfers well to the classroom setting. Dewey maintained that students learn to be democratic citizens by participating in institutions in which they democratically make decisions. I agree with Gastil’s (1993) description of the democratic classroom, that it should be inclusive of all members of the class, class members should internalize democratic values and procedures, the class should acknowledge each person’s individuality and affirm their competence, members should relate to each other in a congenial fashion, and there should be a recognition and practice of the rights and responsibilities of deliberation. There is no division here between thinking, values, and action; all three are integrally related in the practice of classroom democracy.

This view of democratic education upholds the values of respect and caring, with a dual emphasis on individual rights and responsibility to the group. Central to my inquiry here are the aspects of student voice (speaking in class) and choice (participating in and making decisions about the course). While power sharing is central to my approach to teaching democratically, readers will note that at many points during the semester I maintained the “natural authority” of which Dewey speaks, due to my position as the professor.

The story I share here is just one among many. Reflecting educators’ growing concerns with the American people’s alienation from political participation, books on the theory and practice of democratic education have proliferated in the 1990’s (e.g. Apple & Beane, 1995; Becker & Couto, 1996; Beyer, 1996; Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997; Novak, 1994; Parker, 1996; Sehr, 1997; Soder, 1996; Wood, 1992). In these publications, educators from kindergarten to college tell the stories of their attempts to give students a firsthand experience of democratic participation through shared decision making within a classroom climate that supports the expression of diverse views. While many of the books focus on descriptive accounts of teachers and students struggling to build democratic classroom communities and others articulate various theories of democracy and democratic education, few attempt to juxtapose theory and practice in an effort to further our understanding of both. Only a handful of the democratic educators ex-
ploring their own practice use systematic research methods, and very few classroom stories focus on a university setting. These shortcomings in the literature set the stage for this action research study.

**Democratic Education In A University Classroom: Context For The Study**

A university course is typically characterized by the professor as decision maker and information provider and the students as followers of instructions. In a graduate social studies seminar entitled “Education in a Democratic Society,” I attempted to change the traditional structure and engage in power sharing and mutual decision making with the students. Modeling a potentially viable approach for educators to apply to their own teaching, the seminar offered graduate students the opportunity to practice democratic participation in our classroom and in community settings, as well as to consider the theory and practice of democratic education for elementary and secondary schools.

The three credit course convened on Mondays from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. during the Spring 1996 semester. Twelve students participated in the seminar and associated research project. Five of the students, two men and three women in their late 20’s and early 30’s, were from Indonesia completing an MA program through a grant secured by our Office of International Education. Of the remaining seven students, two were white men in their 20’s, one was a white man in his mid-30’s, two were white women in their late 20’s, and two were white women in their early 40’s. Of these seven students, one man was from Canada and one woman was from Great Britain; the rest of the students were from the United States. The majority of the students were taking the course as an elective in their Masters in Education program; two were Ph.D. students. Only one woman and one man were currently classroom teachers, though most of the students had prior teaching experience.

I informed students at the beginning of the semester that I would be “studying my own practice” while teaching the course and I invited their ongoing feedback. I also let them know that later on I would be asking them for written permission to include them in the research study, consistent with Human Subjects guidelines, but that this would not be required or affect their participation or grade in the course. At the end of the semester, all students signed a written consent form agreeing to be included in the study.

In framing the action research study, I chose to use a number of questions to guide my reflections, rather than one or two specific research questions. The following open-ended questions were included in my early notes for planning the course and research study.
At the university level, what does it mean to create an inclusive democratic classroom community? How far can the democratic experiment be carried in this setting? To what extent will participants rise to the occasion, and to what extent will they take advantage of the choices and power offered to them? Can I or should I be an ‘equal’ participant in this setting? In what ways should I retain control or power in the class? What is my responsibility? What will be the signs of growing democracy in the classroom? What feelings emerge in response to our democratic experiment in the students and in myself? Am I shirking my duties, laying too much on them? Are they resentful, hesitant, fearful, reluctant, etc.? In regard to discussion, is there also a democratic prerogative to be silent and not to have to speak? (Professor notes, 1/10/96)

At the first class meeting, I presented a draft syllabus for the students to review, discuss, and suggest changes. The second class meeting consisted of small group discussions and decision making on proposed assignments, discussions, and grading. I then revised the syllabus based on this feedback as well as questions about democratic education that students brought to class. Within parameters proposed by me and subsequently modified and agreed upon by the group, each student developed his or her own personal statement which included goals for reading, in-class work, and assignments. While I required some common readings, others were chosen by individuals based on their particular interests. Although class activities varied considerably (discussions, simulations, videos, small group activities, and so forth), each week featured a thirty minute student-led presentation/discussion on one of the readings and an instructor-led discussion or activity on the night’s topic. Each student completed a “democracy-in-action” project in which they found a way to participate in the democratic process in a community organization or a school. Each student’s final paper for the course synthesized the common elements of the course, the democracy-in-action experiences, and the personal readings chosen by the student.

**Understanding Action Research**

Of the various types of action research, this study is most appropriately classified within the increasingly recognized genre of teacher research, the “systematic, intentional inquiry about teaching, learning, and school carried out by teachers in their own school and classroom setting” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 27). This form of action research “aims to improve educational practice by engaging teach-
ers in the processes of planning, acting, and reflecting” (Oja & Smulyan, 1989, p. 23).

More than a decade ago, Wittrock (1986) observed that teacher educators rarely direct their research efforts at teaching in their own classrooms. Despite the growing teacher research movement, this is still the case. Even among teacher educators committed to action research and teacher research, the approach taken most often is to involve preservice teachers in conducting research in public school classrooms. Short (1993) asserted that new perspectives on education have impacted what education professors teach in university classrooms, much more so than how they teach. Thus, this study is significant in its contribution to a small body of literature on teacher research in a university setting. Furthermore, the study considers personal, cultural, situational, and societal factors as major influences on the course events, thus responding to a concern about some existing studies on teacher research disregarding context in university settings (Hutchinson, 1996).

Perhaps one reason why action research is uncommon in the university classroom is due to some researchers’ misunderstandings about the nature and intent of action research. “We have become imbued with a Western consciousness that devalues and distrusts collective and critical self-reflection as a source of legitimate understanding” asserts McTaggart, a renowned Australian action researcher (1997, p. 41). Several dimensions of action research are important to its validity as a research method; the following discussion explores the personal, systematic, and cyclical nature of action research.

Unlike more traditional forms of research, action researchers study their own practice, not the practice of others. Thus, as in other types of ethnography, the researcher is very close to the data. “In the collection of data, or evidence, related to practice, action research emphasizes the educator’s own, often intuitive, judgments of teaching” (Noffke, 1995, p. 5). However, while action research can provide important insights for practitioners, there is also the potential limitation that “it may reveal only those parts of education that they are positioned to see. Identities and the experiences that help to construct them affect visions of what ought to be” (Noffke, 1995, p. 7).

Thus, effective action research employs several methods to augment the perceptions of the researcher/teacher. First, action researchers are intentionally systematic in their procedures for collecting data. For example, in this study, I participated in all of the following data collection methods: participant observation and field note taking during classes, keeping a reflection journal after each class meeting, keeping copies of all student works and correspondence (papers, essays, midterm and semester-end written feedback, course evaluations, letters) and collecting other course “artifacts” (various versions of the
syllabi, weekly plans, handouts, written summaries of group discussions). I used field notes to remind me of the class events and then reconstructed the events along with my thoughts about them in my reflection journal. Journal entries in this article are cited by date, for example "(2/5/96)." "One can never be too diligent about recording all aspects of the research process, for, over time, the seemingly insignificant becomes relevant" (Battaglia, 1995, p. 90).

While action researchers are systematic in their data collection process, the analysis of their efforts is typically less orderly. "Action research is cyclical, that is, it does not progress from an initial question to the formulation of data collection, analysis, and conclusion. Rather it assumes that understanding and actions emerge in a constant cycle, one that always highlights the ways in which educators are partially correct, yet in continual need of revision, in their thoughts and actions" (Noffke, 1995, p. 4-5). The end results of action research may inform theory or be applicable to others' practice, but their most immediate and useful purpose is the contribution they make toward the transformation of one's own teaching.

Action researchers explicitly acknowledge that their view of what is happening in the classroom is just one among many. They, thus, pay attention to the voices and views of participants as well as focus their awareness on how their own position, institutional obligations, and values affect their perceptions. Altrichter (1993) asserts that action researchers should collect views other than their own, thereby examining different perspectives on the same situation.

Some action researchers involve class participants as co-researchers in the study. While I chose not to do this, I sought validation for conclusions through both triangulation of the data and participant confirmation. In an effort to try to uncover disconfirming evidence and divergent views (Erickson, 1986), I asked the students in the course to contribute their views in writing at both mid-semester and at the end of the course (the latter papers were sealed in an envelope and opened after grades were assigned to encourage students' honesty in expressing criticism of the course). I also asked the students if they would be willing to read and give feedback on my analysis of the course events in a draft of this article. Ten of the students originally agreed to do so; I received feedback from five of the students. (Three could not be reached as they were living out of the country, one had died, and the other was unwilling due to time demands at a new job). Where possible, students' views have been acknowledged or incorporated in the text. All student names in this article are pseudonyms.

My reflection on the course events was also greatly assisted by my communication via e-mail and in person with a professor at a nearby college teaching a similar graduate course. The similarities and
differences in how my colleague and I structured our courses served as a mirror for revealing to me many of my values and concerns in the approach I took to teaching democratically.

**Voice And Choice: What I Learned From My Teaching**

Typically, at this point in a research article the reader would be presented with the findings of the research to be followed by a discussion and analysis of these results. Here I have a chosen to take an approach more fitting to the process of action research. In this section of the article, I share the “story” of my efforts accompanied by both reflections on what I learned from my experience as well as insights gained from the literature on democratic education. The story will be told chronologically, though of necessity I must limit my focus to key events that highlight the two themes here: voice and choice. Why these two themes in particular? There are several factors that led to the emergence of these foci. First, student voice (speaking publicly in class) and choice (participating in mutual decision making about the course) are central aspects of democratic teaching, frequently cited in both theoretical works on democratic education as well as democratic educators’ stories of their efforts. For example, Angell (1998) describes her preschoolers’ interactions and decision making with a class meeting structure. In the setting for this study, students had frequent opportunities to voice their views in class discussions and small group work, and to make choices about the syllabus, assignments, readings, grading procedures, and class activities.

Second, as I analyzed the data collected for this study, I learned that voice and choice were the aspects of my practice that led to the most struggle and difficulty for me, and that, therefore, I had much from which to learn. Finally, students’ feedback revealed that these aspects of the course were pivotal to their thinking about how the course was democratic and how it was not.

The reader will note that I make no attempt to separate my discussion of these two themes, for they are integrally related in practice. The unfolding of the course events shared here will reveal how student voice was a critical component in participants’ involvement in making choices in the course, and how choices made, both by individuals and the class as a whole, strongly influenced the development of student voice over the course of the semester.

**Beginning The Semester: Choices I Made**

Getting the course started in a way that would encourage students’ involvement was critical and led to hours of planning. Especially the taken-for-granted foundation of a typical university course—the syllabi—was called into question. I eventually decided to present
a “draft” version of a syllabus, which students were invited to think about, discuss, and suggest changes. The following excerpt from the first version of the syllabus also included a metaphor designed to relate to the students my views on teaching democratically.

I am the captain of a large sailing vessel and you are the crew. We are about to set sail. At this point, I have chosen a tentative destination, have some knowledge of how to sail, and some understanding of the principles of navigation, group dynamics, ocean life, etc. Some of you may also have knowledge or experience in these and other areas that will contribute to our voyage. I hope so. My plan is to eventually give up most of my ‘captain’ish ways and share the journey and the decisions to be made with you. This means that we will work together and at times take turns sailing the ship and deciding its course. I will know that I have been successful if I can sometimes function as a crew member rather than as the captain while the ship sails on smoothly toward its destination. This experience will be exciting, though probably not always comfortable. Given that we are used to our ‘captain’ and ‘crew’ roles from prior voyages in different company, we will each be called upon to take risks, to trust each other, and to let go of old habits. What we stand to gain however is great. In addition to arriving at our destination, I hope that we will become a community, that we will learn about ourselves and each other from the experience, and that we will go on to our next voyage with more creativity, confidence, and new knowledge than we had before.

Thus, I began the semester with high hopes, a bit of naiveté, and very little awareness of the many personal and contextual factors that would strongly influence how the course transpired. In regard to the latter issue, the literature provided little assistance. As Ellsworth (1992) notes, “while critical educators acknowledge the existence of unequal power relations in classrooms, they have made no systematic examination of the barriers that this imbalance creates for the kind of student expression and dialogue they prescribe” (p. 101).

First Weeks: Deterrents To Student Voice

During the first few class meetings, many barriers to my image of a democratic classroom emerged. One of the first challenges was agreeing as a group upon my role as an instructor. Some of the students were ready and willing to jump into making decisions and shar-
ing the teaching of the course; they saw no problem with the professor being just another member of the group. Others, particularly the Indonesian students, thought that the instructor should share her knowledge with the class via lectures each week. Several asserted they had taken this class to learn from me and that Indonesian culture dictated that the student’s role was to pay attention, to listen, and to speak when asked a question. My head spun with thinking about how to reconcile these differences. As Elbow (1983) noted, it is difficult to work with the “contraries” of the teacher’s being facilitator, guide, and coach as well as judge, evaluator, and critic.

Compromise seemed the easiest route to take, so I attempted to balance professor “lecturettes” with student-led discussions, interactive tasks, and small group activities. While the class agreed to this format, not all students were engaged all of the time. Some students chose not to be involved in some discussions or decisions. In addition to the cultural barrier cited above in regard to Indonesian cultural mores about schooling, language difficulties limited the involvement of some of the Indonesian students as well. I noted during the second class that “some of them had a hard time communicating with the rest of the group about decisions they had made” (1/29/96). Most of the Indonesian students also noted their difficulties with expressing themselves in English on their midterm or final course evaluations.

Language and cultural differences also contributed to the Indonesian students’ separation from others in the class, particularly during small group work. While there were a few occasions where some of the other students reached out to work with some of the Indonesian students (such as Eliza forming a study group and Tony offering to help Endang with her student-led discussion), I noted in my journal during the first weeks of the course both the Indonesians’ difficulties with English (2/5/96; 2/26/96; 3/25/96; 4/8/96) and their separation from others when the students formed groups on their own in class (2/26/96; 3/11/96). In general, many students seemed most comfortable working in small groups with others similar to themselves; this occasionally included divisions along gender lines as well.

The development of student voice was further complicated by issues surrounding respect in class discussions. Students held different standards about what respectful discussion looked like, despite the fact that a group activity during the second class focused on developing a list of guidelines for class discussions that included “provide a safe place to share opinions” as one of five recommendations. My field notes and student written feedback revealed that some students were comfortable with arguing energetically, while others avoided such “confrontations,” felt intimidated, or thought that they were not given any space to contribute. These differences greatly in-
fluenced the degree of development of each student’s voice in the course.

With the exception of Sam, all of the students indicated in their personal goal statements that they would try to participate often in discussions and respect others’ ideas as well. Sam wrote in his personal statement, “I intend to stir up as many controversies as possible just to make things interesting. I propose to play devil’s advocate, but in a courteous manner.”

I was never sure how to respond to Sam’s “devil’s advocate” stance in class discussions. On the one hand, democratic educators value how confrontation can lead students to think through their ideas more thoroughly, re-examine the taken-for-granted, or question their assumptions (Stevenson, Noffke, Flores & Granger, 1995). Ellsworth (1992) noted the importance of making students’ contributions in class “problematic” due to their “unfinished, imperfect, limited” nature (p. 97). On the other hand I observed in class that Sam’s dialogic style would often lead to long back and forth conversations between him and just one or two other students. Student comments and written feedback revealed that some students felt excluded, didn’t know where to jump in, or didn’t feel comfortable doing so.

My dilemma about how to respond to Sam was just one of many I faced in regard to my own “style” of participating in class discussions. Should I try to be an equal participant? Where should I sit, at the front of the room, in the back, in the midst of the group? My role as researcher also contributed to this conflict. At times I would want to just observe and take field notes, yet feel that I should sit with a small group. There were also times when I felt that my knowledge or opinions if expressed might sway the group too much or limit students’ efforts to critically reflect on course readings. Shor (1996) also noted that “my arrival in a group changes the dynamics, sometimes for the better...sometimes for the worse” (p. 48).

While I often felt awkward and was seldom sure I had made the right decision about how I chose to participate during any given discussion, I also occasionally shared Seabrook’s (1991) experience of being “surprised to learn that I could step out of the center of the class and still find my place in the group” (p. 481). However, Freire’s (1970) notion of teacher and learners engaged in dialogue together, learning new information and developing new skills in reflection, often seemed a distant ideal beset by numerous roadblocks in both myself and the students.

Next Steps: Small Successes, Difficult Struggles

It wasn’t until the fourth class that I saw what I labeled in my journal “the beginning of what I would call a classroom community.” I wrote, “people know each other better, are using each other’s names
a bit more and just generally feeling more comfortable with the format of the class and differences among us” (2/12/96). In part, the development of a classroom community was assisted by two types of interventions on my part. First I intentionally sought to mix up the students more, for example, by choosing discussion groups ahead of time (2/5/96) and deciding who would be on each committee (1/29/96; 2/19/96).

Second, I structured opportunities to foster everyone’s participation, particularly those who had often chosen to be silent. These strategies included asking students to “group up with people you don’t usually talk with” (4/2/96), inviting anyone who hadn’t spoken yet to do so (3/25/96) and using discussion techniques that provide turns (2/5/96; 2/12/96; 2/19/96). In one of these activities, students were each given three plastic chips and instructed to throw a chip into the middle of the room each time they spoke. I wrote in my journal after class that evening, “The chips discussion seemed to have the best participation of anything we have done so far. All the Indonesians really participated. Perhaps it was having those chips in your hand, feeling like you are supposed to talk” (2/5/96).

With both types of strategies—mixing students in groups and using structured discussion strategies—I took a more directive role in an attempt to encourage more equal participation among the students. Thus, while my decisions limited students’ choices (of who was in their group or how they discussed a given topic), the structures imposed facilitated students’ voices. Over the course of the semester, the Indonesian students each participated more in class discussions and instances of culturally integrated groups became more the norm than the exception (3/4/96; 4/15/96).

By the middle of the course, we had settled into a routine in terms of class structure that limited the time needing to be spent on student choice. Generally each class began with a student-led discussion and then proceeded to small group discussion/activities and a short professor “lecturette,” (tolerated by some of the students and looked forward to by others). A critical incident related to both choice and voice, however, took place during the sixth class meeting.

During the first few weeks of class, some students were occasionally late and a few had handed in late assignments. I decided to raise this as an issue at the beginning of the sixth class. Prior to this evening, I had mentioned the problem and joked about it a bit but some of the students did not seem to be getting the message. The climate of the classroom was tense when Sally and I discussed whether her draft of an assignment was in fact due on the previous Friday or not. But this discussion paled against what followed later in the evening. The following passage is quoted at length from my personal journal on February 26, 1996.
The most confrontational and unsettling part of the evening came when we talked about the issue of coming to class on time. I went over to Sam and asked if he had found out if he could get out of his new job a bit early so that he could get to class on time. He explained that he couldn’t and then I said that I would raise it in the class to decide if we should change the time back to 4:15. [We had previously voted to change the class starting time from 4:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.]. I also clearly let him know that coming late to class would affect his grade. (I have joked and said things to let the students know that I care about punctuality but hadn’t connected the issue with grades thus far). Sam said he didn’t think it should matter or affect his grade. I invited him to share his view when I raised it in the class, which he did. It then got rather heated, especially between Sam and me but other people chimed in too. Sam accused me of going back on the value of running a democratic course and of making an arbitrary decision based on my preferences. He thought he should just be able to flow in and out of class, as one would in a family or other social group. I then suggested that he just flow out of his job so he could get to class on time. He said this wouldn’t work; he’d be fired and he’s being evaluated there. I said that he was being evaluated here too. And also that I was being evaluated and that one heard about professors who let students out early, canceled class, etc. and that I felt it was part of my responsibility to grade based on attendance, punctuality, etc. Catherine made the point that rights are balanced with responsibilities, especially when Sam kept saying that shouldn’t he be free and his personal rights be respected in this issue. Eliza said [to me] “well, you’re the captain, assert your authority.” Tod joked that I could just throw him overboard and out to sea if I wanted to. I asked the class to vote on whether to change the time back to 4:15 or not (I didn’t want them to vote on whether or not one could be late and not have their grade changed). I closed my eyes for the vote because I didn’t want anyone to feel swayed by my view (Robyn assured me no one would but I wasn’t so sure) so I closed my eyes and Tod counted... The final vote was 5 to 5 with two abstentions...I was somewhat disturbed by this whole encounter and said that I didn’t think we should make any changes without a clear vote to do so. I also said that we could come back to this
issue and discuss it some more...Now I have to think more about this and what I want to do with it...This all gives me cause to think about how democratic the course really is, what the bottom lines are for me, how I put out some of them in the syllabus but I guess I just took this one for granted. I wonder if we could come to a consensus on the issue. Sam wants to go to his job without penalty and I want everyone to be in class on time. These differences could be approached with creativity and are not insurmountable. For example, maybe Sam could provide "comp time" in some way for missing the class time...We could still change the time of the course. Perhaps there are other creative solutions that I haven't thought of. Perhaps I should just admit that this is not a complete democracy and that there are some things I am not willing to negotiate. I will think more about this and consider how to address it in the next class. (2/26/96)

There is much to "unpack" here in regard to both voice and choice. As in Shor's (1996) college course, students' protests forced me to question my choices. As I analyze the events of the evening I see ways that I was democratic and ways that I wasn't. Actions such as bringing the issue to the group for everyone to express their views, seeking a possible solution that would promote the common good (changing the starting time of the class), and having the class vote on this issue seem to be democratic in the sense of encouraging both voice and choice.

However, announcing that being late will affect one's grade was clearly not democratic; it was a position I assumed based on my authority as a professor. It was also my decision, not the students', to table the issue until another class meeting. After thinking about this incident for a few days, I decided that the best approach to resolving it was to be clear about my limits and have the class work as a group to find a solution. In the subsequent work on this issue the following class meeting, I retained an authoritative position, asking the class to seek solutions to the problem that would meet my "bottom line": that being late to class would affect one's grade.

In the process of conducting this study, I have spent considerable time reflecting on why I chose to retain authority with this issue. While I was concerned to some degree about the effect this approach would have on our classroom community, my larger concern was about adherence to standards, both those set by the university (3 credit classes meet for 3 hours) and my own (being prompt is important). In hindsight, I think that I felt threatened that if the students could determine that there were no consequences for being late to class, they might go
on to make other decisions that, in my view, would be equally unreasonable or undermine the functioning of the class. Indeed, Shor (1996) notes from his democratic teaching experience that some students “become passionately involved in power-sharing, they turn the tables, pushing the teacher and the process to change faster” (p. 150). I also concur with another teacher educator’s admission that “Even though I espoused collaborative experiences, reflection and empowerment for the learner, I still kept control in a way that I had not realized” (Patterson et al, 1996).

Two additional issues that emerged frequently for me in my attempts to share the power with students in the course were how many decisions there are to make and how much time it takes to make decisions as a group. My journal reveals numerous instances of my questioning how much time we should spend on process (e.g. deciding on course activities, how grades should be determined, resolving conflicts) vs. content (e.g. discussing course readings, formulating our ideas about democratic education). To some extent, these two endeavors were mutually supportive, in other words, we could learn “content” about democratic education by reflecting on our process. However, many times the two would conflict. Further, students had varying degrees of tolerance for the energy it took to participate in group decision making. Some were impatient or wanted me to make more of the decisions; others wanted to have the class decide everything.

Power and control were especially problematic for me in regard to the student-led discussions. Early on in the semester I had proposed, and the students agreed, that each week one student would lead a half hour discussion on a reading chosen by that student. I would then plan the rest of the evening’s activities to revolve around the readings and topics we had determined based on the students’ questions about democratic education. Very often, however, the student-led discussion would run over the thirty minute time allotted. While some students felt that we should just continue a good discussion for as long as we wanted, others (myself included) wanted to move on to the other activities planned for the evening. Other concerns I had about some student-led discussions were that they lacked focus, weren’t particularly challenging, involved too much teacher talk or were unrelated to the reading assigned (3/4/96; 4/8/96; 4/15/96). These experiences led me to feel that it was important that I control the majority of the teaching in order to provide the group with stimulating, focused activities though I continued to feel conflicted about this position. One student reviewer of this paper countered, “Do you really have the corner on what is stimulating and interesting? The same criticism could be applied to some of your own lectures.”

Looking back on this issue, I ask myself why I didn’t raise the concern about time spent on student-led discussions with the class
rather than struggle with it on my own, frequently announcing that “time was up” or “it’s time to move on.” Again, I think that I unconsciously feared giving students the power to make a decision about this issue. What if they chose to let the discussion go on as long as the leader wanted it to? Would the activities and lectures I had planned be omitted then from the evening’s agenda? I commiserate here with Shor’s admission at being less than democratic with his students because “It meant giving up more control than I was prepared to risk at that moment, I am sorry to say” (1996, p. 104).

Last Weeks: The Limits Of Classroom Democracy

Largely because of the issue about being late for class, I subsequently decided to give the class more decision making opportunities. During the last few weeks, I invited the class to decide on how we would spend the majority of the evening. For example, the group planned the events for a visit we had one night from the democratic education class at a nearby college. I reflected on our planning later in my journal. “We talked about what to do with Jeffrey’s class when they come to visit, lots of good ideas. While it was difficult, I feel that I negotiated fairly well, listening to all ideas, getting a straw vote opinion on each, and eventually we worked out a plan. It took some time but I was happy with that rather than just me deciding what to do with them” (3/25/96).

As stated previously, I saw many instances of students developing stronger voices in the classroom community over the course of the semester. However, I did not realize how much individuals’ participation was still supported by structured experiences until Julie led what she called a “free discussion” on the reading she had chosen for the group. The following description of the event is quoted at length from my reflection journal.

Julie was leading the discussion tonite and chose to use a ‘free discussion’ method. She had some good questions that she posed to the group about the reading, somewhat controversial in regard to whether teachers do or should impose their moral values in the classroom. I watched this discussion with dismay, sitting back and choosing not to participate verbally. Sam and Catherine and Sam and Tod spent most of the discussion time doing back and forths. Catherine’s line, “I disagree with that” followed by a giggle, Sam coming back every time. Tod at one point kept insisting to Sam that they didn’t disagree. Of course hardly anyone else said anything. Whether they couldn’t get a word in edgewise or just didn’t want to talk is hard to tell. Most of the Indonesians were completely silent. Robyn
said something I think. Eliza also was silent. I became increasingly depressed witnessing this event. What had happened to all our progress in building a class community, in empowering each other to participate? It seemed to be all down the tubes and I quickly came to the realization that we had only seemed to progress because we had used systematic arrangements that facilitated more equal participation (talking stick, student facilitated, and chips). Julie was trying to end the discussion, and had said that she was overtime. I could feel my anxiety increasing due to the time element and the nature of the interactions. As Catherine and Sam were about to launch into another round of back and forths, I looked at Sam and with a bitterness and bite I didn’t realize would emerge from my voice, I said, “and let’s let Catherine have the last word.” Sam was shocked, “oh well, I thought this was a discussion, an exchange of ideas” and he quickly followed with a mock apology “excuse me!” Catherine of course giggled and everyone else was silent. I realized I had made a mistake in the tone of my voice especially, but I still was thinking “I’m going to raise this all as an issue tonite, enough of sweeping this stuff under the carpet or just writing to individuals one on one. We wrote our feedback to Julie and then I asked her to comment on how she felt the discussion went. She echoed my views when she stated that she was disappointed that some people were dominant and others very quiet but that she suspected this might be the result with the method she chose, it was a trade-off. I followed with raising that I felt similarly, that I was unhappy, that I wanted to talk about it some as a class. After I made a few comments, Eliza started in on Sam, telling him that she was offended and didn’t feel she could get a word in edgewise. I don’t know why I didn’t stop this more personal interchange. Sam made the point that he talked about ideas but did not put down people. He was obviously hurt. Eliza seemed to have quite a bit of energy on this as she has had prior issues with him. Tod looked concerned; Catherine giggled and said that she hadn’t been offended at all... I tried to point out that there were no right or wrongs here, that these were different perspectives or views that each individual operated out of and that worked for them. [Note: One student reviewer later pointed out that while I said there were no right or wrongs, I did raise the problem within a framework of something being wrong. I now agree]. This whole thing
didn’t seem to be getting anywhere though because of the hurt feelings and the discomfort in the group. Most people were silent and not saying anything. Finally, Robyn said “I think we should go on. I think we’re beating a dead horse.” I reluctantly agreed, realizing that the wounds would not be healed in this short, whole class discussion. (4/22/96)

While this was a difficult evening for all of us I think, I learned some important lessons. Reflecting on our classroom community, I realized that in many ways it was similar to our democratic society. While some individuals in the group were friends or had positive feelings about each other, tolerance or acceptance would more accurately define the group atmosphere as a whole. And, as in society at large, there were undercurrents of hostility between some individuals. The effective functioning of our classroom community depended in many ways on structures that facilitated respectful and equal participation. When these structures were removed, underlying conflicts surfaced and became difficult to resolve, given our limited contact with each other and the relative lack of intimacy or commitment to such pursuits in a university class.

Other democratic educators have noted similar limitations in regard to their efforts. Stevenson, et al. (1995) noted that at the end of their university course, “Power relations within our group, silences, and differences remain only partially addressed” (p. 71). Ellsworth (1992) asserted that “Strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact” (p. 98) while Shor (1996) maintained that “the critical-democratic character of [democratic] pedagogy is limited by the institutional authority I bring to class and by the institutional setting which frames our work” (p. 74).

**Final Evaluations: Was This Course Democratic?**

Not content to rely entirely on my own perceptions, I felt it was important to elicit students’ feedback on their views about whether the class was democratic or not. Evaluations of the course that included a request to comment on the democratic and non-democratic aspects of the course were completed anonymously and placed in a closed envelope until after I submitted grades at the end of the semester. Ten of the twelve students completed written evaluations and all agreed that the course was democratic in many ways. In response to the question, “In what ways was the course democratic?” students cited the following aspects of the course: the organization of the class, group decision making, individual preferences weighed against the group, openness to other’s ideas, construction of the syllabus, student-led
discussions, preparing for the joint meeting with the other democratic education class, equal opportunity to participate, voting on required activities and grading, participation on committees, and student selected readings. I note that almost all of the above are concerned with students’ voice and choice in the course.

While comments regarding ways the class was not democratic were generally fewer than ways it was democratic, it is clear that most students saw elements of both in our shared experience. Their feedback regarding the non-democratic aspects of the course included the following: teacher centered agenda, no agreement on how to resolve disagreements, teacher’s opinions too strong, and teacher made decisions about course goals. One student wrote, “sometimes structure was imposed which was from ‘authority’.” Another elaborated, “Our classroom was a limited democracy because of the instructional roles of professor and student. There were clearly areas where [the professor’s] power established the constraints of our democracy.” Four other students referred specifically to the issue around being late for class; it is likely that many of the preceding comments referred to this issue as well.

The Role of Resistance in Democratic Teaching

My efforts to teach democratically were sometimes successful, sometimes not, yet always challenging and interesting. Analyzing the issues affecting students’ voice and choice over the course of the semester, I am keenly aware of the many faces of resistance that hindered our collective efforts to become a collaborative community. These include, but are not limited to, the following: cultural and language issues; university norms; societal values; assumptions about the nature of university education, teaching, and learning; social relationships; and personal values.

Many if not most of these aspects of resistance were hidden from my view for much of the semester. When I began the course, I had not considered, for example, how the traditionally enculturated aspects of schooling or my own adherence to authority would serve as resisters to democratic classroom life. Nor had I realized the extent to which the powerful influences of culture, language, social relationships, and personal values would affect my efforts to develop classroom community. “How powerful old ways of thinking are, how fragile we are when we are attempting to move away from these old patterns,” wrote Serebrin and Irvine (1996) of their attempts to negotiate curriculum with their university students. In retrospect, I realize that the context for the seminar, from the personal to the societal, was a powerful and oftentimes limiting force in my efforts to teach democratically.
The resistance created by multiple aspects of the teaching and learning context raise questions for me about the usefulness of democratic education theories for real world attempts at classroom democracy. Before planning and teaching the course, I had read widely in the area of democratic education. While theories of democratic education were helpful in framing the objectives for the course, the realities of teaching forced me to “shatter my ideals on the rock of truth.” Given the unconventional nature of democratic education and the many contextual factors that influence classroom events, theories of democratic education can, at best, offer ideals to strive toward.

More useful in analyzing my teaching are the “practical” theories of democratic educators whose stories of their attempts to teach democratically help me understand some of the difficulties and, in the face of failure, provide much needed reassurance and support. When they write of struggle, determination, frustration, feeling nervous or overwhelmed, exhausted yet exhilarated, I know I am not alone. And I continue to question, along with them, the opportunity costs in spending so much time negotiating the curriculum and making decisions about the day to day functioning of the class.

This action research study has led to some beginning ideas toward the development of my own “practical theory” for democratic teaching. For those teacher educators who plan to foray into the challenging and exciting world of democratic education, I offer the following recommendations. First, think about what it means to you to teach democratically and communicate that with your students. My conceptions of democracy and democratic education were “fuzzy” when I began this course, and thus not clearly articulated to myself, let alone to the students. Students should also be encouraged to be aware of and make explicit the expectations they have of themselves and the professor. Consider which aspects of the course can be truly democratic and which—given your personal standards, the needs and desires of your students, and university regulations—will not be. Attempt to negotiate the creation of the course guidelines with the students. As one of the students in our class noted, these guidelines are so dependent on the personalities in the class. Individual expectations and purposes made our living democracy a challenge.

Attempt to carefully balance the many conflicting values within the process of democratic education: individual needs and the common good, time spent on process vs. time devoted to content, personal development or community development, student choice or professor choice. While in some instances these values can support each other, at other times they stand in conflict and hard choices must be made, compromises sought, rationales offered. Educators should anticipate, before they embark on teaching democratically, that consid-
erable time and both psychological and emotional effort are involved in making such choices and compromises.

Finally, reflection is key in the process of learning from one's practice. Keep a journal, collect frequent student feedback, and reflect often on the choices made and the consequences of those choices. For example, the following notes from one of the student reviewers continues to give me much to reflect on about my own teaching style and the process of teaching democratically.

Free rein of minds within certain limits can bring about participation and that is what democratic education is all about. Maybe part of the reason the class did not develop to its full democratic potential is because you didn't let it. To truly be democratic is really risky. You have to let people be themselves. The whole definition of democracy is struggle. I think the confrontational nature of democracy kind of shocked you, but at least it was interesting.

Conclusion

Attempting to teach democratically was not always easy or enjoyable. Yet as I struggled with how and when to share power and engage my students in decision making, I was ever mindful that this effort is important in a democratic society. If students and teachers learn how to negotiate, express their views respectfully, listen to each other, and solve problems of mutual concern in the classroom, hopefully some will continue to use those skills in the public sphere as well. There are no guarantees here, of course, but as Becker and Couto (1996) noted, "Increased and improved democracy may not develop from their [teachers'] enterprises, but it surely will not come about without them" (p. 23). While theories of democratic teaching can guide educators' efforts, studies of democratic teaching reveal the difficulty of the path. "A grand cultural canyon yawns between education and democracy, which simply represents the distance society itself has to travel to reach the democracy it claims to already offer" (Shor, 1996, p. 211).

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Saving Us From Ourselves: The Limits Of Policy Study In The High School Curriculum

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Toward an Aristocracy of Everyone is a paper designed to improve civic participation by preparing high school students to engage in public policy deliberation (PPD), a decision making model adapted from the field of public policy studies. The authors suggest that teaching high school students to rationally “deliberate” important social issues will help our citizenry become better prepared (and thus, presumably, more inclined) to exercise greater civic participation in public affairs. As larger numbers of ordinary citizens develop the rational skills with which to effectively deliberate public policy, the control of democracy will be put back where it belongs—in the hands of the people—and we may strive toward an “aristocracy of everyone.”

The authors acknowledge that developing an aristocracy of everyone will not be easy. Drawing on the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, they insist that members of the public need to be adequately prepared to assume the reins of control over their own destiny, lest their natural human passions render them a “mob.” The way to tame this mob is to “educate” them—to provide each citizen with a rational “filter” through which his or her passions can be reasonably channeled toward productive ends. The PPD model is intended to provide such a filter.

Strengths and Limitations

In their effort to consider the improvement of civic participation in daily life, Parker and Zumeta address a number of important issues. For example, there are few matters of greater urgency than the need for full civic participation within our democratic society. The authors have effectively highlighted the importance of this vital issue.

Another positive aspect of the paper is its insistence that real social issues serve as the basis for the curriculum. Parker and Zumeta argue that a central task of the social studies is to prepare students—as citizens—to identify and address our pressing social problems. Given the current status of our society and world (population growth,
depletion of resources, social and cultural domination and exploitation), the importance of this emphasis cannot be overstated.

The authors have also gone to great lengths to connect theory and practice. This kind of connection is essential if we are to implement philosophically and theoretically grounded policies and practices that are worth the effort they take to develop. The authors' proposal is decidedly practical as well as theoretical.

Perhaps most important, Parker and Zumeta have made a serious effort to critique the limits of classical liberalism and to consider multiple cultural perspectives in their assessment of the issues we currently face. They note the importance of addressing the persistent social inequities that continue to plague our nation and world (e.g., Anyon, 1997; Banks, 1993; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; West, 1993). In this regard, Parker and Zumeta have begun to identify some of the deeper issues underlying the problem (low civic participation) their model seeks to address.

Although the authors have explored a number of important issues, there are also significant limitations. For example, both the PPD model and its theoretical underpinnings are excessively linear, reductionistic, mechanistic, and utilitarian in nature. Parker and Zumeta explain that the model (and the field of public policy studies in general) was developed within the military-industrial context of the post WWII era. It is based partly on mid-twentieth century systems analysis (a mechanistic approach that grew out of military operations research during WWII, e.g., Capra, 1996) and partly on costs-benefits economic models which tend to emphasize technical factors—such as how to maximize efficiency by cutting costs—rather than ethical considerations such as the humane and environmentally sound production and management of resources.

Thus, the paper seems to imply that effective citizenship participation involves a measured progression from one analytic stage to the next, that human problem solving can be modeled on the workings of mechanical systems, and that the whole of a complex social problem—from identification to resolution—can be adequately understood by analyzing its constituent parts. Although the authors carefully qualify the limitations of the model, we are left nonetheless with a rigid, mechanistic approach that proceeds too neatly from one step to the next.

Another problem with the PPD proposal is that it is based on a narrow conception of civic life within a democratic society. Although public policy deliberation is certainly an important aspect of civic activity, the paper virtually equates democratic life with the rational, collaborative analysis of public issues and alternatives. As Parker and Zumeta state, “The rationale for our proposal is that public policy deliberation is the basic activity of self-government—of creating and sustaining democratic life” (emphasis added).
Here again the authors anticipate the concerns of their critics. They acknowledge, for example, Nancy Fraser's (1997) assertion that "there are no naturally given, a priori boundaries" between the public and the private. But again the basic proposal—that our democratic society must be saved from itself by installing rational filters in the minds of the masses—remains intact.

In actuality, public policy deliberation is but one of many important forms of civic activity within a democratic society. "Creating and sustaining democratic life" also involves informal social interaction, critical self-reflection, and various other modes of personal and social activity. Thus, meaningful civic activity can occur when an individual privately chooses a simpler life for the good of society or the health of the planet, when a parent helps a child consider ways to resist unwanted peer pressure, when a teenage student asserts that he is no longer willing to condone the racist or sexist attitudes of a friend, or when a local organization renews its commitment to care for all members of the community.

The point is that the boundaries between personal space and the public sphere and between self-reflection and public deliberation are not nearly as distinct as the proposal implies. Much of the meaningful civic activity that occurs in everyday life is personal, informal, intuitive, self-reflective, emotional, passionate and experiential rather than narrowly analytical and public in nature. The shared spaces in which civic participation occurs are not just public spaces. Nor are they merely "deliberative" spaces, in any formal sense of the word. Rather, these spaces are lived-in spaces, jointly constructed spaces, spaces forged not merely with the intent of deliberating public policy, but also for the purpose of sustaining meaningful social relationships and enjoying or coping with life in general (e.g., Greene, 1988). Because the paper neglects the varieties of activities that characterize civic life in a pluralistic society, the proposal seems out of touch with the concerns and perspectives of the public it purports to serve.

In some ways, the PPD proposal is patriarchal and assimilationist as well. The suggestion that the public will remain a "mob" unless it is "educated" (i.e., provided with a rational "filter") is highly paternalistic. Part of the problem is that the authors appear, like the nineteenth century American Presidents they cite, to underestimate the accomplishments and abilities of the public they serve. While it is certainly possible to identify examples of mob-like behavior among people who have not been formally "educated", it is more common to find "unfiltered" group behavior that is orderly, congenial and efficient (e.g., Nyerere, 1968; Storm, 1972; Zinn, 1995). Even in common contemporary settings (parks and playgrounds, street corners and coffee shops, theaters and shopping malls), the ongoing actions of everyday people tend far more often to be orderly that mob-like. Unfor-
tunately, failure to understand the people we seek to “educate” can perpetuate the privilege of dominant norms and cultures and assimilate others into those modes of thinking and being.

It is ironic that the authors have not explored more deeply the causes of the problem their model seeks to address. Although Parker and Zumeta insist that the PPD model moves “toward the development of a causal theory”, and although they argue that public policy analysts must “account for where people get their images of the world and how those images shape their preferences” (Stone, 1997, p. x), their own proposal does not adequately explore the conditions underlying low civic participation or examine the images of the world that influenced the American statesmen they cite.

A deeper analysis might have revealed important information about the citizens they wish to educate as well as the statesmen upon which much of their proposal is based. Such an analysis might also have looked more critically at the demeaning distinction that is drawn between “the democratic temperance [Jefferson] admired in agrarian America and the rule of the ‘rabble’” of “Europe’s teeming cities” during the latter half of the eighteenth century. A deeper search for underlying causes might have demonstrated that civic apathy, to the extent that it does exist, has less to do with the need for a set of technical skills than with the perspectives and attitudes (disillusionment, greed, individualism) that have evolved in response to destructive social conditions and practices (denial of equal opportunity, social and cultural assimilation, unregulated competition, increasing isolation).

Further analysis might have disclosed that Thomas Jefferson’s concerns about mob behavior were certainly influenced by the general reaction of the European elite to the masses who sought to overthrow the aristocracy. Surely Jefferson, a man of considerable privilege, was influenced by the plight of his European counterparts. Deeper analysis might also have revealed that much of what is viewed as “mob” activity (e.g., Bacon’s Rebellion in colonial Virginia, the Tulsa Race Riots of 1921, the Watts Riots in 1965) could actually be considered a reasonable response—from the perspectives of the members of the “mob”, at least—to unacceptable conditions (persistent poverty, institutionalized racism, cutthroat competition) perpetuated by destructive social norms and perspectives (the cultures of individualism, meritocracy, and acquisition). Even in our own recent history the often justifiable oppositional stances of labor unions, members of minority ethnic groups, American feminists, gays and lesbians, and numerous others have been characterized as little more than the violent, irrational, actions of a “mob.”

Thus, we need to pay more attention to the causes and conditions underlying the problems we face. Although the authors identify many important issues (e.g., sexual harassment, increased pollution, growing
income inequality), providing a rational filter with which to address these problems misses the point. Because the paper does not critique the perspectives of Jefferson or Madison, it appears to support the idea that the failure of the masses to effectively redress their grievances involves a lack of ability to reason rather than a refusal to continue to be “reasonable” in the face of intolerable social conditions. Insisting on reasonableness in light of intolerable oppression can itself be considered an unreasonable expectation. Indeed, this was the argument of many of the “patriots” during our own American Revolution.6

By perpetuating the idea that resistance to unacceptable circumstances constitutes “mob” behavior to be regulated through the installation of a rational “filter”, the proposal contributes to the privileging of one aspect of thinking and being at the expense of another. And by privileging one mode of thinking and being at the expense of others, the model could function—in a subtle way—to make “them” (those who do not restrict their participation in democratic life to the rational deliberation of public policy) more like “us” (those who consider rational thought the preferred mode of thinking and being and public policy deliberation the pinnacle of civic participation). Expecting others to do the changing rather than seeking to change ourselves or to transform the social order of which we are all a part is fundamentally patriarchal and assimilationist activity (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; McIntosh, 1989; Sleeter & Grant, 1994).

Again, we must strive to identify the social conditions underlying the problems we face and to better understand the people we want to educate. Who are these teachers, and students, and citizens in general? What do they do and what do they want? In what ways do they already deliberate public policy? In what ways are they already critical, caring, connected participants in the civic life of the community? A deeper analysis of the perspectives of students, teachers and the public in general should reveal that the lack of participation in democratic life, to the extent that it does exist, is more the result of unacceptable social norms and conditions (whether related to dearth or excess) than the lack of a rational filter with which to control ones mob-like tendencies. Although Parker and Zumeta might contend that their approach facilitates such exploration, this seems an unrealistic expectation for a model that is linear, mechanistic, and fundamentally patriarchal and assimilationist in nature.

Can the Model Work?

The significant limitations of the PPD model raise serious questions about its value for increasing meaningful civic participation in everyday life. Much of the current literature suggests that the social and psychological processes humans naturally use to solve problems
are anything but one-sided (linear, rational, public). Parker and Zumeta's insistence that a rational model of deliberation is "the basic activity...of creating and sustaining democratic life" contradicts the fundamental premises of recent work on the complexities of the human mind (e.g., Bakhtin—quoted in Todorov, 1984; Sternberg, 1988; Wertsch, 1991), on the varieties of ways we make sense of and interact with(in) our world (Belenky, et al., 1986; Neisser, 1976), and on the complex and contingent nature of our socially constructed realities (e.g., Berger & Luckmann, 1966; West, 1989). Since neither the problems we address nor the processes we use to address them are one-sided in nature, the practical value of such a limited model is highly questionable.

We must also question the merits of a social problem solving approach that places a premium on the cool assessment of costs and benefits. While it is certainly necessary to identify workable alternatives, we should not lose sight of the fact that many of our most important needs resist such analysis. Many of these needs also remain, for the time being, far from resolved. What does a model that emphasizes "staying within legal and budgetary limitations" and developing "policy that achieves results without violating widely held social preferences" teach about the merits of resistance, opposition, collective bargaining, critical self-reflection, or standing on principle even in the face of certain defeat? Young citizens need to know that although many worthwhile goals may never be achieved within their lifetimes, in some cases these are the only truly acceptable alternatives.

It is also difficult to believe that a model that privileges one mode of thinking and being at the expense of others will find strong support among those who have endured the rejection of their identities and the reduction of their very life chances (Banks, 1987; Bullivant, 1986; Ogbu, 1987). To the extent that we ask students, teachers, and citizens in general to participate in their own cultural assimilation, we should expect vigorous opposition!

Thus, I have serious reservations about the value of the PPD model. It is difficult to imagine that such an approach could significantly increase meaningful civic participation in daily life, much less "build and maintain a hopeful, imaginative public square", contribute to the "empowerment of citizens as agents", promote "right action", or create an "aristocracy of everyone". The simple fact is that the PPD model is ill-equipped to cope with the task it has been given.

Where To Go From Here?

Many of the thoughts articulated by Parker and Zumeta deserve the serious attention of social educators. However, in spite of the strengths of some parts of the paper, the merits of the PPD model are
highly suspect. The authors are correct when they insist that full civic participation is needed within a democratic society. They have accurately identified many of our most pressing social problems, and they are correct in claiming that these issues can and should be addressed through the social studies curriculum. But they step onto shaky ground when they suggest the use of a reductionistic model—no matter how carefully it has been qualified—to install rational filters in the minds of the masses. Part of the problem is that the authors seem to underestimate the causes of low civic participation. Another part of the problem may be that they use the criticisms they anticipate to qualify their proposal rather than to rethink their basic assumptions.

In some ways, Parker and Zumeta may be setting their aims too low. In my opinion, we must continue to develop approaches that help students examine the deeper problems we face as a nation and world, the conditions underlying those problems, our shared complicity in the perpetuation of those conditions, and the kinds of personal and public actions we might take to help create meaningful social change. Our most fundamental problems involve not only the particular circumstances we encounter each day (e.g., racial and sexual discrimination, greed, corruption, population explosion, the depletion of natural resources), but also the long-term, jointly constructed norms and beliefs that perpetuate those circumstances (e.g., an ethic of competition rather than cooperation, a culture of individualism and isolation rather than community and connectedness).

As we consider ways to increase civic participation in everyday life, let us fully investigate the complexities and contingencies of civic activity in a democratic society. In the end, we will need to better understand, affirm and build upon the experiences and abilities of the public we serve. Multiple modes of knowing and being permeate our existence not merely because we have not yet learned to filter them out, but because they, too, are necessary aspects of civic life within a society such as our own.8

Notes

1 In spite of Barber’s reassurances (e.g., 1992, p. 5), I am uncomfortable with the contradiction of terms in the concept “an aristocracy of everyone”.

2 Parker and Zumeta go to great lengths to legitimize their proposal. But there is little evidence that the authors have used the many criticisms they have anticipated (e.g., regarding the limitations of their model) or critical perspectives they have referenced (e.g., Banks, 1993, Bickmore, 1993, Fraser, 1997, Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, West, 1993) to seriously reconsider the essence of their proposal.

3 Because the authors build upon a number of ideas (e.g., the thoughts of James Madison and Thomas Jefferson; Benjamin Barber’s interpretation of those thoughts) without critiquing them, I assume they are in general agreement with the passages they quote.

4 By focusing so narrowly on practical issues and technical matters, the paper avoids a serious critique of the foundational assumptions upon which our societal norms have been constructed. Thus we are encouraged to apply the perspectives of past leaders.
rather than to question those perspectives, much less the world views upon which those perspectives are based.

3 I believe violence is an unacceptable means of resolving social inequities. But by continuing to assume that violent opposition is necessarily the result of lack of self control rather than the response of reasonable people who have been pushed too far, we conveniently avoid the much needed critical self-examination James Baldwin (1988) insisted our nation has yet to undertake.

4 This position also skirts the whole issue of who is listened to and who can be heard. Oppositional voices of reason have long been dismissed by the people that are most threatened by them. Not only have white men (myself included) privileged rational thinking within our society, but we have also narrowed the forms of discourse and kinds of arguments we are able to hear as rational. Thus, even the measured, deliberate, unwavering testimony of Anita Hill was dismissed by many (white, male) Americans as irrational rhetoric.

5 In some ways, the model also slights teachers and students. Theorists provide an "intellectual framework [that] will be used to guide the teacher and, in turn, the student" (Oliver & Shaver, 1974, p. 59), teacher-technicians consume and disseminate the basic information (in this case, the PPD process), and students acquire a "filter". Such a perspective is surprising in a proposal that draws so heavily on the Problems of Democracy course, developed by progressive educators during the peak of Dewey's influence.

6 I would like to thank Jeffrey J. Kuzmic and Leslie R. Bloom for their thoughtful reviews and useful comments on an early draft of this response.

References


Rejoinder to Houser

Walter C. Parker
William Zumeta
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We readily agree that deliberation is not all there is to civic life and that civic life is not all there is to living. We regret if we implied otherwise. Also, by proposing that high school students be taught a powerful method of identifying and framing social problems and deciding what to do about them, we do not mean that they not be taught anything else. Our proposal concerns just one narrow slice of the school curriculum.

We find much of Professor Houser’s response curiously romantic and somewhat ahistorical. It raises important questions, however, to which we respond below.

1. Q. Does rationality privilege some aspects of being over others?
   A. Thankfully, it does. In the realm of deciding public policy, it privileges reason, inquiry, dissent and consent, evidence, and an openness to critical argument and learning from experience. In some realms of life, rationality is not so important or even relevant; but in democratic governance it is essential. Houser conflates rationality and tyranny, a mistake Jürgen Habermas discusses in his new collection, A Berlin Republic (1997).

2. Q. Is a rational approach to public problem solving “paternalistic” and “assimilationist”?
   A. Not necessarily. Tools can be used for any purpose, of course. Even rational deliberation can be put to evil ends. Let’s not forget, however, that oppressed peoples in democracies have wielded rational argument as their/our most powerful weapon against tradition. Martin Luther King, Jr., wasn’t merely dreaming in his March on Washington address any more than Rosa Parks was merely tired that day on the bus. Both deployed principled reasoning (as did the women meeting at Seneca Falls, as does the gay-lesbian rights movement today), arguing and behaving as if the guarantees of the Declaration and the Constitution extend to everyone. King invoked one rational principle after another (human rights, the rule of law, egalitarianism, justice, non-violent resistance) and measured the success of the movement against these norms.

3. Q. Is deliberation the most important among the many important activities of democratic self-government?
A. Arguably, yes. Why? Self-government is a political activity involving conflict over alternatives when a policy that will be binding on all must be decided. Deliberation specifies an approach: together working to understand the situation so that one's understanding of the problem has diverse viewpoints (pluralism) built right into it. And, together forging a decision. Talking with one another about shared problems, then, is key to creating the public sphere and getting to right action. Another reason why deliberation wins the prize is still more pragmatic: It is preferable to the available alternatives. We could delegate decision making entirely to representatives, on the one hand, or engage in direct voting on the other. In the former, citizens are reduced to spectators; in the latter, they exercise power without having had the opportunity to think with others about the power they are exercising.

4. Q. When teaching a more rigorous (demanding; multifaceted) problem-solving tool, such as PPD, is it useful to scaffold students into competence?
   A. Of course. Why? As Vygotsky has helped us understand (Mind and Society, 1978), appropriating valued cultural tools is not easy for the young. More experienced tool users (e.g., adults) should provide assistance, challenging novices with high expectations yet working within their zones of proximal development. Professor Houser mistakes a scaffold for a linear, rigid, mechanistic algorithm. In so doing, he shies from bonafide instruction and invokes the kind of Deweyism that Dewey himself repudiated in Experience and Education (1938). As we said, “We recommend scaffolding students into the framework, beginning with the linear approach then gradually letting go of the linearity of the model and, perhaps, if real skill in deploying the model is developed, of the model itself.”

5. Q. Is education for deliberation necessary to “save us from ourselves?”
   A. To a significant extent, yes. Why? “History” is the shortest answer. Here’s a longer one: Rigorous deliberation requires us to place our attention on more dimensions of a social problem and to give both voice and credence to a greater number and diversity of perspectives on that problem than we might otherwise, by custom and prejudice, be inclined to do. It requires us to be more thoughtful about the nature of the public and its problems and about who benefits and who suffers from policy options under consideration. This is a tall order, hence the need for a scaffold. But it is worth the trouble because it empowers citizens in basic ways and, through them, their communities. Recalling too many lynch mobs, pogroms, and demagogues, we are not inclined to wax romantic about what “the people” do without deliberation.
The Struggle for Democracy in South Africa: Race, History and Education

David W. Hursh
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I recently returned from the Republic of South Africa overwhelmed that the country confronts both vast possibilities and vast limitations in not only “reinventing a continent” (author Andre Brink’s term) but reinventing democracy, race, politics, and education. Examining those possibilities and limitations will tell us something about the future of not only South Africa but all of us.

The end of apartheid and the implementation of majority rule and democracy in South Africa comes at a particular juncture in history. First, and not accidentally, the overthrow of apartheid came when South Africa, because of the collapse of the Soviet Union, was no longer significant as part of the struggle between the capitalist first world and communist second world. The U.S. could no longer use fear of communism as a rationale to prop up a white minority government. Second, efforts to reduce the extreme economic disparities come at a time when South Africa’s control over its economic future has been subverted by transnational corporations and international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. Further, South Africa’s economic significance has declined as Asia’s has increased. Third, the end of racial segregation comes at a time when the notion of race itself is increasingly problematic. It is increasingly recognized (at least by academics) that race does not have biological validity but is socially constructed and changes over time. Even so, race has material and historical consequences that cannot be avoided. The conjunction of these events makes it possible for South Africa to both create new economic and social processes while, at the same time, makes the possibility of doing so more difficult and complex.

Race As A Contested Social Construct; Race As A Material And Historical Reality

David Roediger, in *Towards the Abolition of Whiteness*, recounts the joke making the rounds among African-American scholars regarding “the distance between academic trends in writing about race and life in the ‘real world’... ‘I have noticed’, the joke laments, ‘that my research demonstrating that race is merely a social and ideological
construction helps little in getting taxis to pick me up late at night” (1994, p. 1). While academics may be studying race as a social construction, much of the world acts towards race as a biological and historical fact.

This contradiction of race as both socially constructed and biologically based poses a particular conundrum for South Africa where the political construction of race has been used to further inequality. I observed South Africans needing both to deny the significance of race as they worked together to create a democracy in which race no longer mattered and to recognize the significance of race if that democracy is to be created. How South Africans talk about race is crucial to analyzing and developing social and educational policies.

South Africans are particularly aware of how race, during apartheid, was used by Whites to divide people and gain power. With the implementation of laws requiring that people live in race designated areas and use race segregated facilities, race became all encompassing. Yet even with (or perhaps because of) the increasing significance given to race, the social, political, and ideological construction of race became more apparent. Creating racial categories and placing individuals within those categories was transparently political and subjective.

Racial categories were created in South Africa not only so that Whites would achieve and maintain political and economic power but to legitimize White rule. While Whites were and are far outnumbered by Blacks, racial classifications were designed to unify Whites and to give the appearance that they constituted the largest group. Whites, no matter whether they arrived from Europe or were descendants of the Dutch, British, French, or even recently arrived from the U.S., were all designated as White. In fact, in the 1960s Japanese business executives were designated “Honorary White”. But Blacks were classified not only as Blacks but as members of particular chiefdoms: Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi etc. (What word we use to describe these subgroups is also politically significant. Many have argued that the use of the word “tribe” is inaccurate and wrongly connotes primitivism. See African Policy Information Center: 1997) This was done to give the appearance that Whites made up the largest group and was intended to help legitimize their rule. (Bam and Visser, 135-137)

Further, it was possible to appeal your classification and people were regularly reclassified. In 1985, for example, thirty-five years after the Population Registration Act was first passed, 1167 individuals were reclassified. Hundreds were reclassified from Black to colored and a few colored became Black. Some Whites became Indian and one Indian white. Roediger writes that on a 1989 visit to South Africa opponents of apartheid referred to the “mixed-race’ category of “colored” as “so-called colored.” Many of the “so-called colored”
insisted they were Black. The arbitrariness of racial classifications was revealed.

Now that the designations have been eliminated many progressive South Africans have understandably been loathe to draw attention to race. The call is for a nonracial South Africa. Consequently ideas we value in the U.S.—such as multiculturalism and identity studies—are more problematic in South Africa. Therefore, South Africans are in a position to promote a new postmodern conception of race, a conception that does not essentialize race, does not portray individuals as biologically racially determined or a member of a homogeneous racial group, but instead recognizes race within an historical, economic, and political context. One example of how they (and we) might accomplish this is by examining the way in which the history of political struggle in general and apartheid in particular is portrayed in school history and social studies classes.

**Teaching History:**

**Democracy Triumphant Or Democracy Struggled Over?**

At the University of the Western Cape I visited the Mayibuye Center for History and Culture in South Africa. The Mayibuye Center focuses on all aspects of apartheid, resistance, social life and culture in South Africa. During my visit to the center I was reminded that during the apartheid era everything about the African National Congress (ANC) and the resistance movement was banned. Not only were opposition leaders either murdered, exiled, or incarcerated on Robben Island, but their names and images were banned. Before Nelson Mandela was released from prison neither he nor a photo of him had been seen in public for 24 years. During that time the resistance material was either hidden within the country or kept outside the country in such places as the London based International Defense and Aid Fund. The Mayibuye Center has collected papers, photos, films and other documents from those who participated in the resistance, including the archives from the International Defense and Aid Fund.

The past governmental control over information made it easier for Whites during apartheid to neither recognize nor question the existence of racism and oppression. Andre Brink, White South African activist and author (*Reinventing a Continent; A Dry, White Season*), has said that as a child he was unaware of the oppression of apartheid and only became aware of it as a graduate student studying in Paris.

Now that the previously banned materials have been collected and are available, now that the history of apartheid can be told, the question becomes: Will it? And will it be told in schools?

Shelly Greybe and Cynthia Kros, faculty at the University of the Witswatersrand and of the History Curriculum Research Project, write
that while the previously absent players in the South African past have been legally reinstated into the story, problems remain. "The most worrying broad trend," they write "is a revision of the historical narrative which leaves out pain, conflict or even interaction between different groups of people." The danger is that rather than a history that helps us understand the struggle for democracy, we get a history in which democracy has triumphed and "the struggle for a just society is over" (24).

We face, of course, the same issue in the U.S. The Civil Rights Movement is often presented as if the struggle for a just society is over and students merely need to add a few Blacks to the pantheon of Great White Men. Missing is the political struggle in which women, the poor, and people of color engaged to win what rights they have and the ongoing struggle to keep and expand those rights.

This literally "papering over" of past and current political conflicts can be clearly seen in the representative accounts of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott. Herb Kohl (1991) analyzes how children's books (and I would add the media in general) about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott typically mis-portray the boycott in particular and the civil rights movement in general as the result of spontaneous individual action rather than the collective activity of a group or organization. The typical narrative is that one day a tired Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat, was arrested, therefore galvanizing the community into boycotting the public buses. What students don't learn, and few people know, is that her arrest that day was not her entry into the civil rights movement. Parks was active in the local chapter of the NAACP for many years and, at the time, was secretary. She had worked with E.D. Nixon, a long-time union and civil rights leader, and had attended organizational meetings at the Highlander Folk Center in Tennessee, an educational center working to desegregate the South.

Nor was this Parks' first resistance to Jim Crow laws nor the first time that civil rights leaders considered a boycott. Parks had refused to give up her seat on previous occasions but was only removed from the bus and not arrested. Others besides Parks had been arrested but it was only with the arrest of Parks that the civil rights community felt they had a person strong enough to weather the abuse they would receive from the White community.

Kohl argues that the predominant description of Parks as an individual hero, besides being historically inadequate, promotes social passivity in students by presenting social change as the consequence of individual heroism rather than "a community effort to overthrow injustice" (13). While not every child can imagine her or himself to be a Rosa Parks, "everyone can imagine her or himself as a participant in
a boycott" (13). And every child can imagine her or himself as part of
a community working for social change.

Students in both South Africa and the U.S. are unlikely to learn
of the struggles by people of color for equality. South African social
studies educators Bam and Vissar write that “to date [1997] the text-
books most widely in use continue to be based on Afrikaaner [Dutch]
Nationalist and British Imperialist versions of South Africa’s past” (30).
South African history has typically been taught so that Europeans play
the central role as agents of change and development. “Others are
included only when whites come into contact with them. They ap-
pear as objects for physical description, as part of the natural land-
scape, as perpetrators of evil, or as a passive labor force” (17).

John Wills (1994), in writing about Native Americans as repre-
dented in U.S. classrooms, concludes that the dominant stereotype of
buffalo-hunting Plains Indians persists because Native Americans are
primarily included in the curriculum as part of the story of westward
expansion. Native Americans are represented as marginal or non-
existent in the remainder of the narrative of U.S. history. Students do
not come to know the diversity of Native American cultures nor un-
derstand the ongoing history of a people separate from their relations
to the Whites. Native Americans only appear on the historical stage in
relation to Whites.

**Possibilities For Inclusive Histories**

What are the possibilities of creating an inclusive history in South
African schools? My first impression is that the possibilities seem dis-
mal. While legal educational segregation has ended, segregation per-
sists through housing patterns. The students in most rural and “infor-
mal settlement” schools are Black and poor. Most of these schools lack
electricity and running water. Education remains separate and unequal.

But in opposition to these dismal conditions, the educators, his-
torians and community organizers I met optimistically and creatively
sought solutions by combining organizational resources. These ap-
proaches typically required more work but not more money. For ex-
ample, I met with two political science professors who had developed
an introductory course that required students to commit forty hours
per semester interning in a community based organization. The pro-
fessors were careful to design the program so that the students had to
carry out a project that made a difference to the organization. Some
students, for example, developed a handbook on rural women’s rights,
created a cultural center, and developed and disseminated informa-
tion on AIDS. (Lawrence and Slembruck, 1998)

If South Africans are to develop an inclusive history that sup-
ports the struggle for democracy, teachers and other educators need
to combine their resources on which to build. Andor Skotnes (1995), in summarizing recent efforts to develop an inclusive South African history, reports ways in which teachers and museum curators have worked to connect history to the people.

Skotnes depicts the District Six Museum, which I visited, that borders the edge of what was once a culturally pluralistic (perhaps leftist), predominantly colored neighborhood. In 1966 the apartheid government bulldozed every building to rubble and forced residents to relocate in segregated “population areas”. The museum is dedicated to preserving the history of the neighborhood including its destruction and providing resources to educators. Educators could contribute to the museum by preserving the history of District Six by interviewing former residents and collecting historical artifacts.

The Mayibuye Center, which I described earlier, has prepared numerous resources to be used by others and exhibits to be shown elsewhere. One compelling exhibit that Skotnes describes juxtaposes the actual government documents on the evictions of non-Whites to populations areas, as in District Six, with the videotaped and printed testimony of those removed. Skotnes is currently involved in creating an international ANC Oral History Project.

**Postmodern Histories, Post-Colonial Politics**

South Africans confront the possibility of reinventing race, democracy, and education. They do so within the constraints of increasing economic inequality and an unfavorable global economy. But these constraints pale next to what they’ve already overcome: apartheid.

South Africans, then, can lead us in sorting out the meaning of race when we recognize that while race is socially constructed, it has real consequences. Jon Cruz situates the social construction of race and identity within particular historical and economic conditions.

It is also that context that presents us with a window of opportunity in which to rethink and rework new social possibilities for a greater social contract, one that builds from multiculturalism toward substantial egalitarianism and political protections for cultural, racial, gender, and sexual differences. (Cruz, 1996, p. 37)

History, like race, is socially constructed. There is no one historical narrative to be developed and told. Rather, there are numerous and contested histories as different narratives are developed based on different perspectives. The story of the U.S. civil rights movement depends on whether we emphasize heroic individualism or political organization. The story of South Africa depends on whether or not we
want to examine the complexities of race, class, and gender or are satisfied that the issues of difference have been resolved.

Given the socially constructed and contested nature of history, it becomes possible and imperative for everyone to enter the historical process and debates. History cannot be left to the academic or political elite. No one should privilege particular historical stories or narratives as the narrative; anyone can contribute to historical understanding. The examples of the District Six Museum and the Mayibuye Center demonstrate the possibility and need for everyone to enter the historical process.

Not only can we all be historians, we can, as Kohl reminds us, all be social activists. South African journalist Hein Marais asks “what kind of nation do we want to build?” (Marais, 245). In a country where inequality has worsened under the new government, everyone will need to be involved in building the new nation. While democracy has come to South Africa, equality has not. (Marx, 272)

South Africans face the possibility, and daunting task, of reinventing race, democracy and education. As they do, they will also teach us.

References
One apparent by-product of the 1980s call for more history in American schools has been a startling burst of scholarly research, in the current decade, into what is actually involved in teaching and learning the subject. Whether such research ought to have preceded, rather than accompanied or followed, attempts to reform the curriculum (Thornton, 1990), or to what extent such a trend in scholarly inquiry might have developed irrespective of the reform movement may be unanswerable questions. What is clear is that the situation has changed dramatically from as recently as a dozen years ago, when an authoritative review of the research could state that, at least on this side of the Atlantic, “very little” sustained descriptive work on the teaching and learning of history had been undertaken (Downey & Levstik, 1988).

What has been true for the field as a whole has been especially true for the teaching and learning of history at the elementary level (Levstik, 1986). For the early elementary years, at least, it is easy to explain the paucity of research. The expanding environments model for social studies, the prevailing curriculum pattern in American public schools for most of this century, did not emphasize the systematic study of the far away and long ago (Hanna, 1934; Parker, 1991). True, vestiges of earlier curriculum patterns, particularly attention to national holidays and individuals associated therewith, seem to have survived in many early elementary classrooms (American Historical Association, 1909; Thevenet, 1994). But until recently, researchers intent on inquiring into the teaching and learning of history at the early elementary level in any sustained or systematic manner would have experienced considerable difficulty in locating such activity to study. Moreover, researchers who might have undertaken such inquiry have received little support or encouragement from their respective scholarly communities to do so (see, for instance, Thacher, 1965). At the upper elementary level, the lack of attention is somewhat more difficult to explain. Despite Paul Hanna’s original emphasis on understanding the present, the expanding environments model in practice has usually included explicit attention to state history in the 4th grade, the nation’s past in the 5th grade, and a variety of historical and cross-
cultural topics in the 6th grade. Professional and institutional research priorities, rather than the absence of suitable raw material, may account for the dearth of descriptive studies at this level. In any event, the teaching and learning of history in elementary school is being ignored no longer.

For those who have participated in, or followed closely, what has been characterized as an explosion of new research in this area (Seixas, in Barton et al., 1996), the volume under consideration may come as a disappointment. Less comprehensive than its broad title would suggest, *Teaching and Learning History in Elementary Schools* is actually a compilation of studies on fifth-grade teachers and students completed at the turn of the decade. Longtime readers of this journal will already be familiar with much of the material (Brophy, 1992; Brophy, VanSledright, & Bredin, 1992; VanSledright & Grant, 1994). As the authors frequently note, their findings are generally consistent with what other active researchers in the field, including Keith Barton and Linda Levstik in Kentucky and Isabel Beck and Margaret McKeown in the Pittsburgh area, have reported. Relatively little new ground is explored. Moreover, relatively little attempt is made at synthesis, with respect to either the authors' own work or to that of others. At the same time, for those just beginning to explore the terrain, the current volume serves as a potentially useful introduction to the literature, methodology, and range of issues of interest to current educational researchers.

Introductory reviews of the pertinent literatures and a concluding chapter on policy implications aside, the volume consists of two major sections. Case studies of three teachers are identified in terms of the typology advanced by Ron Evans (1989). Mary Lake is characterized as a storyteller, Ramona Palmer as a scientific historian, and Sara Atkinson as a reformer. The authors acknowledge that, alternatively, all three might justifiably be placed in the fifth of Evans' categories (eclectic), and indeed, the reader is often struck more by the teachers' similarities than their differences. All, for instance, demonstrate a variety of pedagogical strategies, incorporate the use of trade books and/or integrate their social studies work with the language arts curriculum, and utilize alternative forms of assessment. In all three cases, the teachers' theoretical ideals are significantly affected by personal and institutional constraints, including school and district curriculum mandates.

The elementary social studies curriculum in all three schools is the typical expanding environments sequence, and all three teachers are expected to offer the standard survey treatment of American history. Although their students are exposed to some state history the preceding year, the fifth grade is the students' first sustained experience of studying history. The authors provide a detailed account of a
three- to five-week teaching unit in each of the three classrooms: in the case of Mary Lake, a unit on exploration and the founding of colonies; in the others, a unit on the American Revolution and the Constitution.

While pointing out potential criticisms of each of the three teachers, the authors emphasize that none of the three should be seen as superior to the others. There are trade-offs, the authors argue, in each of the three approaches. While the reader is encouraged to contrast the three approaches, and reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of each, the authors continually point to an even greater contrast—that between all three teachers and the putatively common unreflective dispenser of discrete facts. All of these teachers, then, in the terms of Wineburg and Wilson (1988), are to be seen as models of wisdom, especially to the extent that each has a clear sense of purpose and selects historical content judiciously as a means toward accomplishing such purposes.

As a whole, the three case studies will be of interest to a wide audience—probably more so than the “learning” section of the book considered below. The three teacher portraits may be of particular interest to prospective and practicing elementary teachers—who, in the writer’s experience, are often affected much more deeply by person-centered case studies and narrative accounts than abstract or decontextualized prescriptions (see especially, Edinger & Fins, 1998; Jorgensen, 1993).

The second major component of Teaching and Learning History represents the results of a year-long study involving Mary Lake’s students. The authors collected K-W-L (already Know, Want to learn, Learned) data from all the fifth graders, before and after each of the teacher’s six units. In addition, ten students were individually interviewed and asked a series of more specific questions—again, before and after each of the six units. The authors were particularly interested in understanding what prior knowledge the students brought with them to the study of history and what misconceptions the students held before and after pertinent classroom instruction. The authors provide summaries of the K-W-L data, as well as sample student responses for each question they posed in the individual interviews. What emerges from the study is an unusually complete picture of what a perhaps-typical group of fifth graders learn in a year of social studies instruction, and how that compares to their baseline knowledge.

Of all the student responses, those connected with the teacher’s first unit (the nature of history and work of historians) are perhaps the most revealing and most suggestive in terms of implications for teachers. We see evidence that, initially at least, these students see history as “out there,” rather than something of which their own lives are a part—
much as the secondary students in Thomas Holt’s *Thinking Historically* (Holt, 1990). Students in the study, both before and after, tended to perceive history as a collection of disconnected facts, and while generally positive about what they were learning, were often unable to articulate any reasons for why they might be studying it.

The authors state a desire to focus on “qualitative aspects of the students’ responses that provided clues to their underlying historical conceptions” rather than percentages of right answers. Much of the reported data, however, as well as much of the author’s discussion, does tend to focus on specific historical information the students did or did not learn. We learn at some length, for instance, that students confused the work of historians and that of archaeologists; that students had difficulty, even after relevant instruction, in understanding the lifestyle of a nomadic people; that again, even after relevant instruction, students did not know about reservations for Native Americans.

In addition to providing representative student responses to specific questions, the authors make some attempt to discern in their data more general patterns of historical cognition. Accordingly, they note in a number of places, first of all, that students tend to focus on the concrete, and to experience difficulty with abstractions. The rivalry between European nation-states in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for overseas empires, for example, is understood in terms of a competition among individual monarchs. The authors note in passing students’ tendency to compress historical events spanning one or more centuries (e.g., the voyages of Columbus and the landing of the Pilgrims) into a shorter time span. In somewhat similar fashion, students tended to visualize geographic expanses on a much smaller scale, imagining the early American colonies, even in pre-Revolutionary times, in terms of one or more stockades. In general, students tended to overgeneralize from specific instances, imagining, for example, that events reported in a trade book as happening to one Pilgrim girl were characteristic of children in the American colonies as a whole. Many cases of misunderstanding both before and after instruction, took the form of conflating two parallel but separate events, for example, the American Revolution and the French and Indian War. These and other generalizations, however, are widely scattered and do not receive the authors’ sustained attention where they do occur. Much as in the stereotypical parade-of-facts approach to teaching history, so in this volume, the larger ideas are too often obscured or lost amidst a welter of specific data.

Participants in a 1995 CUFA symposium (Barton et al., 1996) on the relationship between research and curriculum policy expressed great disappointment that educational decision-makers in the area of history were not paying sufficient heed to available research in for-
mulating policy. Since one of the authors of the volume in question was among those who voiced this concern, the final chapter on implications for curriculum and instruction may be particularly worthy of attention. Among these implications and recommendations are the following: (1) fifth-graders appear eager and cognitively ready to engage in the chronological study of history, provided it is not approached in an overly abstract manner; (2) to comprehend American history more fully, fifth-graders need more background knowledge related to early modern Europe, in particular, and the development of social and economic institutions in general; (3) the study of state history in the fourth grade may be something of a handicap as preparation for the study of the nation's past; (4) to prevent historical misconceptions, teachers and curriculum planners need to be judicious in their use of trade books, including historical fiction, in the social studies curriculum.

One theme that emerges in the case studies of teachers which the authors do not translate explicitly into policy recommendations is the pressure of time. On more than one occasion the authors note the difficulty of doing justice to American history in a single year. This would seem to be a powerful argument for a suggestion made later, almost in passing, that the systematic study of U.S. history begin in the fourth grade and continue into fifth. Unfortunately, this suggestion (much like others) is buried in a discursive passage on the trade-offs involved in studying state history, and no attempt is made to link the suggestion with earlier concerns regarding the pressure of time.

This is but one example of an issue that participants in the symposium cited above do not sufficiently acknowledge. If in fact policymakers do not pay sufficient heed to the conclusions of educational researchers, it is not entirely the fault of the policy-makers. Researchers must bear some responsibility for communicating their recommendations in a form that is clear, direct, and easily accessible to the reader.

References


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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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