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Editorial

Since the first issue of Theory and Research in Social Education under my editorship, we have published a total of 20 articles. Of these, two were reviews of research, five were arguments, two were historiographies, four were surveys and four others were reports of interviews, observations, or case studies. In addition, we have published four reactions by members of our profession to the work of their peers, and nine book reviews. As you can see, we have presented a variety of different types of research and/or positions in the journal. Notable by their absence, however, have been reports of ethnographic research—especially descriptions of what is happening in K-12 social studies classrooms across the nation. We'd very much like to publish the results of such research, but we have not received manuscripts reporting on studies of this nature. Accordingly, we would like to extend a special invitation to our readership to send us accounts of ethnographic research that they have completed.

In this issue of TRSE, we present a critical assessment by Martin Booth of the University of Cambridge, of the new National History Curriculum that has recently been introduced in England. Readers should find some interesting parallels to what is happening in the United States. We also include an article on the "considerateness" of fifth-grade social studies texts, a challenging piece on the kind of history the author thinks is appropriate for young children, and a further reaction to James Leming's article on the "two cultures" thesis that was published in Volume XX(3) of the journal. Three provocative essay reviews of recently published books that deal with our field round out the offerings presented.

This issue, we think, is a good one. We hope you enjoy it.

Jack R. Fraenkel
May, 1993
Dear Dr. Marker,

I have read Dr. Ladson-Billings' review with much interest. I would have thought that *The Disuniting of America* had made abundantly clear my condemnation of the deeply inbred racism of American society and my belief that "the burden to make this a unified country lies as much with the complacent majority as with the sullen and resentful minorities" (p. 19 in the Norton edition). Nor do I for a moment regard the cult of ethnicity as a black invention or monopoly. But the theory that black Americans are part of African rather than of American culture does seem to me quite artificial and inauthentic—and defensible only on racist grounds.

I thank you for the invitation to write a long response, but at the moment, I am too busy to take on anything more.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.
STUDENTS' HISTORICAL THINKING AND THE NATIONAL HISTORY CURRICULUM IN ENGLAND1

Martin Booth
University of Cambridge

Abstract

England's new, centrally imposed National History Curriculum was introduced into state-maintained schools in September, 1991. The curriculum is based on a linear theory of cognitive development and on Bruner's conception of cognitive development and a spiral curriculum. This notion of progression in historical thinking is written into attainment targets (assessment objectives) which, with their associated statements of attainment, serve as criteria for measuring student thinking throughout the school years.

In this discussion, I first examine the National History Curriculum critically, by noting that such a mechanistic model, with its supposedly clear-cut description of progression in historical thinking, may have little to do with the perceptions of teachers, the realities of the classroom, and the findings of research on students' historical understanding. I then measure the theory, content, and prescriptions of the National History Curriculum against the research literature, and conclude that these assessment programs may lead to assessment-led teaching. This in turn could result in a lowering of teacher expectations of student potential for genuine historical thinking. I conclude by suggesting an alternative method for assessing students' historical thinking.

Introduction

In 1988, the British Parliament passed one of its most far-reaching pieces of educational legislation, the Education Reform Act.

1This article was presented first as a paper at the American Education Research Association Conference in San Francisco, April, 1992.
This act transformed the educational scene in England and Wales (Northern Ireland and Scotland have their own separate systems) by undermining the power of the local county and metropolitan education authorities (the LEAs), which gave schools control of their management and budgets, and guaranteed parents greater choice of schools as well as feedback on standards. Of all the act’s clauses, those which laid down the framework for a centralized, national curriculum represented perhaps the most significant change (Bash & Coulby, 1989). For the first time in the history of education in Britain, government would determine the aims, objectives, and content of the curriculum in education, and also decide the method for assessing, recording, and reporting achievement levels for all students aged 5 through 16 in state schools. The British government determined that the compulsory curriculum would consist of 10 subjects—three core (mathematics, English and science); and seven further subjects (foundation subjects), including geography and history—an arbitrary decision which had little or no justification (White, 1988).

The National History Curriculum for England—Background

The History Working Group, which the Secretary of State personally selected to draw up proposals for the National History Curriculum for England, took approximately a year and a half to produce its final report. The format of this report was heavily circumscribed by a centrally imposed framework which proposed programs of study for each of four key stages: key stage I, covering the 5 to 7 age group; key stage II, the 7 to 11 age group; key stage III, the 11 to 14 age group; and key stage IV, the 14 to 16 age group. To this, the Secretary of State added his own prescriptions for the history curriculum.

The Secretary maintained first that a substantial proportion of the content requirements should focus on British history. “The programs of study should have at their core the history of Britain, the record of its past, and in particular, its political, constitutional, and cultural heritage” (DES, 1990). In his view, the programs should also “take account of Britain’s evolution and its changing role as a European, Commonwealth, and world power, influencing and being influenced by ideas, movements, and events elsewhere in the world,” as well as provide a study of classical civilizations. Overall, “they should help students to acquire and develop a historical approach based on objective analysis of evidence.” They should also afford possibilities

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2 A separate Working Group was established to draw up proposals for Wales. Members worked closely with the Working Group for England and within the same centrally imposed framework. The final Statutory Order for Wales is very similar in structure and design to the Order for England. The emphasis of the Programs of Study for Wales is on Welsh history (DES, 1991b).
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for cross-curricular work; for example, the discussion of equal opportunities and multicultural issues, environmental education, industrial and economic awareness, citizenship and the skills of communication and problem solving, as well as study and thinking skills. The History Working Group based its own content selection on Bruner's conception of the spiral curriculum (Bruner, 1960), which posited that students would readdress concepts, themes, topics, and skills at a deeper level when they were older (DES, 1990).

The working group was also given an assessment framework within which achievement and progress within the subject would be measured. Attainment targets were created, accompanied by 10 hierarchical statements of attainment, against which the student's level of attainment is measured. The attainment targets and their associated statements of attainment formed "the backbone of the National Curriculum," that which creates standards, promotes progress, and governs assessment, recording, and reporting on achievement levels. Under the curriculum's design, reporting to parents would occur annually and it would be conducted publicly on a nationwide basis at the end of each key stage. Schools would necessarily publish their results for comparison.

The government-appointed Task Group on Assessment and Testing (TGAT) that established this framework envisaged a linear progression through the levels in all 10 subjects. In its estimation, the average student would achieve level two at the end of key stage I (age 7); level four at the end of key stage II (age 11); level six at the end of key stage III (age 14); and level seven at the end of key stage IV (age 16) (TGAT, 1988).

Two major conceptions about the nature and development of children's historical thinking therefore underpin the report of the History Working Group and the National History Curriculum. The first is one confirmed by common sense alone—although research supports this belief—that children's understanding of concepts and skills can be deepened by revisiting the same themes, the same topics, and the same skill areas (Booth, 1979; Shemilt, 1980). The second is more complex and certainly more contentious: the notion that children's historical thinking develops uniformly and progressively through a series of attainment targets and that the nature of this progression can be detailed in a hierarchy of 10 statements accompanying each attainment target. This discussion critically examines the National History Curriculum by focusing on the latter conception of children's historical thinking.
A Criticism of the National History Curriculum

There are three attainment targets (AT) included in the National History Curriculum, each associated with a statement of attainment. The first attainment target (AT1) is entitled “Knowledge and Understanding of History.” It focuses on “development of the ability to describe and explain historical change and cause, and analyze different features of historical situations.” Clearly, this objective is concerned chiefly with the products of historical study. The statements of attainment range from simple storytelling (level one, age 5 to 6: “Place in sequence events in a story about the past,”) to more complex understandings of change (level five, ages 12 to 13: “Distinguish between different types of change,” and level ten, age 16: “Show an understanding of the issues involved in describing, analyzing and explaining complex historical issues”).

The second target (AT2) deals with “the development of the ability to understand interpretations in history.” Thus, at level one, students should “understand that stories may be about real people or fictional people.” At level five, they should “recognize that interpretations of the past, including popular accounts, may differ from what is known to have happened; and at level ten, they should “show an understanding of the issues involved in trying to make history as objective as possible.”

The third attainment target (AT3) is entitled, “The Use of Historical Sources.” It examines the way in which one may “acquire evidence from historical sources, and form judgments about their reliability and value.” At level one, students should be able to “communicate information acquired from a historical source.” Level five asks them to “comment on the usefulness of a historical source by reference to its content as evidence for a particular inquiry,” and level 10 requires that they “explain the problematic nature of historical evidence, showing an awareness that judgments based on historical sources may well be provisional.”

One might wonder about the rationale for choosing these particular attainment targets and their associated statements of attainment. The former clearly reflect a concern of history educators for at least 20 years—teaching the structure of a subject, not merely its content. Bruner's seminal book, The Process of Education (1960), stressed the importance of determining the “most fundamental understanding that can be achieved of the underlying principles that give structure to [the] subject.” It addressed the growing dissatisfaction about the state of history in English schools, voiced by the “New History” movement—or so it was called in the 1970s—as did Bloom’s taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, 1956; Krathwohl, 1964), adopted by history educators with the publication of Coltham and Fines'
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Educational Objectives for the Study of History: A Suggested Framework in 1971. This dissatisfaction achieved national recognition when the government-funded curriculum and assessment body, the Schools Council (now replaced by the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council), launched a history curriculum development project in 1972.

The Schools Council History 13-16 Project (SHP) was formed to develop a new history curriculum for the 13 to 16 age group. It took as its starting point the nature of history and the needs of the child. The first unit of teaching materials that it published was entitled "What is history?" Its subsequent publications were all based on a view that emphasized active student involvement with a range of historical source materials and the importance of key historical concepts such as change, continuity, and causation, as well as the need for fieldwork and for the student to encounter the various ways in which the past can be studied (Schools Council, 1976). Such blind adoption of the Brunerian and Bloomian approach to curriculum development ignored Bruner's subsequent modification of his position and his later concern with the nature of a child's understanding rather than the structural characteristics of subject matter (Bruner, 1966).

SHP has had immense influence in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Approximately 30 percent of all secondary schools that matriculate students for national history examinations at the age of 16 and above now follow the SHP curriculum in grades 10 and 11, and their students take the public examination (the General Certificate of Secondary Education), which assesses their achievement, at the age of 16. Few schools in the country, if any, have not been influenced in some way by the project's approach and philosophy. Active learning, with role play and the use of source materials, has become commonplace in many schools. Indeed, the project's success prompted some to argue that child-centered learning in history had gone too far, and that content and coverage were being abandoned in favor of a skills-based approach. It was therefore with some relief that history educators greeted the enactment of the National History Curriculum in March, 1991. The three attainment targets which form the framework of the curriculum embraced the concepts and skills which many considered to lie at the heart of historical understanding. They preceded the study units, making it clear that content was second to conceptual understanding and skills acquisition. History, true to its Western tradition, was presented as a debatable, even postmodern subject (Jenkins, 1991). Understanding the past depended on using a wide range of sources as evidence and acknowledging that the "past is a foreign

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3For example, see the newsletter of the Campaign for Real Education, 18 Westlands Grove, Stockton Lane, York Y03 0EF—specifically, the issue which appeared on July 13, 1991.
country" (Hartley, in Lowenthal, 1985) that we can never revisit, only
glimpse from a variety of perspectives.

Difficulties in Using the Attainment Targets

One could argue that the attainment targets spell out crucial
dimensions of the structure of historical understanding. Problems arise,
however, when the National History Curriculum model is used to
assess the development of children's historical thinking. The chair of
the History Working Group acknowledged the fact that the committee
disliked working within the TGAT model of progression and
assessment. Research provided insufficient evidence that an a priori
map of children's historical thinking could be devised in this way, and
the group ultimately relied upon hunch and intuition in drawing up the
hierarchy of its statements of attainment at the 10 levels of each
attainment target. The fact that civil servants subsequently modified
these statements is evidence enough of their arbitrary nature (DES,
1990; DES, 1991a, 1991b). Their defects as a framework for charting the
nature and development of children's thinking in history are manifold.

First, the attainment targets and their associated statements of
attainment do not constitute discrete cognitive skills or concepts. The
demonstration of achievement at any level in AT1 (Knowledge and
Understanding of History) must inevitably involve the use of historical
sources (AT3). How else can a student show the level of understanding
he or she has achieved? The interdependence of the attainment targets
is particularly acute in AT2 (entitled "Interpretations of History"),
which demands knowledge, conceptual understanding, and the ability
to draw upon historical sources.

Second, even though it is possible to focus on a particular
conceptual understanding or skill and ignore other cognitive factors
involved in learning, attainment at a given level does not necessarily
imply ability to perform at a lower level. In other words, many of the
statements stand alone and cannot be part of a hierarchical progression:
The ability to "identify different types of cause and consequence" (level
five(b), AT1), for example, does not necessarily mean that a student can
"suggest reasons why people in the past acted as they did" (level
two(b), AT1); the ability to "demonstrate how historical
interpretations depend on the selection of sources" (level six, AT2) does
not mean that one can always "distinguish between a fact and a point of
view" (level three, AT2); and the ability to "compare the usefulness of
different historical sources as evidence for a particular inquiry" (level
six, AT3) does not necessarily imply that one can "make deductions from
historical sources" (level three, AT3) (DES, 1991). The disjunction
between statements is perhaps most acute in AT2, in which they seem to
commingle a number of quite different skills and understandings. To
understand how histories are constructed, why they may differ, how
societies put them to use, and what skills are required to analyze them demands a variety of cognitive skills. Yet it is difficult, if not impossible, to see any continuum or hierarchical progression in this particular attainment target.

Even if one grants the possibility of some sort of progression in the statement of the other two ATs, the crux of the matter is this: How far can the statements of attainment be used to make valid and reliable assessments of a student's historical thinking? Here, it seems to me, lies the greatest defect in the model of children's historical thinking which the National History Curriculum presents: These statements are content free. They make no demands in terms of addressing particular substantive concepts, analyzing particular documents or sources, asking particular questions, or drawing upon a particular body of knowledge. Assessment of an objective cannot be determined by a simple statement of intent—"make deductions from a source." Context is all important.

Context here can be described as the four dimensions of any assessment situation (THRG, 1991). The first dimension concerns the objective—which concept or skill the test aims to assess. It may be conceptual understanding of causation, for example, or a cognitive skill such as the comprehension or analysis of a written source. The difficulty level, however, will be determined largely by the second dimension: the historical topic and the materials upon which the assessment is based. The topic may be a complex theme such as economic policy in Germany in the 1920s, or it may be a more immediately accessible issue such as the Roman villa in Britain. The materials may consist of a simple question, a longer passage, or a range of pictorial, written, and statistical sources. The third dimension is the response expected from the student: Is he or she to answer in continuous prose? Orally? Is the response to be some more substantial project—a slide/tape sequence, drama presentation, video recording, or a written dissertation? Or does the test consist of multiple choice questions? There is also the dimension concerning the nature of the knowledge and skills the student is expected to bring to the test; for example, if a question focuses on student understanding of the reasons surrounding the United States' entry into World War I, giving the principal facts to be included may simplify the task for the student, more so than if this information had been omitted.

Without these four dimensions, the statements of attainment are of little value in providing a hierarchical framework for assessing the nature and level of children's historical thinking. Two practical examples will make this clear. When I was teaching American history to 17-year old students, we would spend time in the early part of the course studying the text of the American Constitution. I considered that my students were doing well if they could communicate their understanding of some of the principal ideas and information that this
complex and difficult document contains. Yet in National History Curriculum terms, this would place them at level one of AT3: can "communicate information acquired from a historical source," a level which, according to that curriculum, is appropriate to a 5- or 6-year old. Conversely, I could take a class of 9- or 10-year olds to the local folk museum which exhibits, among other things, furniture, toys, and household objects used in Cambridgeshire homes during the 19th century. Our visit could focus on themes such as cooking in Victorian times. We could examine how the kitchen was run, look at objects similar to and different from the ones we use in the kitchen today and perhaps learn something about catering in the 19th century. Here the students would be operating at level six of AT3, where students are able to "compare the usefulness of different historical sources as evidence for a particular inquiry"—a level which, according to the National History Curriculum, they should not reach until the age of 13 or 14.

One could argue, of course, that national tests developed for the end of each key stage will standardize the context for assessment and show teachers the sort of questions, materials, and knowledge expectations that are appropriate to students of different ages. But the standards provided by the test development agencies may not be very helpful in enabling teachers to transfer the format to other periods or topics. Nor will this mitigate the feelings which this model of the development of thinking inevitably generates: the lower the level, the lower the skill or concept; ages and levels are inextricably linked, and we should not be attempting, for example, a level six response with students in key stage II (7- to 11-year olds).

Piagetian-Based Research on Children's Historical Thinking

We are in danger here of returning to a view of historical thinking which Hallam's research promulgated (Hallam, 1966, 1975). Hallam was one of a number of researchers who used the Piagetian framework of cognition to investigate the nature of children's historical thinking (Bassett, 1940; Loughran, 1957; Lodwick, 1958; Case and Collinson, 1962; Stones, 1965, 1967; Bell, 1965; Hughes, 1965; Davies, 1965; McNally, 1970; Stokes, 1970; Rees, 1976). His work, more considerable and extensive than other projects, made a considerable impact at the time, because it seemed to emphasize the difficulties of teaching history to children under the age of 16; and his research was widely reported and commented upon (e.g., Hallam, 1967, 1969a, 1969b,

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4 So far none has been publicized, although the contract for developing key stage I assessment was awarded to the National Foundation for Educational Research and for key stage III to the Northern Examining Agency and the Welsh Joint Education Committee.
Piaget postulates a holistic view of the development of children's thinking; that is, that the adaptation and development of thinking from infancy to adulthood can only be understood in terms of the total system. The system consists of an invariant hierarchy of discrete stages through which the child passes, with the successful negotiation of one stage being the prerequisite for the development of the next. The earliest stage is the sensory motor period, from birth to approximately the age of 2. From the age of 2 to approximately 7, the period of preoperational representation, the child begins to understand the world of symbols. Thought is expressed through language, but it is egocentric and often illogical. Only in the stage of concrete operations (ages 7 to 11 or 12) does the child begin to show evidence of logical and deductive thinking on the basis of immediately available evidence. In the fourth and final stage, formal operations, the child moves into the realm of pure thought. Piaget elaborated on the structure of formal operational thought and arrived at a concept of a complex "mental scaffolding held up by a number of girders...so that the agile subject can move vertically and horizontally from one point to another without reaching impasse" (Inhelder & Piaget, 1958).

Hallam's initial research indicated that the stage of formal operations, which Piaget shows appearing from about the age of 11, begins in the study of history at the mental age of 16.5 years. Although lively and challenging teaching could accelerate the thinking processes of some of the 9- and 10-year old students in his sample, his subsequent research showed that the students aged 13 to 14 remained remarkably unaffected and showed no significant improvement. Students remained firmly entrapped in the stage of concrete operations.

Such conclusions are depressing for history teachers, because they suggest that Bruner's contention "that any subject can be taught in some intellectually honest form to any child at any stage of development" is false as far as the teaching and learning of history are concerned. If the majority of children during the years of compulsory schooling can only reach a level of thinking that is the "means for structuring present reality" (Bruner, 1960), what hope is there for students to understand the past, which can never be revisited, and which is forever a foreign country.

There is good reason, I believe, to reject this view and indeed to resist strongly any model of the development of children's thinking allied tightly to ages and stages, because of the danger of limiting our expectations of what children can do. This danger becomes all the more acute when the curriculum is assessment driven, as it is with the National History Curriculum. We pitch our teaching at the level we have been given, instead of asking, What is the nature of the
understanding my students should gain from this particular historical topic? and How can I translate that idea into the hard currency of classroom practice?

The Nature of Historical Thinking

Piaget's theories of cognition have come under attack both for their overlogical, overrational definition of thinking, and for the methodology upon which they are based (e.g., Flavell, 1963; Watts, 1972; Smedslund, 1977; Brown & Desforges, 1977; Driver, 1978; Siegel & Brainerd, 1978). But Piaget's developmental model is, I would argue, particularly inappropriate for measuring historical thinking. His framework is based on experiments in the natural sciences which demanded natural entailments and the logic of inductive and deductive thinking. I have argued elsewhere (Booth, 1979) that the logic of historical thought is not primarily deductive or inductive. The historian is not moving from a general proposition or "covering law" to an explanation of an event, as Carl Hempel would have us believe (Hempel, 1942, 1959); nor are most historians concerned with inducing an overarching theory to unlock the mysteries of the past. The object of the historian's study, the human past, is incommensurably different from the object of investigation of the natural scientist, and the thinking it engenders is equally different, as Fischer reminds us:

The logic of historical thought is not a formal logic of deductive inference. It is not a symmetrical structure of Aristotelian syllogisms, or Ramean dialects, or Boolean equations. Nor is it precisely an inductive logic, like that of Mills or Keynes or Carnap. It consists neither in inductive reasoning from the particular, nor in deductive reasoning from the general to the particular. Instead, it is a process of adductive reasoning in the simple sense of adducing answers to specific questions, so that a satisfactory "fit" is obtained. The answers may be general or particular, as the questions require. History is, in short, a problem-solving discipline. A historian is someone (anyone) who asks an open-ended question about past events and answers it with selected facts arranged in the form of an explanatory paradigm (Fischer, 1971, p. xv).

Fischer further examines the word adductive in a subsequent footnote and defines it as a combination between "abduction, the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis and induction, the experimental testing of a theory." The word is satisfactory because it avoids any sense of logical conclusiveness or inconclusiveness, and it emphasizes
the drawing together of related events toward a common center and the construction of that imaginative web which is the hallmark of Collingwood's historical thinking (Collingwood, 1946). Others present a model of history which is also essentially pluralistic and concerned with historical discourse as storytelling. Hexter, for example, in a delightful and human example that he calls "the case of the muddy pants" (Hexter, 1972), emphasizes the need for the historian to tell a full, warm-blooded, and human story. Gallie, too, argues that the first task of the historian is to produce a convincing narrative, and that "explanations, causal generalizations subserve this" (Gallie, 1964).

In a recent work, Keith Jenkins presents an approach to history which embraces such views of the past within a postmodern framework (Jenkins, 1991). In his short, polemical book, he distinguishes sharply between the past—all that has happened in time and history—and those stories or discourses of events upon which historians choose to focus, and he argues against the atomistic, skills-based approach that the National History Curriculum advances, in favor of a methodological study of the past:

I have had to argue that the truths of the past elude us; that history is intersubjective and ideologically positioned; that objectivity and being unbiased are chimeras; that empathy is flawed; that originals do not entail anything genuine; that history is, in opposition to being an art or a science, something else—sui generis, a wordly, wordy language game played for real, and where the metaphors of history as science or history as art reflect the distribution of power that put these metaphors into play....I have been concerned to argue for...a positive reflexive scepticism....Such reflexivity ponders over how the discourse one is studying, history, has been written by forces and pressures way beyond its ostensible object of inquiry—the past—forces and pressures that I think can best be understood today by the practices and ideas of postmodernism (Jenkins, 1991, pp. 56-57).

Such arguments emphasize the holistic nature of historical thinking rather than its component parts, and they stress the uniqueness of historical thought. Above all, they place historical thinking in a very different mold from the one cast by those researchers who used the Piagetian framework of cognition to investigate the development of children's historical understanding. I have argued elsewhere (Booth, 1980, 1983) that Hallam and others pursuing similar research have adopted an inappropriate instrument and have used
faulty test instruments. Their findings should be treated with caution, if not skepticism.

More Recent Research on Children's Historical Thinking

Those who have since abandoned the Piagetian framework and begun research on the nature of history and the kinds of thinking it engenders have produced far more optimistic results. My own research (Booth, 1979) includes a longitudinal study on the development of cognitive skills, concepts, and attitudes in 53 students, aged 14 to 16, with a wide range of abilities, studying a modern world history syllabus. A control group of students not studying history but matched for intelligence was used to make comparisons. Over a 17-month period, the history group made marked and significant gains in its scores on the skills, concepts, and attitudes towards problems in history tests, both in comparison with the scores established at the first meeting and with the scores of the control group. Through careful analysis, the test data showed that such improvements resulted more from an attractive syllabus and lively, imaginative teaching methods than from maturation. A favorable attitude towards history, displayed by students at the beginning of the course, remained steady.

I argued, however, that the skills, concepts, and attitudes which I tested are not peculiar to history. A major part of my investigation, in fact, looked at the ability to think "historically," a holistic approach to historical cognition that I defined as a process by which meaning, or potential meaning, is abstracted from a discrete source of evidence and drawn to a common center. Discrete pieces of pictorial and written historical evidence chosen from the context of the course were used to test student capacity for thinking in this adductive, inferential, and creative way. Students were given the materials, and they were asked first to group them into as many or few sets as they wished and then to explain the groupings.

Students approached the task in one of two ways: The first approach looked for obvious and common features; for example, people of the same race shown in a set of four pictures, or the word independence appearing in two quotations. The second approach was based not on immediately observable features but on inferred qualities or ideas. A picture or quotation was seen not from the outside, so to speak, but from the inside, where its potential or immanent meaning could be perceived. The reasons for the grouping were given in explanatory terms. This second form of grouping demonstrated student thinking that was more adventurous, creative, and accurately imaginative—hallmarks of adductive historical thought.

Of the students, 71 percent were able to adduce one or more paradigms of this nature from pictures, but these students experienced
greater difficulty with quotations. Even so, 58 percent formed sets of two or more pieces of source material. Further analysis showed the complexity of their thinking, which was dependent clearly upon accurate, relevant knowledge. Thinking was generated by analytical ability and shaped by appropriate conceptual understanding. Attitudes and interests were also important. The teacher's emphasis on open-ended discussion in the classroom contributed to this ability to think adductively. Her perception of their ability contributed more to their adductive thinking than did their home influences, as measured by a home support questionnaire. Intelligence, as measured by the AH4 test of general intelligence, was less important. Although research showed that the majority of students were capable of thinking in this manner, there was clearly a wide variation in the ease with which it was achieved. One or two students had the ability to structure all 12 pieces of evidence imaginatively, while some could structure only 2. Success depended on the extent to which those factors making up the complexity of this thinking had been developed and brought into play.

My research, therefore, took as its starting point the nature of history and the nature of teaching methods and syllabi which seek to turn such theoretical understanding into the reality of the classroom. I attempted to probe the extent to which students taught in this context were able to evaluate and use historical sources and show their ability to think historically—to adduce a picture of the past based on inference and not bound by the immediate constraints of the history materials with which they were confronted. I concluded that students of this age group are able to think imaginatively and inferentially, despite a wide range of ability. But this can take place only if the teacher's view of historical discourse is flexible and recognizes the variety of ways in which the past is reconstructed. Historical thinking is not simply a matter of deduction and induction. Instead, it draws heavily on imagination as supposal. Equally important, the teaching method should emphasize student inquiry and discussion and the use of a wide range of source materials.

My research admittedly involves a tension between a neopositivist methodology involving extensive use of statistical data and a view of history that leans towards postmodernism; so too does Shemilt's thorough evaluation of a national curriculum development project, SHP, briefly discussed earlier. His data, however, are impressive, as is his optimism about children's capacity for engaging in real historical thought (Shemilt, 1980). The project stresses the nature of history, the use of a wide range of source materials, and active student involvement, elements which Shemilt shows to have a profound impact upon historical conceptualization for adolescents. Comparing the performance of approximately 500 SHP students with the performance of approximately 500 students not using the SHP
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curriculum, Shemilt found that the SHP children consistently outperformed the others in their understanding of key concepts concerned with development in history. "The conceptual superiority of the History 13-16 candidates is significant, consistent and uniform." He goes on to say:

The main observable differences between the two groups of adolescents, those undertaking History 13-16, and those following established courses, are that experimental students seem more accustomed to giving and seeking explanations, see more problems and puzzles in history, proliferate ideas more readily, frequently—if implicitly—arrange these ideas into the germ of what deserves to be called a theory of history, and are generally more bold and vigorous in their thinking (Shemilt, 1980, pp. 13-14).

More recent research has moved even further away from traditional methodologies towards an ethnographic approach. Lee, Dickinson, and Ashby's open-ended exploration of the history classroom shows student capacity, particularly among the less able, to comprehend the strangeness of the past (Dickinson & Lee, 1984). Arguing that "for many teaching purposes cognitive stages are...likely to be at best misleading and unhelpful and at worst rigid and stultifying, leading to a kind of 'stage prejudice'," the researchers worked with small groups of children and recorded their discussions on videotape. In the first published report of these research projects, students received a piece of source material either on Anglo-Saxon oath-helping and the ordeal (establishing the guilt or innocence of an accused on the basis of divine judgment) or on Spartan education. With the first, students were asked: "Why do you think the Anglo-Saxons used oath-helping and the ordeal?" The second asked: "Why do you think the Spartans treated their children the way they did?" Other questions were added as appropriate. When the researchers felt it might be helpful, they left the room.

In a separately reported but similar piece of research (Ashby & Lee, 1987), a group of three students, aged 12 and older, characterized as low ability (all three were receiving help from the Special Needs Department for reading and writing) were given a description of the reign of William the Conqueror from the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, a long and complex document. The students were asked to discuss the document among themselves without teacher intervention and to question its use as a source of evidence for William's reign. At face value, the document was quite unsuitable for children with reading difficulties; yet, left to themselves, the three students and others in related research projects reacted and interacted in ways that demonstrated their capacity to
understand difficult concepts. A transcription of their discussions revealed complex thought processes that are at times muddled, but which ultimately address central conceptual ideas. The conclusion Dickinson and Lee make is worth quoting in full:

Children can and do think effectively in history. Frequently it is not the quality of students' thinking which sets the limit on worthwhile school history, but a failure on the part of some teachers to recognize the complexity of what they are attempting. Moreover, the way to cope with this complexity is not to teach ever more simplified and simple-minded "facts" in an endless round of description and regurgitation, with students classified as "less able" compelled to spend their lessons filling in the blanks in anodyne and mindless sentences. We need sufficient flexibility of method to allow students room to show us what they find problematic and enough imagination to offer work that utilizes those problems and gives students some chance of making progress to understanding. Underestimation of children leads only to pessimism and history as child-minding. Recognition of what children can do licenses realistic optimism, provided only that we start thinking more carefully about what is actually involved in the tasks we ask students to cope with in learning and understanding history (Dickinson & Lee, 1984, p. 151).

Experience of History Teachers in the Classroom

The work of other practitioners reinforces these ideas and helps realize children's potential for exploring complex and abstract ideas in history. Although not research in the strict sense of the word, descriptions of individual classrooms with children and their activities have often been persuasive and telling. The classroom work of John Fines, for instance, has been particularly influential. His exciting and sensitive use of drama and role playing in history teaching has been an inspiration to many because it illustrates ways in which both primary and secondary-age children can learn to construe the past (Fines & Verrier, 1974).

My continuing work in the classroom has led me, too, to see the value of this approach both as a powerful incentive and as a means of generating historical discourse and understanding among students. The following example, while typical of the approach I use, hardly constitutes conclusive proof. I believe, however, that an ethnographic description can provide a real feel for the classroom, and it can offer an insight into materials and methods which motivate students.
A class of 14- to 15-year olds was studying the aftermath of World War I in Europe. The students examined the Versailles treaties, the establishment of the League of Nations, and the political crises that developed after 1919. The Locarno Pacts of 1925 became the focus of the role-playing lesson, which aimed to enable students to understand how these treaties helped both to undermine the standing of the League of Nations and to reestablish Germany as a European nation, without any commitment to respect the Eastern postwar borders. The lesson began in a fairly conventional manner: With the aid of a map of 1919 Europe, we reviewed the years between 1918 and 1925.

The students were then divided into seven delegations representing each of the European countries, including Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, which met at Lake Locarno in 1925. Each delegation was given a briefing sheet that set the context and laid down the aims it hoped to achieve during the negotiations; for example, the German briefing sheet reminded its delegates of their republican form of government, their humiliation at Versailles, and their economic difficulties. Their goals were recognition of Germany by the other states of Europe and especially admittance to the League of Nations; stability for Germany to permit economic recovery; a pledge to secure the Ruhr against invasion; and creation of a settlement which did not preclude the possibility of recovering territory in the East. The Polish delegates received a sheet noting their country’s past history as prey to Eastern and Western powers, and it reminded them that post-1919 Poland had been created at the expense of Germany and Russia. Moreover, Danzig was still not under Polish control, and the dispute with Czechoslovakia over Teschen was unresolved. The Polish aims were to recover all of Teschen and to secure firm alliances to protect Poland against Russia, Czechoslovakia, and Germany.

I then set the scene dramatically, verbally painting a picture of the magnificent setting for the conference, but pointing out that the Polish delegation had complaints about the pâté de foie gras served the night before, and the white wine, a Chablis 1906, that had not been properly chilled (poetic license, but it helped to create the right atmosphere). The first task given the delegates was to prepare a brief press statement explaining why they were not using the machinery of the League of Nations to advance the cause of peace in Europe. The delegations were given 10 minutes to accomplish this, and a spokesperson from each country then presented their case.

The second task concerned actual negotiations between delegations on the basis of the aims given each group. The delegates had a few minutes to develop their strategy before negotiations began. Because of the large size of the class (over 30 students) and the small size of the room, strict rules governed the physical movement of the negotiators. During this part of the role playing, the atmosphere was
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particularly animated. Delegates rushed from table to table, passed notes, and returned to their groups for more instructions. During the formal report, when each delegation revealed what it had negotiated with the other conference members, students exhibited a seriousness that revealed their attentive interest in the overall undertaking. Points of agreement were written on the chalkboard, and a series of agreements emerged that were remarkably similar to the actual treaties—guarantees of the inviolability of the western borders, while Germany was remarkably quiet about Poland and Czechoslovakia. Following this, the class reviewed a summary of the actual Locarno agreements, and each delegation prepared a press statement naming one strength and one weakness of the Locarno treaties from their country’s point of view.

The success of the lesson can be judged partly from the lively, intelligent, and involved response of the students and partly from the highly favorable comments written afterwards. The three comments below are typical of the response:

These type of lessons are much more enjoyable and because I enjoyed it [I] didn't get board [sic] like in a normal lesson. When we learn facts like this its much easier to remember the lesson in which you learnt facts. Lessons like this get more response because everybody is involved.

I think that Monday’s lesson was rather smart. A simulation/role-play lesson is really good for learning facts. Because you have to take on a character you feel as if you know every detail and you are more likely to remember dates, etc., from a lesson like that than putting pen to paper.

I think that this type of lesson is a very good way of learning because it helps you actually realize what/how things actually happened. If we were just given notes it would be hard to remember them but if we all re-enact it then sometimes funny things happen (jokes) and helps remember [sic].

For these students, the crux of the matter lay in their involvement in a problematic situation where they had to argue a case, hopefully score diplomatic points, and gain concessions. The fact that the role-play agreements were so similar to the actual agreements is testimony to the quality of thinking and to the extent the students immersed themselves in the context and roles they had assumed.
The Way Ahead

No Piagetian model of the nature and development of thinking and no National Curriculum graph, with its concern for age-/stage-related criteria and its postulation of linear progress, can possibly incorporate the rich and complex world of children's historical thinking described above. Educators must be released from the limits of rigid frameworks and allowed to embrace possibilities for developing real historical understanding in students. This is not to say, of course, that a 7-year old can necessarily think of history in the same way that a 17-year old can. Language, knowledge, and experience alone may be limiting factors for any age group. Nor is this a rejection of the National History Curriculum in its entirety. The attainment targets and their associated statements of attainment direct us to the varied dimensions of historical thinking and to ways in which different teaching strategies can be adopted to stimulate its development. I am glad, too, that history has been marked out as a separate discipline and not submerged within the framework of a social science curriculum. I am well aware of the arguments from scholars such as Hirst or Phenix that history belongs to a field of knowledge or a realm of meaning (Hirst, 1966; Phenix, 1964). Integration can work well in theory; in practice, it often means that one subject plays the dominant, organizing role, while little attention is paid to the skills and understandings generated by other subjects.

I welcome a document which draws teacher attention to the nature of this discipline and its processes and products. But as a developmental framework for assessing student progress, it is positively harmful. The simplistic notion of development totally ignores the varied contexts in which thinking in history must take place. Its intention of reporting in terms of levels and attainment means tells us nothing about individual achievement in specific contexts. Students can demonstrate great insight and profound understanding in one context, and exhibit extraordinary obtuseness in another. What matters are the nature of the topic, the teaching approach and materials used, the understanding and knowledge the students can bring to bear on the task, and the charisma and skill of the teacher. We should report on these if we want to explore the world of children's historical thinking and to raise our expectations of history teaching and learning. To rely on the National History Curriculum now in force in England and Wales may at the end of the day lower our expectations and force us to ignore what the recent research and the experience of gifted practitioners show.

So, what then is the way ahead? One solution might be to reject any form of evaluation, assessment, and accountability for history teachers, on the grounds that we have no adequate instruments to
measure what students learn in our classrooms; however, this answer is clearly unacceptable when notions of standards and accountability of teachers are high on the education agenda. Another answer might involve a return to methods of assessment concerned with content knowledge only. The tests would be reliable, and they would show in quantifiable form the amount of factual knowledge a student had retained. But this would consign the teaching and learning of history to the Dark Ages again. History classrooms would become dull learning factories, with dictated notes and rote learning the stock and trade of the teacher.

My favored solution would be to reprofessionalize the history teacher by giving him or her the major responsibility for assessing and reporting on the work of students. Certainly, there should be an agreed-upon national framework of objectives and a broad but flexible framework of content which would not demand coverage in the way the present National History Curriculum does. The assessment would instead emphasize creative historical thinking based on a wide range of evidence sources. Students might undertake a variety of assignments to demonstrate their historical understanding through forms such as tape/slide sequences, drama and role playing, pictures, oral presentations, and models, as well as through more conventional, written projects. Teachers would demonstrate that students were undertaking all the assessment objectives in a balanced way, and they would report to the students, parents, and employers by providing a simple profile which might, for example, include a brief statement about progress on each of the objectives listed, and a letter grade of A (outstanding) to E (unacceptable). Any attempt to quantify progress, however, would be avoided; teachers would simply make a subjective assessment as to whether or not they consider the student to be achieving greater conceptual understanding or greater sophistication in the handling of historical sources.

Some regulation of such a loose assessment regime would be necessary. The National Curriculum Council for England and Wales together with the School Examinations and Assessment Council could offer advice as to suitable assignments for particular age groups; and the inspectorate, both local and national, could monitor standards and maintain comparability. Regional committees of teachers, higher education lecturers, inspectors, employers, and parents would meet on a regular basis to compare and comment on practice.

Such a picture is perhaps utopian given the current climate in England and Wales, where central government control of education becomes more obtrusive by the month and criticism of teachers, both by the government and the popular press, more insistent by the day. Unless history teachers can be empowered to take control of their classrooms
and their students' learning, the future of history in schools seems grim and uncertain.

References


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CONSIDERATENESS OF FIFTH-GRADE SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTS

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Abstract
This article describes an investigation which examined the "considerateness" of five recently published fifth-grade social studies textbooks using the following selected elements of considerateness: (1) "readability" level; (2) placement of relevant pictures/illustrations; (3) use of subtitles; and (4) use of words and phrases to connect ideas within and between sentences. The results revealed that the publishers of the analyzed social texts made extensive use of relevant pictures/illustrations and subtitles; however, they rarely used words which connected ideas between and within sentences, and readability level determinations were considered appropriate for these fifth-grade texts in only 8 of 25 analyses. We determined that these textbooks were considerate of the reader when dealing with factors other than those related to connected discourse. Subtitles and graphic aids were numerous, compensating for inconsiderate text. The discussion concludes with an examination of the implications for writing social studies text.

Introduction

Use of the textbook has long been pervasive in social studies education (Banks, 1969; NCSS, 1988; Tyson & Woodward, 1989), strongly affecting teaching methodology and content presentation. Siler noted that "there is little doubt that textbooks will continue to be the main source of content material in American classrooms" (1987, p. 78).

While the textbook has been the traditional mainstay of social studies instruction, just as the basal reader has been the traditional mainstay of reading instruction, social studies educators and researchers who are interested in the effect of text structure on learning have questioned the manner in which content is presented in some of
these textbooks (Woodward, Elliott, & Nagel, 1986; White, 1988). Beck, McKeown, Sinatra, and Loxterman have noted:

The quality of school textbooks has long been of concern to professionals in many areas of educational research and practice. One way this concern has been expressed is in attempts to provide students with “comprehensible” texts which have been manifested traditionally through the use of readability formulas. These formulas are based on simple indices, such as sentence and word length, that correlate with text difficulty but do not account for what makes a text easier or more difficult (1991, p. 253).

One alternate way to determine the instructional value of a textbook is through an examination of its considerateness. Textbook considerateness refers to the clarity with which verbal and nonverbal information is presented. Written discourse is highly considerate if it facilitates communication between a reader and a writer; it is inconsiderate if it inhibits communication. According to Kantor, Anderson, and Armbruster:

Considerate text is clear and straightforward, enabling the reader to gather information efficiently with minimal cognitive effort. Inconsiderate text requires the reader to expend extra cognitive effort in order to compensate for the author’s failure to be cooperative and considerate. An inconsiderate text is not necessarily an incomprehensible one; rather it requires more of the reader’s background knowledge, strategies, time, and effort to comprehend than does a considerate text (1983, p. 62).

Content area considerateness is especially important at the middle and elementary levels. “Subject matter textbooks pose the biggest challenge for young readers being weaned from a diet of simple stories” (Anderson, p. 67).1

While considerateness is ultimately the responsibility of textbook publishers, the production of the textbook is, in fact, the result of a collaborative effort between the publisher and the author. While the reader needs to be adept at using appropriate reading strategies, authors and publishers must cooperate by using a writing style and a presentation format which will maximize comprehension. The publisher must ensure that the information is presented in the most

1Numerous researchers have identified elements of texts which affect considerateness: Crismore, 1983; Langer, 1983; Tierney, Mosenthal, & Kantor, 1984; Singer, 1986.
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effective manner, so that communication between the reader and the author occurs easily. Beck, McKeown, and Gromoll (1989) concluded that many social studies texts inhibit rather than facilitate comprehension. Authors knowledgeable in a discipline but unaware of how to write for an elementary school-age audience, for example, may unintentionally obscure information with a writing style too sophisticated for the intended reader. “Authors and readers have to cooperate in order for the communication to work,” as Kantor, Anderson, and Armbruster (p. 61) have indicated.

Accordingly, this study examined the following elements of considerateness: (1) appropriate level of readability; (2) adequate use of pictures and illustrations; (3) prominent and numerous subtitles; and (4) use of words and phrases that relate ideas explicitly.

**Elements of Considerateness**

**Readability level**

One traditional method of textbook analysis is the application of a readability formula. In spite of the acknowledged difficulty with readability formulas in predicting comprehensibility (Evans, 1987; Estes & Wetmore, 1983), publishers still emphasize readability level to sell textbooks. “In addition, members of school district selection committees have started to include readability as a major criterion by which to evaluate potential new textbooks” (Manzo & Manzo, 1990, p. 84). Nevertheless, “many readability studies continue to demonstrate that there still are considerable mismatches between textbook readability and student’s reading level” (Weiss, 1983, p. 77). Estes and Wetmore state that “comprehensibility depends on the interaction of the cognitive structure of a reader with the conceptual structure of a text as expressed in its surface structure” (1983, p. 39). Most readability techniques are based on syllable and word count and on sentence length. They fail to consider elements such as passage cohesiveness, anaphoric reference, use of connectives, and advance organizers.

One way to lower readability level is to develop text with shorter sentences; however, this may result in less comprehensible text (Armbruster, Osborn, & Davison, 1985; McCabe, 1981; Pearson, 1974). Woodward and Elliott note, “The use of readability formulae that result in inconsiderate content presentation involves short sentences, simple vocabulary, and the exclusion of connectives and references that help make text easier for youngsters to comprehend” (1986, p. 52).

**Pictures/Illustrations**

Relevant pictures can facilitate communication between a reader and a writer; however, a picture that is relevant but not placed near corresponding text is less valuable in enhancing comprehension than one
that appears on the same page close to the relevant text. The use of appropriately placed illustrations results in both a reinforcement of information and an alternate mode of presentation. A reader experiencing trouble with the written format can refer to a picture or an illustration for clarification.

Subtitles

Subtitles, often emphasized by the use of italics or boldface print, prepare the reader for information to be presented in subsequent text, forming a readiness for the content. Subtitles give the reader hints about a topic before he or she begins to read in depth. Consequently, the probability of improved comprehension is increased if subtitles are clear and genuinely predictive of the text; for example, a subtitle such as "The Causes of the Civil War" signals the reader that the subsequent text will enumerate causes of the war. As a result, the reader may bring to the forefront knowledge that he or she may possess related to wars in general and to the Civil War in particular. By that action, this reader has organized himself or herself cognitively, prior to reading in detail. He or she, therefore, has certain expectations about the following text and has established a purpose for reading.

Connectives

Pearson (1974) provided support for the use of explicit connecting words for facilitating comprehension. He argued that the inclusion of words such as therefore, and, similarly, and on the other hand result in sentences that are longer and therefore typical of passages with higher readability. These connectives, however, link the author's thoughts, relieving the reader of that process (Beck, McKeown, Omanson, & Pople, 1984). Such explicit connections are especially useful for students experiencing difficulty with reading comprehension. Moe and Irwin have suggested that explicit textual cohesion (the manner in which structurally independent sentences are linked) has a positive relationship to comprehension (1986). Beck and McKeown (1991) recently reported a lack of cohesion in social studies texts. Years before, Kantor, Anderson, and Armbruster stated:

Coherence concerns how well the sentences and ideas are woven together and flow into each other. When coherence is present, the reader can move easily from one idea to the next, and is more likely to read the piece as an integrated whole and not a collection of separate sentences. The reader is likely to experience difficulty if pronoun references are unclear, or if transition words, sentences, and paragraphs are missing or inappropriate. (1983, p. 63)
This investigation examined the considerateness of recently published fifth-grade social studies texts.

**Procedure**

**Material**

The five social studies texts analyzed in this study contained 1991 copyrights. For purposes of anonymity, publishers are identified with a letter designation in the body of this article; however, the texts are listed by publisher in the appendix.

Because Irwin (1986) recognized that topic variation may have influenced the results of her investigation of cohesiveness in children's texts, a singular topic was selected for analysis in the present investigation: African Americans. Five portions of text containing at least 100 words (the minimum amount necessary for analysis using the readability techniques described below) were identified from each text. This was done by (1) examining the index of each textbook for references to African Americans; (2) turning to a relevant page; (3) randomly selecting a word; (4) finding the beginning of the paragraph in which the word was located; and (5) counting forward to the end of the sentence containing the 100th word. This procedure was repeated five times for each text, resulting in 25 portions of text (five segments from each of five books) which were then analyzed for considerateness.

**Method**

First, five readability analyses (Fry, SMOG, Dale-Chall, Harris-Jacobson, and Flesch) were conducted for each text segment, resulting in 125 readability analyses (five analyses each for 25 segments of text). The average readability level for each technique across the five segments of each text was then calculated.

Next, pictures and illustrations were examined in terms of their relationship to the text segment identified for analysis; for example, a section on “The Freed Slaves” contained an illustration of instructional classes being provided by the Freedman’s Bureau. A picture of blacks standing in line to vote was judged to be relevant to a section on “Blacks in the South.” A portrait of Chief Joseph Brant was considered unrelated to a section on “Blacks in the War.” In another example, a picture of a Loyalist being punished for his support of the British king was considered irrelevant to a section subtitled “Black and Indian Americans.”

Subtitles were then examined in relation to the text segment analyzed. The content of the segment was compared to the subtitle immediately preceding the segment in which the analyzed paragraph was located. One example of a relevant subtitle was “Douglass and
Antislavery," since the subsequent text dealt with Frederick Douglass' fight for the freedom of slaves.

Lastly, we examined the use of intrasentence and intersentence connectives. Intrasentence connectives are words joining independent clauses within a sentence, e.g., the word and in "Few of them could vote and life was still segregated," and the word because in "Southern planters were not willing to leave their farms to fight because they were afraid their slaves would revolt." Intersentence connectives, as defined in this investigation, join two separate but related sentences; for example, the word but in "Few of them could vote. But African-Americans were ready to claim equal rights," or the word however in "After the war some slaves stayed on the plantations where they had lived and worked. However, many southern planters sent their former slaves away with nothing to eat."

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the results of our analyses.

Readability

Depending upon the readability technique used, there were considerable differences from grade 4 through grade 10 among readability determinations. The Dale-Chall technique revealed that four of the five textbooks were appropriate for the fifth-grade level; the Harris-Jacobson technique indicated that three of the five textbooks were appropriate; and the Fry technique indicated that only one of the five textbooks was appropriate for a fifth-grade level.

The average readability levels ranged from grade 4 through grade 10.5 with 8 of the 25 results revealing that the text portion was written at an appropriate (from fourth-grade to sixth-grade) level of readability for a fifth-grade audience. Armbruster, Osborn, and Davison (1985) found a similar disparity in comparing results of readability formulas.

Three of the five techniques indicated that publisher C's text was appropriate; two of the five readability techniques indicated that publisher D's text was appropriate; and only one of the five techniques indicated that publishers A, B, and E produced texts appropriate to a fifth-grade level. In the past, the SMOG formula has resulted in analyses that are generally higher by one year than other analyses. This is because SMOG uses a 90 percent level of comprehension to determine the appropriateness of the material (Evans, 1987). We found this to be the case in this investigation; however, even if the resulting SMOG determination were lowered by one year, none of the texts could be considered appropriate for the fifth-grade target audience using this readability technique.
The readability level of the texts analyzed was above the sixth grade level in 17 of the 25 segments analyzed due to the use of polysyllabic words common to this content area and not due to sentence length. Multisyllabic words such as confederacy, Emancipation Proclamation, commanded, and Powhatan lengthen the syllable count within the sentence. The segments analyzed were written for the most part using simple declarative statements with little or no connectives used within or between sentences.

Pictures/Illustrations
Publisher A had five pictures/illustrations on the same or opposite page as the text explaining the concept. Publishers C and D each had four such pictures; publisher E had three; and publisher B
Considerateness of Social Studies Texts

had two. Each of the 25 approximately 100-word segments of text dealt with a singular theme, such as "The Right to Vote," "Slavery," or "African-American Patriots." In 18 of 25 possibilities then, the pictures or illustrations used were consistent with and adjacent to the text content.

Subtitles
Publishers A and C used five subtitles in each segment, and publishers B, D, and E included subtitles in four out of five cases. Out of 25 possibilities, 22 were relevant subtitles.

Connectives
The use of intersentence connectives varied from three to eight per publisher across the approximately 2,500 words and 202 sentences analyzed. A total of 25 intersentence connectives and 10 intrasentence connectives was used by the publishers. In other words, only 12 percent of the 202 sentences examined in this investigation was linked with connecting words and an even lower percentage of connectives was used to link ideas within sentences.

Discussion

These texts might be judged to be inconsiderate if the readability level and the presence of connectives were used as criteria. On the other hand, if text considerateness were determined by the use of pictures/illustrations and subtitles, a more positive judgment could be made.

Considerateness is best conceptualized as a relative concept. Judging a text to be considerate solely on the basis of either pictures/illustrations and subtitles or of readability level and connectives is myopic; considerateness is a concept where the whole is most certainly more than the sum of its parts. The elements of considerateness examined in this investigation complement each other, and each needs to be employed to a large degree for a text to be judged to be considerate. The presence of one element of considerateness cannot compensate for the absence or presence of another element.

Educators need to take a global, more holistic approach to textbook evaluation. While the responsibility for developing considerate textbooks rests on the shoulders of publishers, the responsibility for accepting new criteria for considerateness lies with the consumer—the educator at the classroom, school, or district level—who is responsible for textbook purchase. Needless to say, textbook content should be both accurate and interesting to the reader, but equally important is the manner in which the content is presented. When selecting textbooks in the social studies and probably in the
other content areas as well, the old sacred cow of readability needs to be replaced with a newer, more holistic sacred cow of considerateness—a more comprehensive approach to textbook evaluation, one which considers a number of factors, some of which were examined in this investigation.

These publishers, whether knowingly or not, compensated for inconsiderate sentence and paragraph structure—short sentence length at the expense of connectives—in the pupil editions of their social studies programs by using subtitles and pictures/illustrations to complement the connected discourse. Since the texts in this investigation did not contain connectives to any large degree, coupled with inappropriately high levels of readability on average in 17 of 25 instances, the connected discourse of these texts seems to demand an excessive amount of energy for comprehension. As used by Stetson and Williams in their study of learning from social studies texts, energy refers to “at least three interrelated abilities: (a) skill in decoding surface structure; (b) previously acquired knowledge and perceptions about the topic; and (c) the language skills [readers] possess for combining information obtained from decoding the text with their previously acquired knowledge and perceptions in order to create meaning from text” (1992, p. 23).

In spite of numerous research findings providing guidelines for considerate connected discourse, the publishers whose textbooks were examined in this investigation failed to incorporate those suggestions for the grade level examined in this study. Even publisher C, whose textbooks were determined to be the most readable, failed to make adequate use of words or phrases to link ideas for the reader (connectives) either within or between sentences. In 1983, Estes and Wetmore expressed concern about the poor quality of textbooks for schoolchildren. They stated, “It appears that the author of this textbook (and likely the authors of most textbooks) failed to observe essentials of composition which have been recommended by rhetoricians for at least the last century” (p. 45). This continuing trend, evident in these social studies textbooks with a 1991 copyright, is especially lamentable for the targeted audience of fifth graders—the youngsters for whom these textbooks were intended.

A more detailed discussion of each of the elements of considerateness examined in this investigation follows:

1. Readability. One crucial part of text considerateness is language usage. Readability is one way to quantify the linguistic structure of

2While these publishers may have attempted to bridge possible gaps between reader and author by providing considerate supplemental activities in the accompanying teacher's manual, this investigation did not examine such materials.
text. As Davison stated, "Formulas continue to be used particularly for assigning difficulty levels in school textbooks because there are no simple convenient alternatives that would assign more accurate levels" (1988, p. 36).

While a textbook might have a level of readability which, according to readability techniques such as those used in this investigation, would appear too high for a fifth-grade level reader, factors in the text, such as those examined here as well as others not examined but nevertheless relevant—size of print, amount of white space, personalization of text, organization of concepts, and interest level of the reader—might be present to a large enough degree to result in a text that is, in fact, comprehensible and therefore considerate. Traditional readability formulas applied without concern for the text's purpose, whether informational or narrative, fail to consider the nuances of content area writing; therefore, a readability technique analyzing informational (expository) text is much needed. Martorella notes:

Readability formulas are not sensitive to the complexity associated with comprehension in an area like social studies. The field, for example, draws heavily upon abstract rather than concrete associations. Social studies also embraces subject matter that includes many specialized concepts and complex visual and tabular data (1984, p. 132).

As an example, a method of analyzing text structure by examining abstractness of concepts and importance and organization of ideas could be included in a yet to be developed technique for evaluating expository material. This is not to say that some magical formula can be created to quantify text so that it becomes more considerate. This would be especially useful when making determinations regarding considerateness of content area texts. Some of the ideas suggested many years ago by Kintsch and Van Dijk (1975, 1978), for example, could be incorporated into such a readability technique to evaluate the propositional structure of the text: the greater the number of propositions per segment of text, the more likely that students will need to expend more energy comprehending the surface structure and the less considerate the text.

2. Pictures/Illustrations. In this investigation, the publishers made frequent use of pictures and illustrations; however, it is not sufficient for publishers to provide pictures/illustrations to make their texts more considerate. They must also provide connected discourse (written language) which is reader friendly. After all, youngsters read to acquire information about content, and while pictures/illustrations can
help, they cannot substitute for the explanation and enrichment that connected discourse can and should provide. Of course, this does not mean that pictures/illustrations should not be included in the text. It simply means that they should not be substituted for text.

3. Subtitles. A relatively high amount of text analyzed, 22 out of 25 segments, had accompanying subtitles. Although there are no studies which quantify the precise number of subtitles present in text to make it considerate, Ausabel (1978) demonstrated that the use of advance organizers is beneficial to the reader. The greater the number of advance organizers (subtitles in this case), the greater the likelihood that comprehension will be enhanced. Teachers, therefore, need to draw attention to subtitles contained in textbooks, to help young readers predict what might come next. By providing a large number of relevant subtitles, publishers provide the structure for readers to utilize. This is especially important for readers who lack sophisticated reading skills and who are unable to organize as they read. While simply providing subtitles will obviously not guarantee success for the reader who is experiencing difficulty with connected discourse, it is most certainly a step in the right direction.

4. Connectives. The fact that publishers rarely made use of connectives between sentences, and even more rarely made use of connectives within sentences, may have been the result of a concern for producing a textbook with a targeted level of readability. Social studies textbook producers are in an unavoidable bind. Words such as citizenship or confederacy need to be used, but their use results in an increased level of complexity. This is true even when such words are defined within context. It seems even more important then that publishers make greater use of connectives as well as other elements of considerateness (verbal as well as nonverbal) in order to make text more comprehensible. One example of a group of sentences typical of the texts analyzed in this investigation is:

At least 5,000 African-American patriots joined the fight for freedom. Two slaves fought with the militia at Lexington. A free black man named Oliver Cromwell joined the army early in the war (Publisher C, p. 301).

These sentences could have been written with a more explicit connection; for example:

At least 5,000 African-American patriots joined the fight for freedom, among them two slaves who fought with the
 Considerateness of Social Studies Texts

militia at Lexington. A free black man named Oliver Cromwell joined the army early in the war.

In the latter group of sentences, the explicit connecting phrase, among them, was used to join the first two sentences, resulting in a sentence of greater length typical of passages with higher readability. According to the research of Pearson (1974), however, the inclusion of connectives in this manner also results in a greater probability of comprehension, because the link between ideas is stated rather than implied, and hence more considerate.

Conclusion

This investigation focused on factors of considerateness within the textbook. There are, of course, factors external to the textbook, such as readiness (reader's expectation of the text, enthusiasm for the topic, and background knowledge), reading ability, and perceived purpose for reading, which affect comprehensibility. While these external and internal factors of considerateness both contribute to making a text friendly or considerate to the reader, it is the textbook itself that plays and probably will continue to play the major role in social studies instruction.

Certainly one of the goals of the social studies is to encourage students to become independent learners; therefore, it is imperative that textbooks facilitate this learning by requiring of the reader a minimum amount of energy to understand the concepts and to acquire the information necessary to master the objectives of the social studies curriculum.

Appendix

References for Elementary Social Studies Textbooks

References


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HISTORY FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

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Abstract
As a means of reforming the social studies curriculum in early childhood education, some have suggested replacing the typical here-and-now, expanding communities approach with the study of history presented through story and myth. Such study, they argue, is more likely to interest children and entice them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required of citizens in a democracy. Rather than revolving around stories and myths, however, the study of history should focus on concepts considered key to the field and on children's understanding of these concepts. Only as children are able to construct everyday or spontaneous concepts of history during their early years will they be ready later to learn the complex scientific concepts characterizing the field of history.

Introduction

In schools for young children under the age of 7 or 8, the social studies curriculum has been based historically on children's here-and-now-world. In this “expanding communities approach,” children study their home and family, their school and neighborhood, and then their community; however, based on a belief that this approach ill prepares young children to achieve the broad yet critical goal of the social studies, “that of preparing children to be able to identify, understand, and work to solve the problems that face our diverse nation and interdependent world” (NCSS, 1989, p. 15), many educators are now advocating curricular reform.
Historical Learning for Young Children

The Problem

Criticizing the here-and-now approach as sterile, simplistic, and void of intellectual stimulation, some educators have suggested replacing the "tot" sociology of the expanding communities curriculum with the study of history (Ravitch, 1976). With history at the core instead of a child's here-and-now world, the social studies curriculum would better prepare young children to assume civic responsibility as adults. "Each generation faces new challenges, for which lessons from the past have much relevance. Individuals do not think well if they do not understand their own history" (NCSS, 1989, p. xi).

If presented through story and myth, history would offer children an intellectual challenge and preparation for citizenship, and would also capture their interest. History, after all, is a story well told and young children, like people of any age, love a good story (Egan, 1988; Guzzeti & McGowan, 1991; Ravitch, 1989).

Myths and stories would also be meaningful to children. Egan (1988) claims that children under the age of 7 or 8 obviously have no clear understanding of historical time, nor will they until well into adolescence (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), but they certainly do have clear and accurate concepts of the causality that holds the stories of history together (1988, p. 32). "They clearly do understand power and weakness, oppression, resentment, revolt, ambition, and punishment" (Egan, 1988, p. 33), all of which permit children to find meaning in the stories of history. "Telling children dramatic stories of human cultures, in particular of the one of which they are a part and parcel product" (p. 208), is an appropriate beginning for children's life-long study of history.

True, children—all of us—love to listen to a good story. Equally true is the fact that children do make sense out of all types of myths, fairy tales, and nursery rhymes in much the same way that they make sense of the realities in their lives. Nevertheless, if the study of history is in fact essential in developing individual and social intelligence, without which children will be "buffeted by changes that are beyond their comprehension and understanding of the vital connections among past, present and future" (CSBE, 1987, p. 3), then its study must consist of more than a well-told story.

Hypothesis

The study of history as a sound alternative to the here-and-now, expanding communities curriculum should not be organized around good stories but on key ideas or concepts that characterize the field of history. Admittedly, during the early years the nature of children's concepts will be what Vygotsky (1962) termed everyday or spontaneous,
gained mostly through their own first-hand experiences. Still, it is unlikely that without a foundation of everyday, spontaneous concepts, children would be able to gain conventional concepts of history in the future.

An everyday concept clears a path for the scientific concept...it creates a series of structures necessary for the evolution of a concept's more primitive, elementary aspects, which give it body and vitality. Scientific concepts grow down through spontaneous concepts; spontaneous concepts grow upward through scientific concepts (Vygotsky, 1962, p. 109).

Some key everyday concepts that can form the foundation for later scientific concepts include: (1) time; (2) change; (3) the continuity of human life; and (4) the past. This discussion examines the nature of these concepts, how children understand them, and suggestions for introducing them to young children. It concludes by raising questions for educators in the field of social studies and early childhood education.

Time

“What notion of time has our Tommy got? Does yesterday exist for him save as something very distant, vague, and separate as were, a little while ago, his own toes and feet?” asked Margaret McMillan in 1921 (p. 235). Research suggests that children have an intuitive sense of time based on their direct experiences. “I don't know what time it is, but my daddy comes to pick me up after nap,” states 3-year-old Kim. Limited to their perception of the succession and duration of time and to their ability to sequence and organize daily experiences, children have intuitive ideas of time that are subjective. This subjectivity leads to errors. Five-year-olds know that waiting for 10 minutes will be harder than waiting for five, but they also conclude that it takes less time for a fast-turning wheel to spin for five minutes than it does for a faucet to drip for the same amount of time (Acredolo & Schmid, 1981).

Intuitive time is distinct from operational time. Operational time, based on logical thinking, involves understanding relations of succession and duration, and is based on analogous operations in logic, which may be either qualitative or quantitative (Piaget, 1946, p. 551). As such, children will not be able to master operational time until they enter into formal operations around the beginning of adolescence.

Perhaps because temporal sequencing requires only qualitative comparisons, such as little versus large, children as young as 4 or 5 are able to demonstrate some understanding of the ability to sequence events. Four- to 6-year-olds can order actions in sequence to achieve a goal, they know that events happen in order, and they can sequence
their day around cyclically organizing daily occurrences (French, 1989; French & Nelson, 1985; Vukelich & Thornton, 1990). Four-year-olds can accurately judge temporal order at above-chance level and by the age of 5, are able to judge the backward order of daily activities, the forward order from multiple reference points within the day, and the lengths of intervals separating daily activities. By about age 7, children can also judge the backward order of events from multiple reference points (Friedman, 1990).

Temporal sequencing concepts, such as before and after, tomorrow and yesterday, or those that require only that children position two points in time, are learned more readily than quantitative temporal relations. To understand quantitative temporal relations, a child must realize that the interval between 1 and 2 o'clock, for example, is the same as that between 2 and 3 o'clock. Children who understand only the sequence may not fully appreciate that the intervals are equal. Parenthetically, this same problem with equal intervals characterizes the child's initial mistakes in utilizing linear distance (Forman & Kamden, 1986).

The research on children's understanding of time suggests that children will not be ready for instruction in conventional time until after 7 or 8 years of age. Nevertheless, this does not mean that concepts of time are not introduced to young children. To be effective, however, instruction must be based on the cyclical, recurring, and sequential events of children's daily lives (Dunfee, 1977; Vukelich & Thornton, 1990). Although it would be inappropriate to ask children to memorize the names of the days or months, to tell time or learn operational time concepts, it may be appropriate for adults to give children labels for these things, and to make certain their life has a routine.

Change

As time passes, so does a child's concept of change. If children are to gain a sense of history, they must have some understanding of the concept of change. For young children whose thought is dominated by perception, however, change is a difficult concept for them to learn. Since children have little or no ability to understand conservation logically until age seven or eight, changes that occur with the passage of time must appear as magical and unrelated to logic as any other changes they experience.

Without an understanding of change, children are unsure even of the constancy and continuity of their own lives. Under 5 years of age, children are uncertain even of the stability of their own gender (Slaby & Frey, 1975). Nor do they understand the changes that occur with illness and death. Blaming immanent justice for both illness and death, a young child's concept of change is indeed primitive. "He died because he was bad." "She was naughty and got sick."
According to children under the age of 5, aging and death are events which might suddenly occur either as the result of contagion or immanent justice. "Don't touch him," commanded a 5-year-old to her 7-year-old brother, who was talking to an elderly man. "You catch it (old age) and then you'll die." "I won't get old," stated a 3-year-old, "because I'm always real good." Kindergarten and elementary school children were unable to understand aging as a continuous process in time (Galper, Jantz, Seefeldt, & Serock, 1977). Children asserted that people grow older at different rates, and were quite willing to say that their father would stay the same age while they would grow older, or that neither they, themselves, nor their grandmother grew older each year. For the young child, aging seems related specifically to events in the time interval involved rather than to the passage of time.

For children who are younger than 7 or 8, time is discontinuous as well as local, since it can stop with any partial motion. This is why adults are believed to have stopped aging, or why a tree is thought to age if it still grows, but not otherwise. Only with the introduction of operational time will duration and the changes that occur with the passage of time be understood as a continuous flux.

It is unlikely that direct instruction or planned experiences will affect children's understanding of the concept of change; nevertheless, the preschool/primary social studies curriculum can include experiences which may enable children to construct ever more conventional concepts of change. At the very least, surrounding children with opportunities to experience and reflect on the changes in themselves and their here-and-now world may free them from fearing change. By studying themselves, their school, and their community, children may have experiences that lead to the concepts that: (1) Change is continuous and always present; (2) change affects people in different ways; and (3) change can be recorded and become a record of the past.

Changes that occur in the classroom and school building can be noted and recorded. Rooms are decorated for holidays, some buildings are readied for winter with plastic runners in the hallways, and others are painted or renovated. Primary-grade children could even explore the changes that occur over time. They might find early photographs of the neighborhood before the school was built, or other photographs that record changes in the building.

In the neighborhood, other changes can be observed and recorded. A house is built, a street is repaired, a shopping center closes. The changes in a neighbor's apple tree are observed throughout the year. Seeds are planted, plants bud, and flowers bloom. When children's attention is focused on specific changes, they are better able to understand the concept of change.

The most interesting changes occur in the children themselves. As they keep records of their own growth, of the tasks they could not
perform when they first came to school and have now mastered, children become aware that although life is a process of continual change, there is continuity to the human experience.

Continuity of Human Life

Margaret Mead suggested that children need the living presence of at least three generations to build an awareness of the continuity of human life. Separated from elders in today's mobile, hectic world, contact between young and old appears rare. Because children rarely interact with elders, many communities have taken steps to involve the elderly in programs for young children. Today, estimates show that well over 100,000 older persons are involved volunteers in schools for young children. These programs, in which elders work with or read to children, volunteer in the school library, assist teachers, or work with parents, differ greatly. Regardless of type, all programs have as their goal building the caring connections between generations in order to make children aware of the continuity of human life. To date, however, there is little evidence to suggest that these programs affect children's concepts of continuity.

Even evaluations on the effectiveness of these programs to enhance intergenerational attitudes are mixed (Seefeldt, 1987). A common finding is that children's attitudes toward the elderly become more realistic, and they seem to refuse to categorize all elderly as the same. Children are less able to group all elders stereotypically as sick, tired, ugly, and near death after contact with them in the classroom. On the other hand, children continue to fear their own aging, worrying about both death and the fact that they may not be the same person if they grow old (Seefeldt, 1987).

The Past

Another reason for involving elders in young children's early education is to introduce children to concepts of the past. Older people can tell children stories of their past, share photos of past events, or teach them some historic craft. Teaching children a game they played themselves or asking children to compare this game with their own might enable them to understand more about the continuity of human life as well as serve to introduce them to the concept of the past.

Children could begin recording their immediate past. By keeping records of what they do in kindergarten or the primary grades, children would, it is believed, become familiar with the idea of past events (Seefeldt, in press). Reading A. A. Milne's poem, "When I Was One," and having children describe what they were like at age 1, 2, 3 or more years of age, asking them to examine their own baby clothes and compare these with their current clothing, or tasting baby foods they once ate are other ways of teaching children about the past.
History for Young Children

To understand the past, however, children must not only be able to comprehend that the present is but a single moment in a continuous process, but also be able to store and retrieve memories. The research on children’s memory development is vast and readily available (Brainerd, Reyna, Howe, & Lingman, 1990). The various theoretical positions on memory development, the importance of storage failure versus retrieval failure, the relative importance of true forgetting processes versus test-induced processes, and the importance of storage-based reminiscence versus retrieval-based reminiscence have been widely researched.

For Piaget, however, the development of memory parallels that of perception and imagery, and the process of being able to recall the past is based on a changing operational structure that continually governs and transforms what has been stored.

How Will We Teach History to the Young?

Given the complexity of the concepts of time, change, and continuity, it seems simplistic to suggest replacing the typical here-and-now early childhood social studies curriculum with the study of history through story and myth. This recommendation ignores both what we know about the study of history and our knowledge of young children’s thinking and the way they learn.

Social studies for young children, if its study is to prepare them for future citizenship, must include the complex and abstract concepts that comprise the field of history; further, however history is introduced to young children, whether through concepts or through stories and myths, it should be: (1) meaningful; (2) appropriate; (3) personified; and (4) intellectually stimulating.

History Should Be Meaningful

Whatever concepts of time, change, continuity, and the past that are introduced to young children should be meaningful to them. Content that children initiate themselves and can experience directly has the potential of being meaningful. When children are able to initiate their own learning, the problem of matching the circumstances that the child encounters to the nature of his or her own intellectual organization (Hunt, 1961) is at least partially solved. In control of their own learning, children select content that has meaning to them.

Concepts that involve the children in firsthand activities may also have meaning. When children can experience content firsthand, when they can act upon materials, touch, handle, move, taste, pound, see, hear, and do something (Dewey, 1944), they are more likely to find meaning.
The selection of concepts to include in the study of history should incorporate those activities which children can initiate and experience firsthand. This leads back to the here-and-now curriculum first proposed by Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1934). Children, who are interested in developing an understanding of their immediate world, find the here and now much more meaningful than some fanciful, far off, make-believe world. "Indeed," Mitchell wrote, "it is only by exploring the here and now that children grow in the capacity to discover relations—to think. We find that the transition to the far away and long ago seldom takes place in schools before age 7. History and distant geography appear, consequently, only as occasional episodes in kindergarten and the early grades; engines, boats, markets and stores take the place of the Eskimo and primitive men" (Mitchell, 1934, p. 23).

Then, too, teachers know that historical concepts hold meaning for young children, based on what children already know (Bruner, 1960; Prawatt, 1989; Vygotsky, 1962). "At each stage of development the child has a characteristic way of viewing the world and explaining it to himself. The task of teaching a subject to a child at any particular age is one of representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child's way of viewing things" (Bruner, 1960, p. 33).

Those suggesting that teaching history through stories will transcend children's inability to comprehend concepts of time or change (Finn & Ravitch, 1988) may be ignoring this principle. Egan's (1988) claim that stories are ideal vehicles for children's learning because they already know and understand concepts of power, ambition, revenge, and so on, is unsubstantiated. Given the difficulty children have in understanding concepts of time, change, and the past, it seems unlikely that the abstract and complex concepts found in stories, myths, and folktales are any more clearly known to them.

Even if the telling of stories were found to be an efficient and sufficient method of transmitting all knowledge of the past necessary for children to meet the challenges of the future, early childhood educators might resist this idea. Early childhood educators have their own history, one which is replete with discomfort (Mitchell, 1934; Montessori, 1929; Derman-Sparks, 1989) about teaching children through myths and stories. Montessori decried presenting children who were, she claimed, in the process of trying to separate fact from fantasy with stories that were not true and factual. She believed that presenting children with stories of bunnies who talked and cats who wore hats and held tea parties was simply unconscionable.

**History Should Be Appropriate**

Appropriate concepts from the field of history must also be considered. First, a concept should be age appropriate. Young children
have a lifetime to learn concepts from history. During their early years, it is appropriate for them to become aware of and to explore concepts—not to develop an in-depth understanding of them. Whether selected from the study of time, the past, or change, the concept should be worthwhile for children to learn and appropriate for their age. Ask if this is something children should learn, and if it is, is it important for children to learn now, or will it be more efficient for them to learn these concepts later in life.

In addition to being age appropriate, content from the field of history must also be appropriate in other ways. Today, myths and folktales or fantasy are considered inappropriate by early childhood educators for other reasons. Far too many myths and folktales portray women and minorities in sexist and racist ways. Folktales, sometimes called the mirror of a people, reflect people's sexist and racist attitudes; e.g., passive and submissive women, or older women who take action and are portrayed as evil, ugly, or witch-like. Demeaning illustrations of African Americans, minorities with “negative” character traits, menial roles, and tortured dialects are all examples of powerful stereotypes found in the tales that mirror past societies.

Even those myths free of stereotypes are questionable because myths, stories, and folktales “hardly represent a complete or accurate picture of life” (Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force, 1989, p. 119) either past or present. Brophy (1990) agrees, reminding us that stories and folktales may not always be accurate, and can only serve to perpetuate untruths and myths when used as the basis for the study of history rather than to teach children the realities of the past and present. Then, too, if teachers rely on myths and stories to teach history, young children will eventually come to question the veracity and credibility of the teachers who have lied to them.

**History Should Be Personified**

Young children's thought processes are characterized as egocentric. Unable to view the world from another's point of view, young children need the concepts of history presented to them to be personified. Ravitch (1991), recognizing the need to personify the study of history, claims that introducing children to the heroes and heroines of myths and folktales will offer them the necessary personification and will lead them to identify with the past (NCSS, 1989). The personification of heroes and heroines stimulates and motivates children, Ravitch (1991) claims, whetting their appetites for understanding the world beyond their own. It may be that in order to teach history to young children, personification is the key, not through identification with heroes and heroines found in myths and folktales, but by personification through the study of their own histories.
The study of history that begins with children and their daily here-and-now activities has much more deep personal meaning than hearing stories of some exotic hero or heroine of long ago. For the egocentric young child, nothing could be of higher interest or have greater personal meaning than that of his or her own life, family, school, neighborhood, and community. What could better whet young children's appetites for the study of history than the story of their own past recorded in photographs, anecdotes of past behaviors, and records of their work and growth. The personification children find in the stories of the heroes and heroines in their own families, whether of their great, great grandmother who left Europe at 16 and traveled alone to the new land, the aunt who served in the Vietnam war, or the cousin who devotes his life caring for the elderly in a nursing home, is more enticing than the story of people far away in time and space.

**History Should Be Intellectually Stimulating**

Finally, the history we teach young children must be intellectually stimulating. Children's own histories and the histories of those around them can be intellectually stimulating and replete with concepts from every area of the study of history. Lucy Sprague Mitchell (1934) recognized this fact, even though her concept of focusing children's learning on their here and now has been so badly misinterpreted. Mitchell believed that the everyday life of children was very complicated and complex. "At first glance," she wrote, "to base a curriculum for small children upon a study of their own life was 'preposterous'" (Mitchell, 1934, p. 12). Yet the very complications of the child's here-and-now history make this study imperative for children if they are to build concepts and relationships underlying "the distant and the past" (Mitchell, p. 16).

Rather than making the here and now more interesting or complex, simplification of the child's everyday history is required. The complexities of daily life and of children's here-and-now histories make simplification necessary.

But it is a simplification of the immediate and the everyday rather than recourse to a vicarious or alien culture. The school does not ask first, Where did mankind begin? What did early men know? or What part of larger wholes are we? Rather, it first asks, What have these children learned through their experiences in living about the way their human world functions? What is easy, and what is hard for those children in time and space relations? To what extent do they use images, symbols? These questions really ask which relationships children
have discovered in the conceptions underlying the distant and the past (Mitchell, 1934, p. 16).

Only as young children develop a sense of their own self in time and space will they have the possibility of developing scientific, logical concepts as they grow. Only when the child's everyday concept of the past is sufficiently differentiated, when his or her own life and the lives of those nearby can be fitted into the elementary generalization "in the past and now," can they later learn scientific concepts of the past.

Conclusion

If social studies in early childhood continues to be based simplistically on children's here-and-now world without recognizing the complexities of that world, then curricular reform is a necessity. An expanding communities curriculum implemented through boring, repetitive, and mundane activities clearly does nothing to prepare children for the challenges of today's world or for citizenship in a continually changing, problem-filled nation and world.

Early childhood educators, given the demands for crucible reform, have the responsibility to reexamine the expanding communities approach to social studies curriculum. Calls for reform force the field of early childhood education to accept the complexities of the child's environment and to follow Lucy Sprague Mitchell's (1934) suggestion to begin curricular reform by exploring and studying "the children's own environment, whatever or wherever it may be" (p. 16) in order to come to know the "features which characterize her particular environment" (p. 25), and to strive to understand how these characteristics affect the children taught. On the basis of this study then, "each school will make its own curriculum for small children" (p. 12).

Equally simplistic, however, is the suggestion that the expanding-communities approach should be replaced with the study of history through story and myth. History is a complex and abstract field. Like any other social science discipline, it has the potential to organize social studies instruction by serving as a core subject. By viewing history simplistically without concern for the concepts considered key to the field and how these can be made accessible to young children, its study will be no more meaningful, appropriate, personified, or intellectually stimulating than the tot sociology Ravitch (1976) decried.

Clearly, nonstereotypical stories and myths have a place in the early childhood curriculum. Stories and myths, a critical part of the early childhood curriculum, are an acceptable means of transmitting
historical concepts. They can serve to connect children emotionally with their past and with others far away in space and time (Bruner, 1990). Nevertheless, these cannot be the sole sources for the study of history any more than a simplistic interpretation of the here-and-now expanding communities approach can. Only the careful, thoughtful selection of both stories and experiences that serve to extend children's concepts of time, change, that past, and the continuity of life will offer children the intellectual challenge necessary to study history and to adequately prepare them for later citizenship.

References


History for Young Children


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REACTION

Editor's Note: This is a response to James Leming's article, "Ideological Perspectives within the Social Studies Profession: An Empirical Examination of the Two Cultures Thesis" (Theory and Research in Social Education, XX(3), 293-312). We received this too late to include it with the Walter Parker/James Leming reaction and response section in the Fall, 1992 issue of TRSE, and due to space limitations, we have not been able to publish it in its entirety until now.

A CHALLENGE FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES: A RESPONSE TO LEMING'S "IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES WITHIN THE SOCIAL STUDIES PROFESSION"

Rahima C. Wade
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As a newcomer to the university social studies professorate, I read with keen interest James Leming's empirical study on ideological perspectives within the social studies profession (Theory and Research in Social Education, Summer, 1992). Although I found myself philosophically at home with his descriptions of social studies professors, I was surprised by his conclusions and disappointed with his recommendations for the social studies profession's next steps.

I share Leming's concern for creating an agenda for social studies that will garner the support of teachers and the general public, but I disagree with his assertions about how to accomplish the task. Leming seems to conclude that we should give up the goal of active citizenship and embrace instead an approach more acceptable to mainstream thinking: cultural transmission of historical knowledge, core culture, and democratic values. I believe that the difficulties the social studies profession faces lie not with the goal of active citizenship, but rather with the ways that we have attempted to promote it thus far.

Part of the problem exemplified in Leming's study is our lack of attention to understanding social studies educators' definitions of citizenship. Although the social studies has a long history of holding citizenship as its primary objective (Parker, 1991; VanSledright & Grant, 1991), it is difficult to tell from Leming's study how widely the goal of citizenship is embraced and how this amorphous concept is understood. When respondents were asked to what extent they agreed

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1 It is unclear how Leming defines the concept of core culture. Other writers using this phrase have been criticized for emphasizing facts and principles from Western European history and neglecting the United States' multicultural heritage.
with a list of purposes of social studies education (Leming, Table 9, p. 304), the word citizenship was not even mentioned. The findings he presented in Table 8 (p. 303) are also problematic. Social studies teachers placed citizenship only fifth among eight goals, but this may have been affected by the fact that respondents were rank ordering "general goals of education" (p. 303) rather than those of social studies education specifically. I understand that the study design confined Leming to use the same wording employed in previous questionnaires in order to obtain valid comparison data. Qualitative data acquired through either interviews or correspondence would have enriched the study by giving descriptive information about the personal meanings of citizenship and about the goal of citizenship compared with others in the lists.

Given Leming's assertion that one of the central challenges for social studies education is the definition of citizenship, I am surprised that he would settle for both the lack of clarity discussed above and an equation of citizenship with voting. Rather than working from high school students' limited ideas about what it means to be a good citizen, the civic involvement of adults yields greater insight for the profession's direction. While voting is declining in the United States (Powell, 1986), other types of political activity, such as campaigning or participating in organizations, are more frequent here than in other democratic countries (Dalton, 1988). When one takes all forms of political participation into account, the United States has the largest proportion of what Dalton (1988) terms complete activists. If one expands the notion of citizenship to include voluntary community service activities, then the percentage of active citizens increases further. A recent national survey found that two out of three incoming college freshmen had participated in some form of volunteer work during the previous year (Astin, 1991).

From the vantage point of this more comprehensive view of citizenship, Leming's quick dismissal of the possibility of school influence on students' social or political participation (p. 309) merits further discussion. Although he cites Ferguson's (1991) conclusion that the formal curriculum has had little effect in this regard—a contention with which I wholeheartedly agree—he ignores the potential impact of active participation through school democracy or community service. There are promising and admittedly inconclusive indications that active involvement within and outside schools is associated with greater civic involvement. In his review of research on social and

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2 Others have also lamented the lack of consensus in the field about the definition of citizenship (Morrissett, 1979; Shermis & Barth, 1982; VanSledright & Grant, 1991). In 1988 the Center for Civic Education analyzed more than 40 state social studies frameworks, and found that the meaning of citizenship was seldom addressed (Quigley & Bahmueller, 1991).
political participation, Ferguson (1991) cautiously concludes that "students who take part in extracurricular and school governance activities are more likely to become civically active as adults" (p. 391).

I agree with Leming that we need to speak about citizenship "in terms of goals and outcomes that can plausibly and causally be linked to education practice" (p. 310). Consequently, social studies researchers must engage fully in the research agenda that Ferguson (1991) outlines to assess empirically the effects of social participation on civic involvement and to communicate these findings within the field of education as well as among the general public. I suggest that Ferguson's recommendations could be a fertile starting point for the research consortium suggested by James Shaver (1992, p. 229). Ferguson outlines research possibilities in a number of areas including longitudinal and causal/experimental methods, the study of contextual factors, field-based qualitative case studies, and the extension of research efforts beyond the confines of the classroom.3

Thus, in my opinion, Leming does not devote enough attention either to a comprehensive definition of citizenship, to an understanding of the perspectives social studies teachers and CUFA members hold of this key concept, or to the possibilities for school influence on civic involvement; however, even if I were to accept Leming's assertions that (a) citizenship is equated solely with voting, and (b) "whether citizens vote or not is not a function of schooling" (p. 310), his idea that knowledge is the only viable focus left for the social studies profession is not a foregone conclusion. As numerous social studies researchers have pointed out, knowledge alone has little effect on the goal of creating active citizens. Are we then to give up on this goal entirely? I fail to see how an exclusive focus on knowledge would revitalize the profession; rather, it would seem to issue the social studies, with its professed goal of active citizenship, a confirmed death warrant.

Knowledge is of course a critically important component of social studies instruction. "Participation without knowledge, action without understanding, obviously is folly" (Parker, 1991, p. vi). Individuals who are capable of thinking and acting as responsible citizens should have a sound understanding of how history informs present social issues as well as how to creatively apply social science principles in their civic and personal lives.

But knowledge alone will not suffice as the end goal for adults in our trouble-filled world. Effective citizens also need skills in critical thinking, creative problem solving, communication, collaboration, and social participation. Furthermore, if we wish students to continue to use

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3 The scope of this article precludes a more detailed discussion of Ferguson's recommendations for research on social and political participation. I refer the reader to pages 394-396 in the *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning*. 

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these citizenship skills in their adult lives, they require opportunities to practice civic action in real-life settings, both within and outside schools. Although Leming concludes that the research on higher-order thinking has proved discouraging (p. 309), the skills listed here have not been researched thoroughly, and they could be important areas for possible exploration in the coming years.

This is an exciting time for all of us in the social studies profession. With the recent publication of the *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning* (Shaver, 1991) and the impending opportunity of a collaborative research focus within the profession, social studies researchers have the opportunity to learn vital lessons about citizenship development and subsequently gain broader acceptance of a comprehensive approach to active citizenship among teachers and the general public. First, an organized research effort identifying the key factors that foster civic involvement is needed. Given the realities of U.S. adults' civic activities, research that shows how social studies education promotes involvement in social and political organizations, encourages campaigning, and fosters community service may have wider appeal to the general public. Second, social studies researchers must communicate their findings not only in research journals, but also in publications more generally accessible to both teachers and the general public.

Finally, if our efforts to gain the support of teachers and the general public do not meet our expectations, we should not despair. Although successful societies do recognize the connection between cultural survival and cultural transmission, as Leming contends, we should not neglect the vital role of leadership by those who challenge popular beliefs. Successful societies do not just maintain the status quo; they also evolve in response to the problems and challenges of the times. Perhaps part of the role of the liberal social studies professorate is to provide guidance for societal transformation. Towards that end, let's not give up our goal of creating involved citizens. Instead, we should accept the limitations of social studies research thus far and vigorously pursue new directions more likely to lead to an informed and active citizenry.

**References**


BOOK REVIEWS

ESSAY REVIEW

Utopian Visions and Mainstream Practice


Review by RONALD W. EVANS, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182.

I have learned a great deal about social reconstructionism and critical pedagogy from reading William Stanley's book, *Curriculum for Utopia*. The book makes a significant contribution to late 20th century discussions of curriculum by synthesizing and explaining much of the literature on critical theory and social reconstructionism. Certainly the language employed by contemporary curricular theorists has grown more technical, more obscure, and more sophisticated. Here lies both a strength and a weakness of Stanley's effort and of curricular theory. While making much of current theory more understandable to scholars still grappling with its meaning (myself included), for most outsiders and for most teachers, the work will seem dense and heavily laden with the jargon of critical theory and postmodernist thought. After describing the intent and content of the book and assessing its strengths and weaknesses, I will revisit this theme by focusing on the possibilities for transformative pedagogy to overcome obstacles and to have a greater impact in the everyday world of classroom teachers.

*Curriculum for Utopia* addresses several important questions relevant to reform in education. Among these are the following:

1. What was the nature of social reconstructionism? Who were its prime advocates? What was the critical reaction to reconstructionist theory? What were (are) the strengths and weaknesses of reconstructionist theory? To what extent does mainstream curricular theory contain traces of reconstructionism?

2. What are the major approaches to critical pedagogy that have developed over the past two decades? How do these approaches relate to reconstructionist theory? What are the central disputes over critical theory from competing critical theorists and from outside critics?
3. What is the nature of postmodern and poststructuralist theory and what is the relation of these developments to critical pedagogy and to social reconstructionism? What are the central disputes related to postmodern and poststructuralist theory?

4. What conclusions might be drawn regarding the current relevance of reconstructionist theory and the continuing development of critical pedagogy for educational reform?

5. What sort of critical pedagogy offers the most promise?

All of these questions are explored in the belief that radical ideas of the past and present are a major source of knowledge that can enhance our thinking about curricular matters and that may eventually have an impact on mainstream perspectives. Too often mainstream discourse tends to preclude the serious consideration of critical or reconstructionist approaches to education.

Stanley seems most comfortable, and is certainly most readable because the language is less technical, when discussing the reconstructionists. The reconstructionists believed that schools were in a unique position to influence the direction of social change, and that teachers were “most dedicated to democratic values, most knowledgeable about cultural trends, and in the most strategic position to direct social change” (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968, p. 278). The reconstructionist movement had its roots in Marxist and socialist theory. In education, social reconstructionism was an outgrowth of the progressive movement and a direct response to the crisis of the 1930s Depression. The reconstructionists believed that education could not be neutral, that it necessarily involved some form of imposition, that “our social philosophies, theories, and institutions lagged behind the reality of social change,” and “that certain groups (e.g., the poor, blacks, etc.) suffered relatively greater exploitation while certain ‘dominant’ groups exercised controlling power over major social institutions....” (Stanley, p. 12). Thus, reconstructionist teachers and schools had an obligation to help reform the social order.

Stanley recounts the ideas of several prominent figures: Harold Rugg, who believed that schools could help to create a “cooperative commonwealth” built around “private ownership, collective control, and restrictions on industrial investment and profits (in) the public interest” (Stanley, p. 13); George Counts, who argued for the creation of a new social order based on “a fundamental redistribution of economic power” (Stanley, p. 14); and Theodore Brameld, whose work refined reconstructionism and whose views, like some of the critical theorists, were strongly influenced by Marxism, even though he was less supportive of its dogmatic elements. Rugg, Counts, and Brameld believed that schools could use a reconstructionist curriculum to help bring about the social change necessary to create a better social order. Less clear, both from Stanley’s review and from the original works of
the reconstructionists, is the actual pedagogical meaning and application of a reconstructionist philosophy in schools. What would a reconstructionist curriculum look like? Which processes would be emphasized? Which topics would be selected for study?

Some answers to these questions are to be found. Rugg created an entire curriculum built around the *American problem* and a textbook series that built on narratives from history and the social sciences to the critical examination of social problems. Brameld argued that reconstructionist teachers should share their defensible partialities with their students, submit the teacher’s views to critical analysis by the students, and attempt to move students toward a morally defensible stance through the process of consensus validation (Stanley, p. 43).

Critics of the reconstructionists, including John Dewey, reacted unfavorably to Brameld’s application of Marxism to education. While Dewey did believe that schools should assist in the reconstruction of society, he viewed the method of intelligence as the best vehicle for transformation, but “never suggested that schools should seek to indoctrinate students to a particular social view” (p. 50). In Stanley’s view, Dewey appeared to believe that “any attempt to inculcate preconceived conclusions could block the method of intelligence, even if the open access to alternative views were maintained” (p. 51). This is perhaps the central dilemma of a reconstructionist approach in practice, a dilemma that confounds many of the beginning teachers that I work with. What role should a teacher’s perspective play in the study of a topic, problem, or issue? At what point does the imposition of a teacher’s defensible partialities serve to terminate student thought? We have all witnessed the dogmatic teacher whose statements of belief have a chilling effect on classroom dialogue.

Others criticized the reconstructionist’s faith in teachers, a relatively conservative group, to implement a reconstructionist program, the possibility of permissive indoctrination espoused by Brameld, the inadequate explanations of how to turn this utopian vision into practice, the ubiquitous sense of mission that tended to obscure the need for a more critical and wide-ranging analysis of issues, and the naïvely utopian faith that education could solve all social ills. More negative critics dismissed reconstructionism as a form of indoctrination and propaganda that neglects the needs of the individual student.

In a section on reconstructionism and mainstream social education, Stanley critiques several of the most well-known advocates of reflective approaches to teaching. After describing the work of some of the major advocates of a reflective approach to teaching social studies (Oliver & Shaver, 1966; Hunt & Metcalf, 1968) and admitting that these views were a “major advance beyond either the impoverished
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rhetoric of citizenship transmission or the more sophisticated social science education rationale,” he writes:

Still there are problems that limit the critical potential of either of these particular approaches to reflective inquiry....Oliver and Shaver appear to take the value of our contemporary culture and institutions for granted. True, there remain serious social problems to resolve, but there is little discussion of the possible systemic or structural causes of such social problems. They also appear to assume that our current social structure and institutional arrangements are basically adequate—perhaps even the best system humans could conceive....From a reconstructionist perspective, Oliver, Shaver, and Newmann’s work lacked a sufficiently specific theory of social welfare or a utopian vision beyond the rather vague guidelines of the American Creed (p. 73).

While softened slightly, his critique of Hunt and Metcalf is similar: “More critical than the jurisprudential rationale, it still lacked a focus on building a new social order. Much like Dewey, Hunt and Metcalf would leave the future to the method of intelligence” (p. 73).

While Stanley is technically correct about these approaches, that they did not state a specific theory of social welfare or a utopian vision, my sense is that he underestimates the implied reconstructionist rationale underlying a reflective or issues-oriented approach, and ignores the limited attention given to the possibility of systemic or structural causes of social problems. Like Giroux, I prefer to think of John Dewey and the reflective inquiry tradition spawned by his ideas as reconstructionist at root but generally favoring a more gradual form of social transformation, a more realistic approach to curriculum, and a more moderate role for the teacher, in part for strategic reasons. In evaluating these approaches to social studies education, we must ask which approach would be more readily adopted by teachers. Also, we must keep in mind the times during which these books were written—peak Cold War years. If there is an implicit reconstructionist theme in these works, it is, like Rugg’s version, a softer, less doctrinaire approach. Although he discusses some of Engle’s earlier work, Stanley unfortunately fails to mention the more recent work of Engle and Ochoa (1988), which poses reflective teaching practice as a means to achieve a countersocialization of our youth. Although Engle and Ochoa stop short of calling for social reconstruction, they strongly imply that structural change is necessary.

During the past two decades a new discourse has developed among radical educators, a discourse which Stanley discusses under the
rubric of critical pedagogy. Far from monolithic, this discourse includes reconceptualist curricular theory, cultural studies, feminist scholarship, and other forms of critical scholarship. Critical pedagogy poses a somewhat different reform agenda for education, more strongly influenced by European theoretical perspectives including neo-Marxism, critical theory, structuralism, and more recent developments in postmodernism and poststructuralism. In the U.S., critical pedagogy retains a strong link to the work of Dewey, and it has forged some direct links to social reconstructionist theory. Certainly the language is different. While the reconstructionists tended to use language that was more commonly understood, most critical pedagogues are immersed (hopelessly, it seems sometimes) in a less familiar language drawn from European theorists including Gadamer, Gramsci, Habermas, Foucault, and Derrida. Their agenda, although similar in its ultimate goals to the social reconstructionists discussed above, seems focused on building a community of scholars critical of mainstream educational practice, cognizant of the systemic and interwoven nature of our educational, political, and social systems, and committed to resisting the dominant interests that control wealth and power in America and whose interests the schools tend to serve.

To varying degrees, critical pedagogues share an affinity for reproduction or correspondence theories which hold that schools, through both their structures and their hidden and overt curricula, tend to mirror and reproduce the dominant social hierarchy, imposing different kinds of knowledge on different groups in accordance with their place in a stratified social order. Through intellectual and moral influence as well as direct coercion, dominant groups (the economic, political, and cultural elite) maintain the hegemony of the dominant culture and retain power over marginalized groups (women, the poor, people of color).

In a slightly more recent related development, resistance theorists accept most of the insights of reproduction theory, but they are more optimistic regarding the potential for education to challenge the power of dominant interests. From this perspective, “schools can be understood as contested terrain” and school curriculum as a “complex discourse that simultaneously serves the interests of domination while also providing possibilities for opposition and emancipation” (p. 100).

Paulo Freire has developed perhaps the most influential approach to critical pedagogy, a precursor to what came to be called resistance theory. Freire draws a distinction between traditional forms of education, such as banking theory, in which knowledge is bestowed on ignorant students by knowledgeable teachers—an approach that mirrors oppressive society as a whole—and problem-posing education, which breaks the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education and creates a dialogue of teacher-student with student-teacher through
which both teacher and student teach and learn simultaneously. "They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow" (Freire, 1970, p. 67). The goal of this process of liberation or conscientization is to provide students with the means to challenge an oppressive social order—to transform oppressive social relations.

Most of the critical theorists propose somewhat similar goals; for example, Giroux stresses student participation in the learning process to enable students to transform the social order, revealing the problematic and objective pretensions of knowledge so that students may understand how they acquired a particular world view, and how it limits their understanding, while developing the competencies required for collective action to help transform the social order. While I share the critical theorists’ analysis of the function of schooling in society, as does Stanley, I am less sanguine concerning the prospects for critical pedagogy to have a major impact in the public schools. Obviously, critical pedagogy has had a significant impact among curricular theorists. Like reconstructionism, however, it has had little serious impact in the public schools. I will return to this theme later.

While the recent neoconservative backlash against political correctness (p. c.) riles against all forms of critical pedagogy, including the socialist and reconstructionist versions described above, these attacks have been most vociferous in describing and discussing postmodern and poststructuralist scholarship and their impact in academia. Poorly understood by many scholars and certainly by many lay critics of p. c., Stanley devotes some space to defining these somewhat ambiguous terms. While postmodernism is often "employed as a general label for a movement that includes elements of feminist thought, poststructuralism, antireductionist forms of pluralism, certain approaches to neopragmatism, and various media and cultural studies," Stanley prefers to think of postmodernism as a "description of the kind of universe in which contemporary critical discourse takes place; that is, the condition of our contemporary world" (p. 152). It is not, as some would suggest, a distinct perspective or theoretical orientation.

Poststructuralism, on the other hand, has a more concrete focus. "It is best described as that school of thought that has emerged as a critique of the structuralist theory so popular in the 1950s and 1960s" (Stanley, p. 152). Although there are differences among structuralists, positivists, and phenomenologists, what they had in common was "the assumption that systematic, objective knowledge was possible" (p. 153). In literary analysis, for example, structuralists held that "stable textual meaning could be determined by finding the code that explained how the various elements of a text (or text analog such as...schooling, etc.) were related to each other to create meaning....Poststructuralists view all claims for transcendental meaning as fictions....So while structuralists and others have sought to defend the possibility of
objective, systematic knowledge, poststructuralists claim to know only the impossibility of this knowledge" and they investigate the way in which the search for the intended meaning of a text is "subverted by the workings of the texts themselves" (p. 153).

Some critics of poststructuralist deconstruction argue that it leads logically only to disbelief, playful cynicism, and nihilism. Stanley recognizes the possibility that poststructuralist analysis can undermine and threaten the philosophical basis for a critical pedagogy, but prefers to incorporate the insights of poststructuralist critics by reshaping the theories of critical pedagogy "to account for the insights of poststructuralist thought" (p. 154). He argues quite convincingly that the critique of poststructuralism as a form of antirationalism or of nihilism is unfounded, and he suggests that "poststructuralism provides a way for humans to understand the 'textuality' of the social world in which we live...that is essential to counterhegemonic praxis" or any form of curricula for utopia. Understanding the uncertainty of meaning does not mean abandoning value or hope. Indeed, as Stanley suggests, "the relative nature of truth is only a problem for those who insist on the possibility of and need for an objective (in the sense of certain) foundation for human knowledge" (p. 190).

These areas of thought are relevant to critical pedagogy and social reconstructionism because they offer several insights or critiques that have the potential, when not too muddled, to advance the conversation regarding curricula for the future. Paradoxically, they are full of what would seem to be commonplace insights (the lack of certainty) and obfuscating language, making them largely inaccessible to all but the educationally elite who happen to have an interest.

There are significant links between reconstructionism and critical pedagogy. Stanley points out that while similar in orientation to reconstructionism, critical theory represents a more sophisticated understanding of the entrenched nature of dominant powers. While critical pedagogues struggle over differences in orientation (for example, several feminist scholars charge that male critical pedagogues have neglected feminist scholarship and perspectives), many elements of reconstructionist thought are present in more recent radical theory, including recognition of the political nature of schooling and its tendency to reproduce structural inequalities; the potential of schooling as a site of resistance to the dominant order; the role of teachers as transformative intellectuals who can help facilitate change toward a better society; a complex understanding of ideology; a central concern with the need to take ethical positions; and a rejection of education as either neutral or radically relativistic. But, as Stanley suggests, developments in critical pedagogy "represent a more complex and useful critique of educational theory and practice by way of having incorporated the insights of the new sociology, critical theory, neo-
Marxism, feminism, cultural studies, neopragmatism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism” (p. 218). He concludes that reconstructionist theory “remains relevant to educational reform, but only in a significantly reconceptualized form” (p. 218).

Stanley develops a reconceptualized form of reconstructionist theory for today’s education built around what he terms “practical judgment” or *phronesis*. While this seems a commonplace insight, if conceptualized in the full context of Stanley’s argument and applied in appropriate forms to curricular theory and practice, practical judgment could make a real difference in schools. This notion entails a fundamentally ethical purpose since by definition practical judgment involves a praxis to define and educate good or better humans. His notion of a reconceptualized reconstructionism also includes ongoing critique and reinterpretation; human life as textuality largely formed by language; minimum sociocultural conditions to provide sites where practical judgment “can be developed and expanded in an effort to resist domination”; a heightened sense of humility—keeping our options open based on the postmodern and poststructuralist critique of the search for objective knowledge; sensitivity to the difficulties posed by difference or otherness; the realization of communities defined by toleration of dissent and differences; and recognition that human suffering is part of the totality of life that can never be eliminated completely (pp. 218-221).

Like the reconstructionists upon which he draws, Stanley understands the need to act in the face of human suffering and oppression and the danger of complacency inherent in mainstream educational theory. To quote him at some length:

As I have tried to show, a reconceptualized reconstructionism would aim at the realization of the basic human interest in practical competence and the sociocultural conditions necessary for praxis toward this end. Such praxis involves the simultaneous transmission and transformation of our cultures while also challenging the value of both processes in a world in which we can never fully grasp the dimensions of otherness. This is a critical pedagogy of neither/nor, oriented by a poststructuralist rejection of false dichotomies, awareness of the unknowable, understanding the limits of rationality, and an awareness of the danger posed by both nihilism and the terrorism of closure or monologue. It is a pedagogy of hope in the face of the very formidable barriers to critical analysis.
Human hopes and desire might never be grounded in any absolute knowledge, but we can gain a sense of human interests. As we act to realize our human betterment, our critical praxis can lift our thought, as McLaren suggests, “beyond the limitations of the present moment in order to be transformed into dreams of possibility. And with dreams we can do wonderful things” (Stanley, pp. 221-222).

William Stanley’s book provides a remarkably cogent and thoughtful synthesis and critique of utopian curricular theory, and it makes a valiant attempt to expand upon existing theories. His call for a curriculum built around practical judgment and the ethical orientation to which that notion is attached, if implemented with other critically oriented structural reforms (i.e., school financial reform, restructuring of tracking, etc.), could transform our schools into institutions where the goal of human betterment becomes an outcome rather than a selectively realized goal.

While I greatly appreciate the need for continued theoretical development, and I find myself in general agreement with the direction of Stanley’s book, I do have several concerns about these ideas and their relationship to schooling in American society. While practical competence, as described by Stanley, carries with it several specific notions about the political direction of the curriculum, I am not convinced that this is substantially at odds with the reflective inquiry or issues-centered tradition; for example, several of the points that Stanley makes to gird the notion of practical competence are similar to understandings shared by many of the advocates of the reflective tradition over the years: the uncertainty of knowledge, the goal of general human betterment, the tentativeness of truth claims. While it is true that poststructuralism has breathed greater depth into some of these ideas, they are not new ideas. Hence, practical competence is a slightly enhanced version of reflective inquiry with more explicit reconstructionist aims.

On my mental continuum of educational ideologies, reconstructionism, critical pedagogy, and practical competence as conceptualized by Stanley are slightly further to the left than a mainstream reflective or issues-oriented approach, yet these approaches have much in common and are essentially different threads of the same strand of progressive theory. Both would use problem-posing forms of education, both would champion student activity, student reflection, and student empowerment. Perhaps the central difference between the two may be found in the teacher’s perspective and the way that is to be shared with students. While mainstream reflective teachers might attempt to downplay or withhold their perspectives and opinions, critical pedagogues would impose their
views though a critical dialogue, yet maintain an openness to alternative views and contradictory evidence. Many issues-oriented theorists and practitioners would no doubt reject such a dichotomy, preferring that teacher perspectives and the reasons for them be shared openly with students as one of many voices and views to be considered, but also as an especially important view to discuss because of its centrality to the generation of teacher-student interaction and the context in which it will take place.

Although I have not seen any concrete discussion of this by theorists, it seems that the central dilemma to be resolved is the way in which a teacher’s defensible partialities would be imposed, as one of several perspectives to be considered, or as the one best view. Related to this is the question of how much class time would be devoted to direct sharing of the teacher’s views and when these views would be shared (at the outset, or only after students are engaged in consideration of alternatives). Of course, it is important to recognize the infinite and implicit ways that a teacher’s ideology is reflected in classroom discourse and to make discussion of the teacher’s framework for classroom decisions open and subject to revision.

One of the dangers of a critical pedagogy is that it can lead to sermonizing, moralizing, and monologue (or near monologue) which Stanley rightly describes as a form of terrorism in an educational setting. Such an approach is not open ended, and not really open to a critical dialogue. As Stanley admits, conservative educators promote reconstructionism as well, but with different outcomes in mind. Rather than the imposition of a socialist utopia (implicit in much of critical pedagogy) these educators might impose a deep faith in our dominant institutions (and capitalism) as the best arrangements that are humanly possible. While this reverse image of reconstructionism may be seen as an unacceptable form of conservative citizenship transmission by utopian theorists, it could be rationalized in a similar fashion.

In considering these concerns, I am reminded of a day I spent escorting Michael Harrington around a college campus many years ago. When he was asked (about his teaching) by members of the political science department, “Aren’t you teaching socialism to your students?” he replied, “I tell them what I think, and the reasons I have for my beliefs, but I bend over backwards to include opposing views. I have them read the works of mainstream and conservative thinkers as well, and give them the freedom to make up their own minds.”

The language of *Curriculum for Utopia* makes it inaccessible for most practitioners and curricular specialists and even for many of our colleagues in university schools of education. I have tried to summarize some of the main ideas above, but in doing so, I know that I am guilty of reductionism while nevertheless retaining some of the technical language of the original, the very aspect of critical pedagogy that
makes it difficult to understand. This concern goes beyond Stanley's book and to the heart of our problems in educational reform. Reconstructionist and critical approaches to pedagogy have been marginalized in part because of their political orientation and in part because their language makes them inaccessible. Preparing a guide for practitioners, written in plain language, would help alleviate this concern.

As Stanley and others suggest, critical pedagogy has had some impact on curricular theory, even among mainstream educators. The language of critical pedagogy has been co-opted by the mainstream without an understanding of its supporting ideas (hegemony, domination, liberation). Empowerment, postmodernism, and deconstruction have become part of the national vocabulary even though the concepts are often misunderstood or misused. In addition, the impossibility of an ideologically neutral form of education has become more commonly accepted among mainstream educators, causing many to remove the mask of objectivity and contributing to a paradigm shift in research methodology.

Critical theorists and reconstructionists may have underestimated the conservatism that guides schooling, and this is ironic for scholars who tend to agree with correspondence theory. At present, we are in the midst of a neoconservative revival of traditional approaches to curricula especially in social studies. Teachers are relatively conservative as well, in spite of the National Education Association's proclivity to endorse Democratic political candidates. Most do not share the interpretation that our problems stem from a system that is fundamentally flawed. Reconstructionist and critical theorists are viewed as out of the mainstream at best and at worst, undemocratic. Teachers fear radical ideas and negative parental and community reaction. Teacher freedom is not what we might like it to be. This is an ongoing reality that we must keep in mind. Self-censorship, along with very real restrictions on teacher practice, prevent many teachers from devoting attention to radical ideas, much less endorsing anything that could be seen as controversial.

Stanley tends to ignore the obstacles to reforming practice. As tenacious bureaucracies, schools tend to stubbornly reject reform (Cuban, 1984). School structures reward stability, and make innovation difficult. Administrators typically want to avoid the controversy that might result from a radical curriculum. Parents and community members often have strong notions about what students should learn in schools, and radical ideas are seldom their focus. Most teachers are content oriented and they focus on knowledge acquisition rather than on thoughtfulness or discussion of radical ideas. The school setting is not conducive to issues oriented or critical approaches to teaching, in part because teachers devote a great deal of attention to keeping large
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numbers of students under control. Finally, textbooks and most currently available materials do not fit a reconstructionist or critical orientation (Shaver, 1989).

Thus, curricular theorists of whatever stripe ignore the obstacles to implementing their ideas, at the risk of having little or no impact. At this point in time, I can think of only one critical theorist who has had some impact on practice. Paulo Freire's work is so powerful partly because it is readable, and partly because he talks about students and teachers and discusses what his work means for their interaction and for their lives. Stanley tends to ignore teachers and students. In fact, I find very few explicit references to either anywhere in the book. This is both troubling and telling. It is troubling because teachers and students are at the heart of the process of education. Any work that would significantly impact educational reform must give attention to this reality. It is telling because it may be indicative of an orientation to theorizing for the sake of theorizing, although I do not believe this is true in Stanley's book.

One high school student I interviewed a few years ago said of her teacher, "I'm sure if he told us what to believe I would feel like I was scolded and go against it." Such is the nature of youth; they often tend to rebel against authority. If the aim of the critical agenda is to transform the classroom into a bully pulpit, we must be aware that the end result could be counterproductive for many students, and that it could lead to the terror of a radical monologue by well-intentioned teachers who end up oppressing the freedom of thought they set out to create.

On the other hand, a reasonable teacher attempting to engage in critical pedagogy will open student minds and hearts to multiple ways of seeing, will engage students in the process of reflection, will devote considerable time to radical ideas and alternatives as possible solutions to global and societal dilemmas, and will ask students to consider possibilities for social improvement and social transformation. Handled by a caring, thoughtful, and nondoctrinaire teacher, a critical pedagogy could inspire deep dreams of justice and the possibility of a utopian society.

To sound a note of realism, for critical pedagogy to have a chance of success in classrooms, even supportive teachers will need help in learning how to develop critical approaches to teaching, support for academic freedom, and a rich array of resources and materials in place of the traditional textbook. For this to occur on even a limited basis, it will take a concerted long-term effort by a coalition of educators on the progressive side of the educational spectrum—critical pedagogues and reflective practitioners working in solidarity toward realizing forms of education that are open to the consideration of radical ideas (Evans,
1989). For strategic reasons, this might best be realized under the rubric of reflective, issues-centered approaches to education.

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ESSAY REVIEW

Kozol and the Political Economy of Schools


Review by JACK L. NELSON, Rutgers University, Graduate School of Education, New Brunswick, NJ 08903.

This is a remarkable book at a remarkable time. The essential point of the book, however, is unremarkable. It is something that any decent observer of economic disparities in society and schools can easily recognize: The poor suffer from being poor, and schools in poor areas often reinforce and exacerbate that suffering to make it a lifelong disadvantage. This disadvantage, the savage inequality of the title, marks a society whose rhetoric includes platitudes about justice and equity. Social educators concerned with democratic education and the pursuit of improved civic culture have good reason to consider seriously works such as Kozol’s and the challenge they represent.

The message about social and educational poverty and its impact on people should not be so remarkable, because it has been made repeatedly over the long history of mass education. In an age of relative wealth and human compassion, what makes the point remarkable at this time is that we appear not to have gained much knowledge in this regard. At the least, the gripping evidence that Jonathan Kozol brings to bear in this book shows that we have not learned well how social and educational starvation affect a society. Dickensian writings on Victorian times about social and educational maltreatment of young poor people reverberate through the international literature and provide a minds-eye picture of the grimness of life among the poor. Kozol’s work, published in 1991, is not fiction, but it poses the same issues for our society today.

Early efforts to provide mass education in America used the condition of the poor to gain public support for improved schooling. Those efforts produced compulsory schooling and some concern for equity, but they have often been misinterpreted as evidence of American idealism. Michael Katz (1971) and others provide a proper skepticism about the romantic notion that early American schooling was socially altruistic in its provision for educating the poor; for example, Katz cites Henry Barnard’s preoccupation with maintaining social order and prescribing moral character for the young poor by forcing them to school to learn from the better classes. This smacks of social class self-interest and manipulation.
Among other less charitable purposes, however, early concepts of common schools and compulsory education were intended to provide schooling for people of all classes in the broad interest of enlightenment and equality. The school reform coalition of social democrats, liberals, labor organizers, religious leaders, and others who persisted in pursuit of public education was also rooted in the idealism of Jane Addams and other social progressives. These progressive-minded reformers saw the destructive quality of life among the poor in cities and wanted to correct a national disgrace (Graham, 1967). Over 30 years ago, former Harvard president James Conant was appalled by the disparity between city and suburban school financing: "[It] jolts one's notion of the meaning of equality of opportunity" (1961, p. 3). Remarkably, Kozol's book suggests that we may not have travelled very far since then.

Kozol's book is remarkable not only because of the times about which he writes, but because of its writing style. Kozol uses extensive dialogue from his conversations with many people from some of America's most economically devastated cities. This dialogue provides a richness and a humanity to his argument, and captures the human tragedy of gross inequalities in society and in our schools. It is a continuation of social conscience literature dating from Victorian times and of muckraker literature from the early 20th century. Upton Sinclair (1923, 1926) would have liked most of this book, but might have wondered why Kozol didn't assess blame more directly and more individually for the conditions exposed.

Kozol's work is also consistent with many contemporary, sophisticated critiques of the American political economy (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Carnoy & Levin, 1976; Colvin, 1989; Coons et al., 1971; Hanushek, 1989; Jencks et al., 1972; Kotlowitz, 1991; Sexton, 1961; Wise, 1967), but it is most compelling in its depiction of real human suffering. The contribution Kozol makes with this book lies in his ability to refocus national attention on the plight of young students whose lives are and will continue to be blighted by the impact of gross disadvantage in our nation's schools and communities.

One of the defects of the book, however, is that Kozol does not connect his work with the long tradition of either the scholarly or the personalized literature that buttresses the primary issue. This book can be read as an exposé of a few cities in recent times, a journalistic account that arouses interest but which can be forgotten as the next book emerges. That reading would be a mistake, however, because this book addresses a much deeper social ill; it is not simply a book about poorly funded schools but a test of the tenets of democracy, justice, and equality. Undercurrents of racism, nativism, exclusion, class-based politics, and hypocrisy are evident in the cases Kozol presents. Inequalities may be savage; savages may also be at the heart of the inequalities.
Kozol's work is a personalized account of a trek through the soft underbelly of American education. Although his book is not scholarly or academic, it provides graphic evidence to support the more technical literature on political economy in education. This literature often contains a special concern for the influence of social class and the related issues of race and gender on schooling equity. Equal educational opportunity, another of the American Dream themes, is as yet unmet. As a result, this book presents a challenge to a social education which aims toward progress in civilization. Our democratic rhetoric is sorely tested by the examples Kozol presents as representative of life in poor communities and poor schools. Dialogues with the real people of this American subsociety highlight his discussion; for example, Kozol paints a devastating account of the filth, toxic waste, sewage plant flooding, and pollution by chemical and metal plants that afflict East St. Louis. He then quotes a local resident:

"Nobody in East St. Louis," Ahmed says, "has ever had the clout to raise a protest. Why Americans permit this is hard for somebody like me, who grew up in the real Third World, to understand...I'm from India. In Calcutta, this would be explicable, perhaps. I keep thinking to myself, 'My God! This is the United States!'" (p. 17).

Kozol goes on to describe the city of East St. Louis as one with some of the sickest children in America: first in Illinois in fetal death, first in premature birth, and third in infant death. Lack of hospital facilities, sewage running in the street, foul air, high lead levels in the soil, poverty, lack of education, and crime are noted by the local health officials as major negative factors in the community. The schools are also in dire straits—sewage floods cause evacuation of schools, gaseous fumes in schools make people ill, 280 teachers are slated for layoff along with over 200 other school employees. High school teachers are assigned to teach 175 students each, all teachers run out of chalk and paper, and paychecks are late. Textbooks over 25 years old are used to teach social studies, a history teacher with 110 students in four classes has 26 books, and an elementary teacher has one full-color workbook for the entire class. School heating systems do not work, and necessary maintenance cannot be undertaken. Over 70 substitute teachers are employed at a very low $10,000 per year. The governor, however, says the state will not pour money into the city because those who live there need to help themselves. This comes about the time he announces a grant to a nearby, more wealthy town to improve their sewers.

East St. Louis is only one of the cities Kozol visits. The Chicago area, New York, Camden, and other cities in New Jersey, Washington, D. C., and San Antonio are also examined extensively. The specifics
differ, but the story is the same. The wealthy schools in the same states spend about twice as much for schooling per child as do the poor areas. And despite the view of George Bush and other politicians who believe that more spending is not needed, there are gross disparities in what those extra dollars mean for children of the wealthier schools.

The book presents many examples of the difference money can make in schools. One is that of East Orange, New Jersey, a suburb of Newark, and one of the 30 most seriously underfunded districts in the state. At East Orange High School, the track team has no field and must practice running in the school hallways. In contrast, Montclair, New Jersey, is an upper-income suburb nearby. Montclair has enough school funds to provide a high school with two recreation fields, four gyms, a dance room, a wrestling room, a weight room with a universal gym, tennis courts, a track, and indoor areas for fencing. Montclair employs 13 full-time physical education teachers for 1,900 students; East Orange High School has only four physical education teachers for its 2,000 students, 99.9% of whom are black. East Orange residents, by the way, allocate much more in taxes and proportional income to support their schools than do residents of Montclair. The difference is that the property is more highly valued in Montclair, so Montclair schools have much more money available for educational purposes.

My wife is an English teacher at the other high school in East Orange, Clifford Scott High, and I can attest from her experience to the lack of funds available for what other schools provide as a matter of course. This school is also about 99% black, and it is funded from the same district’s budget. Generally, overcrowded facilities and extra-large classes are commonplace. There are financial difficulties in providing multiple books for classrooms and the library, adequate computer stations, enough guidance counselors, support for teacher in-service efforts and professional travel to conferences, and other general educational supplies and equipment. These difficulties are examples of the results of historic underfunding. The school staff has become accustomed to accommodating, compromising, and stretching themselves in order to pursue the educational purposes for which the schools exist. Despite the major handicap imposed by significantly unequal funds, teachers and parents in East Orange share a pride in the accomplishments of their schools. But consider what could have been done if those schools had had funding equal to that provided other schools in the state.

The Puritanical premise that deprivation leads to ingenuity or “character” and is thus beneficial is intellectually dishonest. Its application to the have-nots but not to the haves suggests that it is instead a rationalization to justify poverty and disadvantage, not a well-reasoned and empirically supported position that all should suffer deprivation. Deprivation of the kind Kozol describes is, in fact, a
net loss both to the individuals afflicted and to the society that could benefit from well-educated citizens. The principal of a high school in Camden, which spends less than half as much per child as does Princeton, tells Kozol:

I am asked to speak sometimes in towns like Princeton. I tell them, "If you don't believe that money makes a difference, let your children go to school in Camden. Trade with our children—not beginning in the high school. Start when they're little, in the first or second grade." When I say this, people will not meet my eyes. They stare down at the floor (p. 145).

Kozol interviewed an urban planner with children in the Washington, D.C., schools who said:

We did a comparison of schools in Washington and schools out in the suburbs. A group of business leaders went with us. They found it sobering. One of them said, "If anybody thinks that money's not an issue, let the people in Montgomery County [a wealthy Maryland suburb by Washington] put their children in the D.C. schools. Parents in Montgomery would riot" (p. 184).

The planner goes on to describe some of the other schools visited in Washington, D.C. Some have ceiling holes and 20-gallon drums to catch rainwater; toilets in others were so unpleasant that the planner said she would not go to the bathroom if her life depended on it; another school had windows nailed shut despite heat and humidity.

In 1968, the Texas Supreme Court decided unanimously in the Rodriguez case that the disparity in per student spending between rich and poor districts was unconstitutional. The slow and halting response by Texas to the Rodriguez decision means that almost a quarter century later, per pupil spending in the poorest schools is about $2,000 per year, and in the richest it is about $19,000. Rich kids still get access to public schools 10 times more well financed than those attended by poor kids. Yet President Reagan's Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, appeared in Texas about 20 years after the Rodriguez decision and claimed that, "First, money is not the answer" (p. 227).

Similar court decisions in California and New Jersey have found the inequality in school financing to be so gross that it is unconstitutional. California's attempt to equalize spending sparked a tax revolt culminating in Proposition 13 and the incredible example of a state that is among the 10 wealthiest in the U.S. with school spending in the bottom 3 of the 50 states. The California "leveling down" process
has not been effective in correcting the equalization problem, and it carries the obvious risk of our most populous state and one of our wealthiest having school districts that are a national disgrace. The poorest districts in California spend about $3,000 per child, and the wealthiest spend well more than $7,000.

In New Jersey, a state income tax and major political wars followed the first state court decision 20 years ago that the disparity in school financing was unconstitutional. A second decision, just three years ago, found that the disparity remained. New taxes and a new state school funding law two years ago ignited a taxpayer revolt. In the backlash, the equalization portion of the new school-spending law was completely gutted. Within two years the incumbent state legislature, mainly Democratic, was replaced by a Republican majority which overturned a new sales tax and began new attacks on the equalization basis of the school spending law. One answer proposed by some current legislators to the constitutionality issue is to merely change the constitution so the state does not have the obligation for equity. That move would raise very serious questions about democracy, justice, equality, and social class warfare in New Jersey. Kozol notes that the poor children of Texas are still waiting for justice through equity in school spending. The same can be said for most other states.

School reform, a popular topic in the media during the 1980s and early 1990s, largely avoided the issue of finance reform for schooling. The federal government, despite actions taken during the reform efforts of the 1950s, did not increase its funding levels appreciably. In the 1980s, many states increased school spending overall, but little was done to address the basic equity issue. The disparities remained or increased. Most of the current reforms are designed to make the schools more dull and boring through drill and test preparation.

The recent reform movement is very reminiscent of the school reform efforts undertaken in the late 1950s and 1960s (Nelson, Carlson, Palonsky, 1993). Right-wing educational reformers of that period attacked the declining test scores of students, the permissive setting in schools, the progressivism of educational literature, the lack of a standard and traditional academic curriculum (e.g., too much squishy and possibly socialistic social studies rather than the 100 great “facts” that all true Americans must know from nationalistic American history), and the apparent softness in education. These attacks dated back to the McCarthy period, and the launching of Sputnik in 1957 coalesced national opinion that poor schooling was largely responsible for the Soviet ability to beat us in the space race.

The answer in the post-Sputnik era, although there were some differing opinions, was to make educational excellence our goal. Excellence is normally used as an opposite to equality; it presumes competitiveness where some rise and others fail. The Sputnik-
excellence movement concentrated on testing, homework, rigid and traditional basic curricula, and improvements for gifted students. Average and below average students, often those in already economically deprived schools, were ignored or further deprived. Our decline in international competitiveness and our general social malaise was blamed on schooling defects, and the response was to make school dreary, mechanical, and dull and to provide more funds for those already advantaged in society.

This all sounds very familiar today to those who understand the excellence movement of 30 years ago. The current excellence movement was fueled by national politics and such propagandistic reports as *A Nation at Risk* (1983), which argued that we are in a crisis with mediocrity enveloping the land. A barrage of media blasts blamed schools for the decline in test scores, for the failing of the U.S. in international economics and business, and for assorted other social evils. The current reform movement echoes the earlier one in its emphasis on technical adjustments to make school life drearier and test scores more significant than they deserve to be. We again have renewed interest in requiring even more traditional history to assure that everyone learns the same thing with the same interpretation. Scholarly critics of current reforms have argued eloquently that the movement is driven by conservative forces—another echo of the 1950s (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1983; Bastian, 1985; Presseisen, 1985; Giroux, 1988; Purpel, 1989).

Among the hidden elements of the contemporary political battles over school reform is the root inequity in school funding. One of the most publicized of recent school efforts is the privatization of public education, a new model for private schools that hopes to use public funds. President Bush advocated vouchers to use public funds to pay for private schooling; Benno Schmidt retired as president of Yale University to run a commercial enterprise devoted to private education. A market mentality suggests that public schools will do better if they have to compete. Lost in this discussion is what occurs to the very poor that Kozol portrays. Whose children are likely to be helped by public funds for private schools? Has school reform helped the poorest of schools or the poorest of children? Will vouchers end the plight of children like those who spoke with Kozol about dilapidated buildings, no books, rotating teachers, classes with too few seats, sewage and flood damage, and a diminished life?

Following the post-Sputnik burst of school reforms, there was a progressive reaction to the dull and mechanical schools that those

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1See *Social Education*, 54, November/December, 1990; and *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 20, Summer, 1992, for criticism of ideas expressed in *Charting a Course*, 1989, a publication of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools.
reforms ushered in. John Holt's personal account (Why Children Fail, 1964) of the results of reform and the sterile places that schools had become stirred the public conscience. Jonathan Kozol joined that call for more humane schooling with the publication of Death at an Early Age (1967). In this personalized account of life in a school filled with children from poor families, Kozol demonstrated his ability to understand the human loss that inadequate educational opportunity creates. His book was among several that addressed the rigidity and cultural conservatism of misbegotten school reforms in the 1950s and 1960s, and the impact they had on poor children.

Today there is another conservative surge to make the schools efficient and accountable. There is increasing concern among the well-to-do that legal proceedings to correct gross disparities in public school financing will include either leveling up, which costs massive amounts of tax dollars, or leveling down, which threatens their suburban schools. Kozol's newest book could be a lightning rod to address the depressing result of conservative school academic reforms of the past decade and the undemocratic result of deficiencies in school financial reform over the last century. At the least, it should attract attention to the human side of educational deprivation resulting from political action and inaction. In this, it speaks to civil rights and civil liberties, issues that make the book a suitable work for social educators to consider.

References


ESSAY REVIEW

Still A Seamless Web


Review by OLIVER M. KEELS, Berea College, CPO 1081, Berea, KY 40404.

When Charles Beard characterized the social studies with a phrase borrowed from Sir Frederick Maitland's earlier description of history, I doubt he suspected that 60 years later we would still be struggling to locate the seams in that web called the social studies. Not only do we continue to debate what social studies should be for our own time, but we have very little clarity as to what social studies was in its earliest years. I therefore received the announcement of David Saxe's forthcoming volume with considerable excitement. At last someone had undertaken the sleuthing that would bring evidence to light on the formative years of social studies in the schools. Finally we would have an update to Rolla Tryon's compilation of research on course offerings and enrollments, and of school administrators' reports to accreditation agencies that their programs conformed to this or that national recommendation (Tryon, 1935). I hoped to find application of recent historiographical methods, and I hoped to find citations leading to rich new sources. Misled by the title, I was disappointed. Professor Saxe did not write the book I had hoped for.

What Saxe does offer is a detailed argument that social studies can trace its origins to the work of the 1913-1916 Committee on Social Studies of the National Education Association. Rejecting the view that social studies "was an outgrowth of the traditional history curriculum," Saxe argues instead that "the birth and growth of the social studies movement had its own set of unique beginnings" (p. 1). The first chapter is devoted to discussion of the various uses of the terms social studies, social education, and social science and to a discussion of both common and divergent meanings granted to these terms by users in the decades before 1920. In delineating the specialized nature of these disciplinary rubrics, Saxe begins to establish what he sees as the differentiating tradition of social studies—a discipline that paradoxically emerges from strands of social and academic thought that at times had conflicting elements.
Chapters two, three, and four establish the nature and role of what is labeled "traditional history." Saxe, I think correctly, sets the beginnings of modern secondary school history curricula at the historical juncture of two important manifestations of late 19th century historicism. In one thread illustrated by the psychological and pedagogical work of G. Stanley Hall, William Torrey Harris, and B. A. Hinsdale, he identifies a curricular justification for serious historical study which contrasted with the existing mixture of myth, parable, and chronicle that stood for history in the schools. The second thread was the fledgling profession of college-based, academic historians who by 1900 were speaking through an increasingly influential American Historical Association (AHA). As advocates of a scientific history, historians defined the traditional history curriculum, and through their growing influence oversaw the institutionalization of history curricula in the burgeoning secondary school system. Saxe provides a detailed examination of the two seminal statements of traditional history—the 1892 Madison Conference Report and the 1899 Committee of Seven Report.

Chapter four explores the status of history study in the first 15 years of this century, and it introduces the elements of dissatisfaction that provided the impetus for reform. Saxe examines the initial reaction of traditional history advocates illustrated by John Bach McMaster and Jane Addams. Although McMaster and Addams envisioned quite different purposes for history, Saxe sees both coming down on the side of a traditional history curriculum. General dissatisfaction persisted, however, and the AHA was persuaded to reexamine its Committee of Seven recommendations. This led to the Committee of Five, whose report basically rubberstamped the Committee of Seven's work. Since Andrew McLaughlin chaired both committees, it should not be surprising that this later 1910 report offered little substantive change and that the Committee of Five had little influence. On this interpretation of the influence of the Committee of Five, Saxe is substantially in agreement with most other students of the early social studies. He believes, however, that in this ineffectuality there is insight into the origins of the social studies, because it was the Committee of Five that "in effect ended the locus of curricular control among academic historians" (p. 93). Saxe concludes the chapter with a summary of three contemporaneous surveys of history in the schools, which he claims demonstrate the dominance of traditional history.

In the final two chapters, Saxe presents the heart of his argument. The work of the 1913-1916 Committee on Social Studies established a social studies insurgency that challenged advocates of traditional history for control of the secondary school curriculum. These social studies insurgents were part of a broader movement of social
progressives and efficiency advocates who dominated the National Council of the National Education Association and sought to influence all elements of secondary school curricula. Saxe contends that "through the persistent efforts of such men as David Snedden and Clarence Kingsley, traditional history's hold at the theoretical level in school curricula began to erode" (p. 143). He examines the reports issued by the Committee on Social Studies and the role of the leading protagonists in shaping the report as a document of insurgency. The last pages of Saxe's work discuss the impact of World War I on the debate, ending with his assertion that the traditional history advocates colluded to quiet the insurgents by denying them an opportunity to argue their case in the only major national publication devoted to history and social studies in schools, *The History Teachers' Magazine*.

The actual text of the book is a rather slim 179 pages. The remainder of the total of 310 numbered pages is given to appendices, notes, bibliography, and index. Arguably, among the best features of the volume is the appendix of the various publications of the Committee on Social Studies. The publisher deserves a commendation for being willing to assume this added expense. The real strength of the work is not in Saxe's new interpretations (which are not that new, only more forcefully expressed), but in the synthesis of what I would call the tradition of social studies as an educationist creation. Saxe gives us the best available treatment of this interpretation that seeks an origin for social studies outside a collegiate matrix. It does not, however, explain the history of the social studies. It merely gives one perspective on a very confusing past, as does Jenness (1990) in his recent work, and as did Tryon (1935), Johnson (1932), and Wesley (1937) half a century ago.

Earlier, I mentioned my wish that Saxe had written a different book, a study which I think is desperately needed in the historiography of social studies; however, before explaining why I think such a work is needed, I wish to focus specific criticism on the volume Saxe has written. I should say at the outset that I am in fundamental disagreement with much of what he has written. But beyond that, I also believe that he has presented a seriously flawed piece of historical scholarship. My basic dissatisfaction with this volume is due to what I perceive as woefully inadequate research. Every primary source employed reflects solely public utterances. Not a single piece of private correspondence was cited. Saxe makes no reference to archival sources, and he fails even to employ any of the available published collections of correspondence. This is especially apparent in his attempt to demonstrate the existence of a traditional history curriculum. He should have at the very least examined the select correspondence of the historians who were most influential.

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1 Renamed *Historical Outlook* in 1918.
Oliver M. Keels

among historians—H.B. Adams in the 1890s, J. Franklin Jameson, and Frederick Jackson Turner in the first two decades of this century, and Carl Becker as a mirror to the rising tide of progressive history.2

I also wonder about the absence of references to any private papers of the members of the Committee on the Social Studies. Saxe establishes a pivotal connection between several committee members and the sociologists Giddings, Vincent, and Small in explaining the “decidedly ahistorical approach” of the Committee on Social Studies (p. 147). He bases this interpretation solely on the fact that important members of the committee had studied under these three sociologists. Do these members assert the direct, formative influence Saxe implies? When did they study under these sociologists? Was their study the close kind—intense, over a long period—that might foster mentorship? I cannot speak for all three sociologists, but through the 1890s, Albion Small was far from ahistorical. He was a leading proponent for the view that sociology was the true history. Without more evidence, Saxe’s position is mere speculation. What he gives us is representative of a fallacy in historical method akin to the statistical error of equating correlation with causation. One could easily offer an alternative speculation based on textual similarities; for example, the concerns expressed in the report of the Committee on Social Studies resemble so closely the ideas of Herbert Croly (1965) in The Promise of American Life that this has to be seen as the origin of their notions of purpose and focus of social studies. This is especially likely since this book (first published in 1909) was perhaps the single most influential work in the formative years of progressive liberal thought. Both interpretations become equally valid speculations without evidence. Only through a deeper examination of the personal and reflective comments of individuals can one trace the origin and nature of the formative influence of others.

Although Saxe makes less of the personal relationship between Dewey and James Harvey Robinson than others who have looked at this period in the history of the social studies, an existing piece of correspondence is very suggestive of alternative influences. In response to claims that he had greatly influenced his very close friend Robinson during the work of the Committee on Social Studies, Dewey wrote to Merle Curti in 1950 that “influence, as far as it existed, was of J. H. on me, not of me on him.”3 Although this was written long after the fact by a man in his 90s, it still raises questions about how ideas were moving among the protagonists in this period. Quotes and citations from

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Dewey appear throughout the report of the Committee on Social Studies; references to Giddings and Vincent do not. How then do we determine formative influences on the shapers of the report? What did Robinson, Dunn, or Kingsley say about the sources of influence on their thinking? What citations are meant to add academic credibility, and what is meant as truly reflective of some deep, personal influence? Did anyone on the committee keep notes or minutes of their meetings and discussions? Far more evidence is needed to give credence to Saxe's interpretations of the intellectual forces that shaped the report of the Committee on the Social Studies.

Perhaps the most egregious example of Saxe's tendency to make claims that go beyond what is warranted by the evidence is found toward the end of the text. Noting the absence of the promised debate over the Committee on the Social Studies report in The History Teachers' Magazine, Saxe asserts that "the war led the magazine's editors, together with the historians, to close ranks and shut out the insurgents" (p. 172). In his footnote to this statement, he cites no evidence whatsoever to support his claim. He merely describes the prowar sentiment of the editor, Albert McKinley, and describes antiwar sentiment that could have been included but was not. Nothing in the footnote even relates to the collusion between the editor and other historians. Where is the direct evidence that supports such a claim? Is there correspondence between McKinley and the Historical Services Board that discusses editorial policy? Evidence might exist in the papers of the American Historical Association in the Library of Congress or in some as yet undiscovered collection of McKinley's papers.

I actually suspect that Saxe is partially correct and that there is evidence somewhere that the Historical Services Board did attempt to influence publishers, but I am very doubtful that one will find specific evidence that McKinley and historians colluded to shut out social studies insurgents. As it stands now, however, there is no evidence to support Saxe's assertion, and his statement is at best nothing more than hyperbole.

My fundamental disagreement with Saxe merges with questions about the adequacy of his research on the existence of a traditional history curriculum. I think he has built a straw man with this superficial construct. It implies a monolithic notion of what constituted history in the minds of historians, a notion that had ceased to exist by the end of the 1890s, if it ever really had any philosophical substance at all. The rebellion of the "young Turks" among professional historians in the mid-1890s—led by Woodrow Wilson, J. Franklin Jameson, and Frederick Jackson Turner as they established the American Historical Review—initiated an ongoing definitional tension that increasingly dominated the professional concerns of historians throughout the first decades of this century. Progressive history did not supplant objectivist,
scientific history overnight with Beard's AHA presidential address in 1933. It had become dominant in historical practice by the end of World War I at the latest. The writings of Charles Beard and Carl Becker were the new models of historical practice before 1920. By 1910, Turner was at Harvard, and Jameson was with the Carnegie Foundation in Washington, placing both in positions of influence unmatched among professional historians. The few professionals who did advocate a view of history akin to what Saxe calls traditional history—most prominent being A. B. Hart, George B. Adams, and Charles H. Haskins—were not the definers of history in the minds of historians in the years after 1910.

The one historian chosen by Saxe to illustrate reaction to early criticism of traditional history, John Bach McMaster, had relatively little standing among historians. He was trained to be an engineer, so to the emerging profession of historians, he was an amateur. His professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and his popularity as a writer of history made him quasi professional at best. Even Andrew McLaughlin, who chaired both the Committee of Seven and the Committee of Five (the pillars of traditional history curriculum), placed himself outside the traditional category. Responsible for arranging a session on history teaching at an AHA meeting, he wrote to Charles Haskins in search of help, "Is there anyone else whom I could get who has sense and yet who would take the very conservative position?" McLaughlin's dilemma does not suggest that traditionalists were falling out of the woodwork, especially those of notable standing in the profession. Saxe's attempt to construct an antithetical force to his insurgency in the supporters among professional historians of a traditional history curriculum just does not hold up to scrutiny. The view of history expressed in the report of the Committee on Social Studies was actually closer to the mainstream view of history in 1916 than was traditional history. Rather than insurgency to a dominant, established profession of hidebound scientific historians concerned only with the presentation of facts, the Committee on Social Studies worked in synchrony with a rapidly changing view among historians of the purpose and method of history.

Had Saxe looked more deeply at the standard literature which explores the development of professional history, I think he would have recognized the inadequacy of his traditional history construct. His bibliography reveals only one of the more significant post-1970 works: The Emergence of Professional Social Science by Thomas Haskell (1977). Missing are a number of earlier standards, most noticeably the book-length works of David Hackett Fischer (1970),

4 A. C. McLaughlin to Charles H. Haskins, September 8, 1908. Papers of the American Historical Association, Box 243, Library of Congress.
Jurgen Herbst (1965), and Richard Hofstadter (1968). He also fails to mention the important post-1970 works by Burton Bledstein (1976) and Mary Furner (1975), and an instructive essay by Deborah Haines (1977). More importantly, however, is his failure to examine the very important recent work of Peter Novick (1988): That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession. Here Novick provides a picture of historians that reflects their diverse ideological and social perspectives, and delineates the dynamic forces that helped shape the development of a new interpretive historiography. Although Novick gives little direct attention to the numerous debates over history in the common school curricula, his exploration of the tensions within the discipline offers a striking parallel to the ongoing debates over school social studies. Historians were like professionals throughout the academic world in their efforts to come to grips with the emerging pragmatic world view. Simplistic labels that typecast historians as slavish followers of 19th century scientism do a terrible injustice to the reality of early 20th century historical practice. Novick's characterization of the profession stands in stark contrast to Saxe's picture of rigid enthusiasts of traditional history.

It should be obvious by now that I feel Saxe, even in respect to the somewhat limited goals he set for himself, has not given us the kind of scholarly treatment that a history of the social studies needs. My evaluation is certainly harsh. I do not feel that Saxe has conformed satisfactorily to achievable standards of historical practice. The models of excellence, however, are not in social studies. Given standards drawn from the feeble historiography of social studies, my judgment would be quite different, far less harsh, perhaps even somewhat laudatory. But I am convinced that we will never succeed in finding the seams in the web of our discipline's past if we continue the superficial efforts that have so far characterized our work. Even as we continue to explore the writings of those thinkers whom we credit with shaping the discipline, we must examine deeply the private utterances that give context to their public expressions. We must also give far more attention to the institutional dynamics of schooling. While I am certainly no cliometrician, I do recognize the need to clarify the muddled, confusing, statistical picture of pre-1920 schooling. 

5 The review essay of Novick by James Kloppenberg (1989) also offers very important insights. Kloppenberg challenges Novick's dichotomy of objectivism versus relativism, preferring a Jamesian notion of pragmatic hermeneutics to explain the acceptance of progressive thought in the academic world.

6 The contradictions that one finds in looking at this early period could provide a lifetime of research questions; some examples: If there was such wholesale adoption of the Committee of Seven report, why is it that as late as 1912 so many colleges still demanded only a year of history (Kingsley, 1913)? Did a year of study in 1905 mean the same thing as a year of study following the adoption of the Carnegie Unit? What was the pattern of change caused by the implementation of the Carnegie Unit?
Oliver M. Keels

convinced that there are sources being overlooked that will help give clarity to the confusing historical picture of the discipline’s past. I am also convinced that until we start uncovering new sources and employing richer and more innovative historical methods, the history of the early social studies will not be written.

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 about purposes, conditions, and effects of schooling and education about society and social relations.

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