SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATION AND STANDARDS-BASED EDUCATION REFORM IN NORTH AMERICA: CURRICULUM STANDARDIZATION, HIGH-STAKES TESTING, AND RESISTANCE

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ABSTRACT

Social studies have a contentious history as a school subject and this article begins with an overview of the historically competing viewpoints on the nature and purposes of social studies education in the North American context. Next, we provide a critical examination of recent educational reforms in the USA (No Child Left Behind and Common Core State Standards), which use high-stakes testing as a tool for standardizing the social studies curriculum and teaching methods. The final section of the article examines both the significant levels of resistance to high-stakes testing and curriculum standardization by students, teachers, and the public and the question of whether social studies education will promote citizenship that is adaptive to the status quo or the reconstruction society in more equitable and socially just ways.

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EDUCACIÓN EN ESTUDIOS SOCIALES Y REFORMA DE LA EDUCACIÓN BASADA EN ESTÁNDARES EN NORTE AMÉRICA: ESTANDARIZACIÓN DEL CURRÍCULO, PRUEBAS DE ALTA EXIGENCIA Y RESISTENCIA

RESUMEN

Los estudios sociales tienen una historia contenciosa como asignatura escolar y este artículo comienza con una visión general de los puntos de vista que históricamente compiten sobre la naturaleza y fines de la educación de estudios sociales en el contexto de América del Norte. A continuación, se ofrece un examen crítico de las reformas educativas recientes en los EE.UU. (Ningún Niño se Queda Atrás y los Estándares Estatales Comunes), que utilizan las pruebas de alta exigencia como una herramienta para estandarizar el currículo de estudios sociales y los métodos de enseñanza. La sección final del artículo examimna tanto los niveles significativos de resistencia de los estudiantes, profesores y el público a las pruebas de alta exigencia y a la estandarización del currículo y la pregunta de si la educación en estudios sociales promoverá ciudadanía adaptable al status quo o a la reconstrucción de la sociedad en formas mas equitativas y socialmente más justas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: propósitos de la educación en studios socials, educación ciudadana, estándares curriculares, reforma educativa, pruebas de alta exigencia, rersistencia de los profesores.

SOCIAL STUDIES AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

Social studies are the most inclusive of all school subjects. Stanley and Nelson, for example, define social studies education as "the study of all human enterprise over time and space" (1994: 266). Determining what is included in the social studies curriculum requires facing key questions about social knowledge, skills, and values, including how best to organize them with respect to specific subject matters (e.g., history, geography, anthropology, etc.) and in relation to the unique subjectivities of teachers and their students. Given this, it is not surprising that social studies has been racked by intellectual battles over its purpose, content, and pedagogy since its very inception as a school subject in the early part of the 20th century.

The roots of social studies curriculum in North America are found in the 1916 report of the Committee on Social Studies of the National Education Association's (N.E.A.) Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Schools. The final report of the committee, *The Social Studies in Secondary Education*, illustrates the influence of previous N.E.A. and American Historical Association committees regarding history in schools, but more importantly, emphasized the development of 'good' citizenship values in students and established the pattern of course offerings in social studies that remained consistent for the past century (Jorgensen, 2012).

Throughout its history the social studies curriculum has been an ideological battleground in which such diverse curricular programs as the "life adjustment movement," progressive education, social reconstructionism, and nationalistic history have held sway at various times. The debate over the nature, purpose, and content of the social studies curriculum continues today, with competing groups variously arguing for a "social issues approach," the "disciplinary study of history and geography," or action for social justice as the most appropriate framework for the social studies curriculum (Evans, 2004; Hursh & Ross, 2000; Jorgensen, 2012; Thornton, 2004). As with the curriculum field in general, social studies curriculum has historically been defined by a lack of strong consensus and contentiousness over it goals and methods.

But there has been at least superficial agreement that the purpose of social studies is "to prepare youth so that they possess the knowledge, values, and skills needed for active participation in society" (Marker & Mehlinger, 1992: 832), but the content and pedagogies of social studies education have been greatly affected by various social and political agendas. What does it mean to be a 'good citizen'? Arguments have been made that students can develop 'good citizenship' not only through the long-privileged study of history (Whelan, 1997), but also through the examination of contemporary social problems (Evans & Saxe, 1996), public policy (Oliver & Shaver, 1966), social roles (Superka & Hawke, 1982), social taboos (Hunt & Metcalf, 1968) or by becoming astute critics of one's society (Engle & Ochoa, 1988).

Competing viewpoints within social studies education

Because of the diversity of viewpoints on the meaning of citizenship education —and thus diversity in the purposes, content, and pedagogy of social studies education— social studies educators have devoted considerable attention to identifying categories

and descriptions of the major traditions with the field. Various schemes have been used by researchers to make sense of the wide ranging and often conflicting purposes (Vinson, 1998). The most influential of these was developed by Barr, Barth and Shermis (1977), who grouped the various positions on the social studies curriculum into three themes: Cultural transmission, social science, and reflective inquiry. Martorella's (1996) framework extends the work of Barr, Barth, and Shermis, and includes social studies education as: (1) citizenship transmission; (2) social science; (3) reflective inquiry; (4) informed social criticism; and (5) personal development. Each perspective is briefly summarized below.

Social studies as citizenship (or cultural) transmission

In this tradition, the purpose of social studies education is to promote student acquisition of certain nationalistic or 'democratic' values via the teaching and learning of discrete, factual pieces of information drawn primarily from the canon of Western thought and culture. Content is based on the beliefs that: Certain factual information is important to the practice of good citizenship; the nature of this information remains relatively constant over time; and this information is best determined by a consensus of authorities and experts. From this perspective, diversity of experience and multiculturalism are downplayed, ignored, or actively challenged. Cultural and social unity are proclaimed and praised. In the curriculum, history and literature dominate over such considerations as learner interests, the social sciences, social criticism, and personal-subjective development. This perspective has long been dominant in the field and has seen resurgence (see, for example, recent revisions to social studies curriculum in Texas and Florida) (Craig, 2006; Foner, 2010).

Social studies as social science

This tradition evolved during the Cold War and directly out of the post-Sputnik effort of social scientists to have a say in the design, development, and implementation of the social studies curriculum. From this viewpoint, each individual social discipline (e.g., political science, history, economics, and geography) can be considered in terms of its own distinct structure of concepts, theories, and modes of empirical inquiry. In educational scholarship this idea was most widely and successfully advanced by psychologist Jerome Bruner (1969, 1977), and curriculum theorist J. J. Schwab (1969); it formed, in part, the basis for what became known as the "new social studies" (Fenton, 1966; Massialas, 1992).

In this tradition, citizenship education includes mastering social science concepts, generalizations, and processes to build a knowledge base for later learning. Social studies education provides students with the social scientific content and procedures for successful citizenship, and for understanding, and acting upon the human condition in its historical, contemporary, political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. In general, instructional methods include those that develop within learners the characteristics of social scientists, characteristics indicative of conceptual understandings as well as modes of strategic inquiry (e.g., an anthropology course might focus conceptually on 'culture' and methodologically on 'ethnography' as was the case with the curriculum project Man: A Course of Study).[1]

Social studies scholars have recently moved away from the more traditional social studies as social science approach to disciplinary structure and toward increasingly complex interrogations of the importance of particular constructions of the specific social and historical disciplines. From this newer perspective, academics, teachers, and students all have some understanding of the structure of the various social sciences that relates to how they produce, use, and disseminate disciplinary knowledge. These ideas of disciplinary conceptualizations influence all individual modes of teaching and learning. Thus, it is impossible to teach social studies according to any other approach without simultaneously maintaining some structural comprehension of the knowledge and modes of inquiry of the various academic disciplines. There are, however, competing and dynamic possibilities such that teachers, and students may each possess a unique orientation. Within the social studies, much of this contemporary work has focused upon history education, and has emphasized multiple, complex instructional approaches, constructivist understandings of meaning, the production and interpretation of text, historical sense-making, and interdisciplinary conceptions of content (e.g., Sexias, 2004; VanSledright & Afflerbach, 2000).

23

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[1] Man: A Course of Study (MACOS) is a curriculum project from the 1970s, funded by the National Science Foundation. Students studied the lives and culture of the Inuit of the Canadian Artic to see their own society in a new and different way. Students were asked to consider the questions: What is human about human beings? How did they get that way? How can they be made more so? The core curriculum materials included the Netsilik Film Series, which captured a year in the life of an Inuit family and became an acclaimed achievement in visual anthropology. The curriculum, and particularly the films, became the subject of a major political and educational controversy in the United States. Print materials from the project are available for non-commercial use at http://www.macosonline.org. The documentary *Through These Eyes* (Laird, 2004) examines the curriculum and the controversy it sparked and includes excerpts from the Netsilik Film Series. *Through These Eyes* (http://www.nfb.ca/film/through_these_eyes/), and the Netsilik Film Series (http://www.nfb.ca/explore-all-directors/quentin-brown) can also be viewed on the website of the National Film Board.

Social studies as reflective inquiry

This approach to social studies developed originally out of the work of John Dewey (1933), particularly his socio-cognitive psychology and philosophical pragmatism. From this position, citizenship remains the core of the social studies. But unlike citizenship transmission, in which citizenship rests on the acquisition of pre-established values and content, or social science, where citizenship involves the range of academic social disciplines, citizenship here stresses relevant problem-solving or meaningful decision-making within a specific socio-political context.

From this perspective, then, the purpose of social studies education is nurturing within students abilities necessary for decision making in some specified socio-political context (e.g., liberal democratic capitalism), especially with respect to social and personal problems that directly affect individual students. This presupposes a necessary connection between democracy and problem solving, one in which the key assumption behind this link is that within the social-political system significant problems rarely imply a single, overt, and/or 'correct' solution. Such problems frequently require decisions between several perceived good solutions and/or several perceived bad solutions. Democracy thus necessitates a citizenry capable of and competent in the identification of problems, the collection, evaluation, and analysis of data and the making of reasoned decisions. Dewey's work on democratic reflective thinking led to the evolution of a powerful pragmatic theory of education, prominent during the early to middle post-World War II era, spearheaded in social education by Hunt and Metcalf (1968) and Engle (1987). The continuing influence of this tradition in social studies is found in works by authors such as Evans and Saxe (1996), and Ross (1994). By carrying forward Dewey's legacy, these scholars offer an alternative to the social sciences per se and to contemporary 'back to basics' movements, one grounded in reflective decision making centered on so-called 'closed areas' or taboo topics representing a precise time and place—or, more precisely, problem solving within a specific socio-political context.

Social studies as informed social criticism

This framework is rooted in the work of social reconstructionists (Brameld, 1956; Counts, 1932), and related to the more recent work of 'socialization-

countersocialization' theorists (Engle & Ochoa, 1988), and critical pedagogues.[2] The contemporary literature primarily addresses themes such as the hidden curriculum, socio-cultural transformation, and the nature and meaning of knowledge and truth. The work of Nelson (e.g., 1985; Nelson & Pang in this volume), Stanley (1985), and Hursh and Ross (2000) perhaps best represents the current status of this tradition. From this standpoint the purpose of social studies is citizenship education aimed at providing students opportunities for an examination, critique, and revision of past traditions, existing social practices, and modes of problem solving. It is a citizenship education directed toward:

> Social transformation [as] defined as the continuing improvement of […] society by applying social criticism and ethical decision making to social issues, and using the values of justice and equality as grounds for assessing the direction of social change that should be pursued (Stanley & Nelson, 1986: 530).

Social studies content in this tradition challenges the injustices of the status quo. It counters knowledge that is: Generated by and supportive of society's elites; rooted in logical positivism; and consistent with social reproduction and the replication of a society that is classist, sexist, and racist. While it is specific to individual classroom settings and students, it can include, for example, redressing the needs of the disadvantaged, increasing human rights conditions and stimulating environmental improvements. Moreover, teachers and students here may claim their own knowledge's —their content, their individual and cultural experiences— as legitimate. Instruction methods in this tradition are situational, but are oriented away from lecture and information transmission and toward such processes as 'reflective thinking' and the dialogical method (Shor & Freire, 1987), socio-cultural criticism, textual analysis, deconstruction (Cherryholmes, 1980, 1982), problem-solving, critical thinking, and social action.

Social studies as personal development

Focusing again on the role of citizenship education, this position reflects the belief that citizenship education should consist of developing a positive self-concept and a strong sense of personal efficacy among students. It is grounded in the idea that

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[2] Also important here are earlier works by authors such as Anyon (1979); Bowles & Gintis (1976), Freire (1970), and Willis (1977/1981).

effective democratic citizenship involves understanding one's freedom to make choices as well as one's obligation and responsibility to live with their ultimate outcomes. Social studies content is selected and pursued by the students themselves so that it is embedded in the nature, needs, and interests of the learners. Instructional methods are shared between teachers and students, but include techniques such as Kilpatrick's 'project method,' various forms of individualized instruction, and the Socratic method of dialogue. For in essence, this approach evolved out of the child-centered progressive education movement of the early 20th century and within the settings of humanistic psychology and existential philosophy. Its best-known contemporary advocates include Nel Noddings (1992), and in the social studies scholars such as Pearl Oliner (1983).

SOCIAL STUDIES, CURRICULUM STANDARDS, AND SCHOOL REFORM

Since its formal introduction into the school, social studies has been the subject of numerous commission and blue-ribbon panel studies, ranging from the sixteen-volume report of the American Historical Association's Commission on Social Studies in the 1930s to the recent movement for national curriculum standards in the U.S. Virtually all of the subject-matter-based professional groups in the United States undertook the development of curriculum standards during in the 1990s. With the relative success of the 1989 National Council for Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) curriculum and evaluation standards, other associations, including a number in the social studies, joined the movement with high hopes. There are separate and competing standards for US and global history, geography, economics, civics, psychology, and social studies. And these are just the national standards. There were often companion state-level and, sometimes, local district curriculum standards as well.[3]

The emphasis in school reform in North America for the past two decades has been the development of a 'world-class' school that can be directly linked to increased international economic production and prominence. In the U.S. this emphasis can be traced to the 1989 education summit in Charlottesville, Virginia, which gave rise to the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* subsequently passed by Congress in 1994 and endorsed by the National Governors Association (Ross, 2001). And even further

[3] See http://www.education-world.com/standards/national/soc_sci/index.shtml, for a substantial overview of these standards at all levels.

back to the *A Nation at Risk* report of 1983. In that report, American educational performance was linked to the decline in the "once unchallenged preeminence [of the United States] in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation." The report focused on raising expectations for student learning. The National Commission on Excellence in Education encouraged states and local school districts to adopt tougher graduation standards (such as requiring students to take more courses), extend the school year, and administer standardized tests as part of a nationwide, although not federal, system of accountability. Every presidential administration from Reagan to Obama has intensified efforts to reform education to serve economic needs as defined by what is in the best interests of corporate capital. The primary tools of these efforts have been curriculum standards linked to high-stakes tests (e.g., Carr & Porfilio, 2011; Gabbard & Ross, 2008; Gorlewski & Porfilio, 2013; Saltman & Gabbard, 2010; Vinson & Ross, 2000).

The term 'educational standards' is used, though, in different ways Kohn (1996) distinguishes between a horizontal and vertical notion of standards. Horizontal standards refer to "guidelines for teaching, the implication being that we should change the nature of instruction." The emphasis in the NCTM Standards on problem solving and conceptual understanding, rather than rote memorization of facts and algorithms, is a good example of this use of higher standards. "By contrast, when you hear someone say that we need to 'raise standards,' that represents a vertical shift, a claim that students ought to know more, do more, perform better." The term standards is therefore used to refer to both the criteria by which we judge a student, teacher, school, and so on, as well as the level of performance deemed acceptable on those criteria (Mathison, 2003).

Vinson and Ross (2001) sum up what standards-based education reform (SBER) is. SBER is an effort on the part of some official body —a governmental agency (like the US Department of Education or British Columbia Ministry of Education) or a professional education association (like the NCSS)— to define and establish a holistic system of pedagogical purpose (like *Goals 2000*), content selection (like curriculum standards), teaching methodology (like the promotion of phonics), and assessment (like government-mandated tests). These intents combine such that: (1) the various components of classroom practice are interrelated and mutually reinforcing to the extent they each coalesce around the others, and (2) performance is completely subsumed by the assessment component which serves as the indicator of relative success or failure.

There are a number of assumptions underlying the invocation of standards-based educational reform.

- Students do not know enough.
- Curriculum standards and assessment will lead to higher achievement.
- Standards are necessary to ensure national/state/provincial competitiveness in world markets.
- Federal guidance and local control can coexist.
- Centralized accountability and bottom-up initiative and creativity are coherent aims.
- Standardization will promote equal educational opportunity.
- 'Experts' from outside the classroom are best positioned to determine what ought to be taught and how in schools.

These assumptions generally untested and without much supporting evidence, are shared by many along the political spectrum creating a strong pro-standards alliance.

Social studies curriculum standards

While in most subject matter areas there has been a univocal call for and representation of curriculum standards, in social studies there are no fewer than six sponsors of curriculum standards and ten standards documents competing to influence the content and pedagogy of social education.[4]

The most generic curriculum standards are those created by the National Council for the Social Studies (original released in 1994 and revised in 2010). As indicated earlier these standards seek to create a broad framework of themes within which local decision can be made about specific content. Specifically, the ten thematic strands are the following.

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[4] Curriculum standard sponsors, documents, and websites. (1) NCSS: Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies, (socialstudies.org); (2) National Center for History in the Schools: (a) Historical Thinking Standards; (b) History Standards for Grades K-4; (c) United States History Content Standards; (d) World History Content Standards; (http://www.nchs.ucla.edu/Standards/); (3) Center for Civic Education: National Standards for Civics and Government (http://new.civiced.org/resources/publications/resource-materials/national-standards-for-civics-and-government); (4) National Council for Geographic Education: Geography for Life: National Geography Standards, 2nd Edition (http://ncge.org/geography-for-life); (5) Council for Economic Education: National Content Standards in Economics (http://www.councilforeconed.org/resource/voluntary-national-content-standards-in-economics/); (6) American Psychological Association: National Standards for High School Psychology Curriculum (http://www.apa.org/education/k12/national-standards.aspx).

- Culture.
- Time, Continuity and Change.
- People, Places, and Environment.
- Individual Development and Identity.
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions.
- Power, Authority, and Governance.
- Production, Distribution, and Society.
- Science, Technology, and Society.
- Global Connections.
- Civic Ideals and Practices.

In contrast, the history standards prepared by the National Center for History in Schools, are much more specific, especially for grades 5-12, and provide both a sense of how children should think (historically) and about what. Contrast both the NCSS and the history standards with those published by the American Psychological Association for the teaching of high school psychology. These standards mimic the study of psychology at the collegiate level, including a focus on research methods and the sub-disciplines of psychology.[5] None of these standards documents accounts for the others—each is a closed system that maintains the particular discipline intact. In addition, these multiple sets of standards, when combined with state/provincial curriculum documents, identify too many educational outcomes to be taught and learned in the time allocated, what Popham (2008) identifies as one of the fatal mistakes of SBER.

Implementing standards based reform through high-stakes testing

Advocating higher standards (either vertical or horizontal) makes a difference only if there is a clear sense of how we will know if higher standards have been attained. The single most critical, even overwhelming, indicator used in SBER is standardized tests, especially high-stakes tests. High-stakes tests are those for which there are real consequences —such as retention, required summer school, graduation, pay increases, budget cuts, and district take-overs— for students, teachers, and schools (Heubert & Hauser, 1998). In virtually every state, the adoption of higher standards has been accompanied by the creation of high-stakes standardized test or changes to existing testing programs that make them high stakes.

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[5] Links to all these standards, and other standards documents can be found at: http://www.educationworld.com/standards/national/soc_sci/index.shtml.

The frequency with which standardized tests are employed and the faith in their power to reform schools, teaching, and learning seem ironic. Nonetheless, even the most prominent of educational measurement experts judges the ever more sophisticated testing technology as inadequate for most of the purposes to which it is put, a refrain heard from an ever enlarging group (Mathison & Ross, 2008; Mehrens, 1998; Popham, 2008; Sacks, 1999). As one of the world's leading educational measurement experts summarized,

> as someone who has spent his entire career doing research, writing, and thinking about educational testing and assessment issues, I would like to conclude by summarizing a compelling case showing that the major uses of tests for student and school accountability during the past fifty years have improved education and student learning in dramatic ways. Unfortunately, this is not my conclusion. Instead, I am led to conclude that in most cases the instruments and technology have not been up to the demands that have been placed on them by high-stakes accountability. Assessment systems that are useful monitors lose much of their dependability and credibility for that purpose when high stakes are attached to them. The unintended negative effects of high-stakes accountability uses often outweigh the intended positive effects (Linn, 2000: 14).

As Popham (2008) notes, this failure is often a result of schools using the wrong tests in a SBER context, either norm referenced tests or state standards tests that include a smattering of all standards in a subject area. Both types are what Popham calls "instructionally insensitive.

THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are the most recent incarnation of curriculum documents that define what will be taught and how it will be taught in schools. CCSS reflects the same language and concerns as other SBER efforts with an emphasis on 'world class' standards, 21st Century Skills, and a logic that sees schools as serving the needs of corporate capitalism at the expense of educating individuals to contribute to the commonwealth. CCSS also creates new markets to be exploited by corporations. As Au (2013) explains,

> there is certainly money to be made. Some conservative groups

like the Pioneer Institute and American Principles Project suggest a mid-range estimation that the CCSS implementation will cost $15.8 billion over seven years: $1.2 billion for assessments, $5.3 billion for professional development, $6.9 billion for tech infrastructure and support (Accountability Works, 2012). The Fordham Institute predicts the CCSS could cost $12.1 billion over the next 1-3 years (Murphy, Regenstein & McNamara, 2012). Given this potential market for private industry, it is not surprising that *The New York Times* reports venture capital investment in public education has increased 80% since 2005 to a total of $632 million as of 2012 (Rich, 2013). The development of the CCSS and the consequent rolling out of assessments, preparation materials, professional development, and other CCSS-related infrastructure fits quite well with the neoliberal project of reframing public education around the logics of private businesses (Apple, 2006) as well as the shifting of public monies into the coffers of for-profit corporations through private contracts (Burch, 2009).

Some educators claims the Common Core offers a more progressive, student-centered, constructivist approach to learning as opposed to the 'drill and kill' test prep and scripted curriculum of NCLB classrooms (Au, 2013; The Trouble with the Common Core, 2013). But as the editors of *Rethinking Schools* point out, these advantages will likely disappear once the tests for the Common Core arrive. CCSS are for all intents and purposes, NCLB 2.0, with the closing the achievement gap rhetoric removed (Au, 2013).

We have seen this show before. The entire country just finished a decade-long experiment in standards-based, test-driven school reform called No Child Left Behind. NCLB required states to adopt "rigorous" curriculum standards and test students annually to gauge progress towards reaching them. Under threat of losing federal funds, all 50 states adopted or revised their standards and began testing every student, every year in every grade from 3–8 and again in high school. (Before NCLB, only 19 states tested all kids every year, after NCLB all 50 did.) (The Trouble with the Common Core, 2013: 8).

CCSS are the product of the same coalition that produced previous SBER efforts—the major U.S. political parties, corporate elites, for-profit education companies, and the U.S. teacher unions, along with most cultural conservatives and not a few supposed liberal progressives. Despite the name, the Common Core State Standards are top-down, national standards written by Gates Foundation funded consultants for

the National Governors Association, designed to circumvent federal restrictions on the adoption of a national curriculum and create a perfect storm for the testing and curriculum corporations, such as Pearson.[6]

> […] The Common Core State Standards Initiative goes far beyond the content of the standards themselves. The initiative conflates standards with standardization. For instance, many states are mandating that school districts select standardized student outcome measures and teacher evaluation systems from a pre-established state list. To maximize the likelihood of student success on standardized measures, many districts are requiring teachers to use curriculum materials produced by the same companies that are producing the testing instruments, even predetermining the books students will read on the basis of the list of sample texts that illustrate the standard. The initiative compartmentalizes thinking, privileges profit-making companies, narrows the creativity and professionalism of teachers, and limits meaningful student learning (Brooks & Dieta, 2012/2013: 65).

Despite the frequently repeated claims that standards-based education reform is a key factor in improving the economy there is "no independently affirmed data that demonstrate the validity of the standards as a vehicle to improve economic strength, build 21st century skills, or achieve the things they claim are lacking in the current public school system" (Teienken, 2011: 155). And, there is no research or experience to justify the claims being made for the ability of CCSS to ensure students college and career ready, which is not surprising as evidence illustrates that NCLB reforms were a colossal failure even when judged on their own distorted logic (Saltman, 2012; Stedman, 2010; 2011). As Au points out:

> Simply put, there is a severe lack of research evidence that increased standards correlate with increases in test scores and achievement generally (Guisbond, Neill and Schaeffer, 2012; Hout & Elliott, 2011; Weiss & Long, 2013), and a similar lack of evidence that increased test scores correlate with increased competitiveness in the global economy—two of the central presumptions undergirding the arguments for advancing the CCSS (2013: 4).

32

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[6] Between 2008-2012, The Bill and Melinda Gates foundation gave out 56 grants totaling nearly $100 million for the development of the Common Core State Standards (Au, 2013).

NCLB, common core, and social studies

NCLB has not been kind to social studies as a school subject. The NCLB emphasis on testing to meet "adequate yearly progress" goals in literacy and mathematics severely limited the curriculum and instructional time in other subjects. Previous standards-based reform efforts have produced "codified sanitized versions of history, politics, and culture that reinforce official myths while leaving out the voices, concerns, and realities of our students and communities" (The Trouble with the Common Core, 2013: 18). In his incisive critique of CCSS, Au describes two trends regarding social studies. First, under NCLB, there has been a broad reduction in the teaching of social studies "as schools increased the time spent on tested subjects, non-tested subjects like social studies were increasingly reduced" (2013: 6). *Common Core State Standards for Literacy in Social Studies/History* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) exacerbates this trend, making social studies (and other subjects) ancillary to (the pursuit of higher test scores in) literacy and mathematics (e.g., Gilles, Wang, Smith & Johnson, 2013).

> A striking aspect of the Social Studies/History CCSS is that they essentially exchange the pure content of previous era's ossified standards for a new focus on pure skills. While existing content-focused social studies/history standards have never been particularly good, in exchanging pure content in favor of pure skills […] [CCSS] take the "social" out of the "social studies." In some important ways there simply is no "there" there (Au, 2013: 7).

Singer's assessment of CCSS puts it this way,

> the sad thing is that citizenship, democratic values, and preparation for an active role in a democratic society are at the core of many earlier state standards and are prominent in the curriculum goals of the National Council for the Social Studies. But these are being ignored in the Common Core push for higher test scores on math and reading exams (2013: 10).

Drawing upon Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Leahey (2013) explores the logic of standards-based education reform and the ways accountability systems, performance standards, and market-based reform initiatives have degraded teaching and learning

in public schools. In his analysis of the No Child Left Behind Act and the Race to the Top fund, he explores three dominant themes woven throughout Heller's work and how they are reflected in standard-based education reform: (1) The reliance on symbolic indicators of progress, (2) the irrational nature and deadening effect of bureaucratic rules and procedures, and (3) the dangers of unchecked capitalism. Leahey argues that these reform efforts are not only counterproductive, but eroding the democratic foundations of our public school systems and signal the "end of the art of teaching."

> [The] curriculum, student assessment, and now classroom instruction have all been reduced to an externally-determined list of skills, technical knowledge, and compliant behaviors reinforced with institutional rewards (i.e., grade promotion, merit distinctions, public recognition, job security) and punishments (i.e., retention, remediation, public criticism, and termination). The bureaucratic structure reduces the art of teaching to a series of artificial performance indicators that are used to represent "value" or "quality." These indicators are powerful bureaucratic devices that have reorganized schools and the very meaning of classroom teaching around artificial constructs like "proficiency," "adequate yearly progress," "school in need of improvement," and "effective and ineffective." Within this system, state education departments continuously monitor fidelity and progress toward these abstract (and often meaningless and unrealizable) goals. Reaching these goals is indicated through the act of reducing outcomes to simple numerical indicators (Leahey, 2013: 9).

Leahey concludes that to maintain their autonomy and professionalism, teachers will have to find alternative ways of organizing and produce a counter narrative that not only exposes the failings of standards-based reform but also offers meaningful alternatives. (See Leahey's chapter in this book for more on creating curriculum alternatives.)

Standards-based education reforms have slowly and steadily transformed teaching from professional work into technical work, where teachers have lost control over the process and pace of their work, a process Braverman (1974) called 'deskilling.' This detailed division of labor breaks down complex work into simpler tasks and moves special skills, knowledge, and control to the top of the hierarchy, separating

the conception of work from its execution and thus creating dehumanizing, alienating work. For example, teachers' work is diminished as they lose control of the content of the curriculum or how they might assess student learning (both of which are now dictated by governments or indirectly via high-stakes tests).

Many teachers have internalized the ends-means distinction between curriculum and their work; as a result, they view their professional role, at best, as instructional decision-makers, not curriculum developers (Thornton, 2004). What is clear from studies of teacher decision-making; however, is that teachers do much more that select teaching methods to implement curricular goals defined by people outside the classroom (see Ross, Cornett & McCutcheon, 1992b). Teacher beliefs about social studies subject matter and student thinking in social studies as well as planning and instructional strategies, together, create the *enacted curriculum* of a classroom—the day-to-day interactions among students, teachers and subject matter. The difference between the publicly declared formal curriculum (as presented by curriculum standards documents), and the actual curriculum experienced by students in social studies classrooms is significant. The enacted curriculum is "the way the teacher confirms or creates doubt about assertions of knowledge, whether some opinions are treated as facts while other opinions are discounted as unworthy of consideration" (Marker & Mehlinger, 1992: 834-835). For example,

> one teacher may proclaim that one of democracy's virtues is a tolerance for many points of view, but in the classroom choke off views inconsistent with his or her own. Another teacher may offer no assertions about the value of democracy, while exhibiting its virtues in his or her own behavior (Marker & Mehlinger, 1992: 835).

In the SBER era teachers must assert themselves and actively resist top-down school reform policies if they are to recapture control of their work as professional.

Resisting standards and testing

In the face of great enthusiasm for standards-based education reform and high stakes testing there is a growing resistance movement. This resistance, like the support for SBER, comes in a variety of forms and is fueled by the energies of parents, students, teachers, advocacy groups, and a handful of academics. The resistance to SBER is based on three quite distinct arguments: (1) A technical one—the tests are technically flawed or inappropriately used; (2) a psychological one—SBER's reliance on external

motivation is counter-productive and will lead to lower levels of achievement and disempowerment for teachers; and (3) a social critique of testing—testing is a social practice which promotes corporate interests and anti-democratic, anti-community values. Each of these arguments will be briefly summarized.

For some, the problem with using standardized tests to ensure high standards is that the tests are not very good. There is plenty of evidence to support this argument. The use of primarily or only multiple choice questions is prima facie a questionable practice given the current understandings about how one can know what a student knows and can do. A multiple choice item is a very limited sample of any knowledge and/or skill. Bad test questions (bad because there is no right answer; because they are developmentally inappropriate; because they are impossibly difficult; because they are trivial; because they are culturally biased; and so on) appear with regularity, often in newspapers and in the popular press.[7]

The other aspect of the technical argument is that high stakes tests are misused. In a statement on high stakes testing by the National Research Council's Committee on Appropriate Test Use, Heubert and Hauser (1998) lay out the common element of misuse the inappropriate use of any single indicator for decision-making.

> Any educational decision that will have a major impact on a test taker should not be made solely or automatically on the basis of a single test score. Other relevant information about the student's knowledge and skills should also be taken in to account (1998: 3).

While this has been a longstanding position within the educational measurement community, it has not been a compelling restraint on policy makers in establishing high stakes testing programs that flaunt complete disregard for this standard of appropriate and ethical test use.

While the technical inadequacies and shortcomings of tests and test items are easily identified, this critique is ultimately a shallow one. It is a critique that might send test publishers and SBER proponents back to the drawing table, briefly. Technological advances that increase the quality and validity of tests and test items are often short-lived and sometimes even rejected (Mathison & Fragnoli, 2006). Although much could be done to make tests better and to promote responsible use of tests, "better tests will not lead to better educational outcomes" (Heubert &

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[7] For examples of 'stupid test items' see Susan Ohanian's website: http://www.susanohanian.org/show_testi-tems.php.

Hauser, 1998: 3). Attaining better or different outcomes is a much more complex matter than having ever more accurately and precisely calibrated indicators.

The second argument underlying the SBER resistance movement is a psychological one. The pressure to perform well on high stakes tests leads teachers and administrators to adopt teaching styles and activities that depend on an extrinsic reward structure. Research on motivation and academic achievement clearly points to a high correlation between extrinsic motivation and *lower* academic achievement (Ryan & LaGuardia, 1999; Kohn, 1996). The corollary to this is research suggesting that school reforms that increase student engagement in personally meaningful tasks and build a sense of belonging in a community of learners are ones that lead to higher levels of academic achievement (Ryan & LaGuardia, 1999).

With regularity, stories appear in the mainstream media of damage done to kids.

> For Debbie Byrd, a restaurant owner in Pittsfield, Mass, the call to arms came two years ago, when her son began suffering panic attacks and gnawed holes in his shirts over the state's demanding fourth-grade proficiency tests (Lord, 2000).

> She turned 10 last week. Her bed at home lies empty this morning as she wakes in an unfamiliar bed at a psychiatric hospital. Anxiety disorder. She had a nervous breakdown the other day. In fourth grade. She told her parents she couldn't handle all the pressure to do well on the tests. She was right to worry: On the previous administration, 90% of Arizona's kids flunked (Arizona. Daily Star, April 2, 2000).

> When an East Palo Alto parent asked school district Superintendent Charlie Mae Knight why there are no whale watching field trips this year, Knight replied, "Kids are not tested on whale watching, so they're not going whale watching." When the parent complained that whale watching doesn't happen on Saturdays, Knight shot back, "You mean to tell me those whales don't come out on weekends? Listen, after May 2, you can go (on a field trip) to heaven if you want. Until then, field trips are out" (Guthrie, 2000).

> School Board members will discuss today whether they should institute mandatory recess for all elementary schools, in response to a campaign by parents to give their children a break between classes.

> Preparing for Virginia tests had so consumed most Virginia Beach schools they had abandoned this traditional respite. The notion that children should have fun in school is now a heresy (Sinha, March 21, 2000).

And on a broader scale, damage to children is reflected in higher rates of children leaving school for GED programs, increased dropout rates, increases in grade retention rates, and the creation of insurmountable hurdles of educational achievement for English language learners, special needs students, and generally those who are living in poverty (Mathison & Ross, 2008).

Test-driven reforms also have a negative effect on teachers' motivation—robbing them of their professional capacity to choose curricular content; to respond in meaningful ways to particular student needs; to set an appropriate instructional pace; and so on (Mathison & Freeman, 2003; Stephen Round, Providence Teacher, Quits, 2012). In Chicago, teachers are provided with a script—a detailed, day-to-day outline of what should be taught in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Lest there be any confusion about why this script is necessary, at the top of each page is a reference to the section of the standardized test that will be given to students in a specific and subsequent grades.

SBER constructs teachers as conduits of standardized curriculum delivered in standardized ways, all of which are determined by others who are very distant from the particular circumstances of classrooms, schools, and neighborhoods. A fundamental assumption of SBER is that deciding what should be taught is an unsuitable responsibility for teachers. Ironically, or perhaps not, standardized curriculum and high-stakes testing directly contradict efforts, such as shared decision-making, to make schools more democratic, responsive to local needs, and supportive of teacher development and reflective practice.

The other aspect to this psychological critique is the extent to which SBER and high stakes testing ignore the diversity of learning styles and rates among children. Ohanian (1999) captures the idea succinctly in the title of her book, *One Size Fits Few.* This extreme standardization and universal application view is inconsistent with developmental psychology (Healy, 1990), does damage to most students (Ohanian, 1999), and ignores the diversity of students, schools, and communities.

38

Finally, there is a social critique argument proffered in the resistance to SBER/high-stakes testing movement. This argument, while not disagreeing with the technical or psychological arguments, suggests the interests and values underlying SBER and high stakes testing are what are at issue. In particular, high-stakes testing and the standards movement in general are conceived as a broad corporate strategy to control both the content and process of schooling. In most states as well as on the national scene, corporate leaders, and groups, like the Business Roundtable promote SBER in the name of reestablishing global competitiveness. The social critique of SBER suggests this support is more about social control: Control through the establishment of a routine, standardized schooling process which will socialize most workers to expect low level, mundane work lives that will cohere with the low skill level jobs that have proliferated with globalization and increased technology, and control through the well-established sorting mechanism provided by standardized testing.

A critical element of this social critique of high-stakes testing is an analysis of the values which are called upon by the corporate interest, and which have appeal to many North Americans in general. These are values like competition, individualism, self-sufficiency, fairness, and equity.

While corporations (big business, including the education businesses of curriculum production, textbook publishing, test publishing, and for profit educational management organizations—EMO's) promote SBER and the use of high-stakes testing, parents, kids, and teachers 'push back'. Grassroots groups of parents (such as Parents for Educational Justice in Louisiana; Parents Across Virginia United to Reform SOLS; Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education in Massachusetts; California Resistance to High Stakes Testing; Parents United for Responsible Education in Illinois), teachers (such as the Coalition for Educational Justice in California), students (such as the Organized Students of Chicago), and combinations of these constituencies (such as the Rouge Forum, Whole Schooling Consortium, and Badass Teachers) have sprung up around the country. They stage teach-ins, organize button and bumper sticker campaigns, lobby state legislatures, work with local teacher unions, mount Twitter campaigns, and boycott or disrupt testing in local schools.

In recent years the resistance movement has mushroomed and the spring of 2013 witnessed a testing reform uprising as students, parents, and teachers engaged in boycotts, 'opt-out' campaigns, and walkouts in Portland, OR, Chicago, Denver, and New York and other communities. Seattle teachers defied state policies by refusing

to give a mandated testing and were backed by parents and students, and they won. In 2012, Chicago teachers went on strike over SBER policies. These actions demonstrate in dramatic fashion how effective organized resistance to SBER and high-stakes standardized testing can be, but the battle continues as a part of long tradition of workers resisting the dehumanization of work and the workplace (Gude, 2013). There is currently no more powerful force in education and schooling than the Standards-Based Education Reform movement. It is a movement that enjoys both favor and disfavor across the political spectrum, as well as special interest groups including social classes, ethnicities, and races. There is every reason to believe it will fail. This likelihood makes it no less compelling as a force in contemporary educational reform.

RETHINKING TEACHING AND CURRICULUM

Social studies teaching should not be reduced to an exercise in implementing a set of activities pre-defined by policy makers, textbook companies, or a high-stakes test. Rather teachers should be actively engaged in considering the perennial curriculum question—what knowledge is of most worth? Social studies learning should not be about passively absorbing someone else's conception of the world, but rather be an exercise in creating a personally meaningful understanding of the way the world is and how one might act to transform that world.

Thinking of curriculum not as disciplinary subject matter, but as something experienced in situations is an alternative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). This is a Deweyan conception —curriculum as experience— in which teachers and students are at the center of the curriculum. Dewey's image of the teacher and her or his role in the creation of school experiences can be found in *How We Think* (1933) and the essay "The Relation of Theory to Practice in Education" (1964). He argued that teachers must be students of both subject matter and 'mind activity' if they are to foster student growth. The teaching profession requires teachers who have learned to apply critical thought to their work. To do this, they must have a full knowledge of their subject matter as well as observe and reflect on their practice and its social and political context.

The professional knowledge of teachers is theoretical knowledge, or what has been called "practical theories of teaching."

40

> Practical theories of teaching are the conceptual structures and visions that provide teachers with reasons for acting as they do, and for choosing the teaching activities and curriculum materials they choose in order to be effective. They are principles or propositions that undergird and guide teachers' appreciations, decisions, and actions (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986: 54-55).

Such theories are important to the success of teaching because educational problems are practical problems, defined by discrepancies between a practitioners' theory and practice, not as gaps between formal educational theory and teacher behaviors (where ends and means are separated).

Problems of teaching and curriculum are resolved not by discovery of new knowledge, but by formulating and acting upon practical judgment (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). The central aim of curriculum work is to improve the practical effectiveness of the theories that teachers employ in creating the enacted curriculum. This aim presents problems in that sometimes teachers are not conscious of the reasons for their actions or may simply be implementing curriculum conceived by others. This means that reflective practice must focus on both the explicit and the tacit cultural environment of teaching—the language, manners, standards, beliefs and values that unconsciously influence the classroom and school environment and the ways in which teachers respond to it. As Dewey asserted in *Democracy and Education*,

> we rarely recognize the extent in which our conscious estimates of what is worthwhile and what is not are due to standards of which we are not conscious at all. But in general it may be said that the things which we take for granted without inquiry or reflection are just the things which determine our conscious thinking and decide our conclusions. And these habitudes which lie below the level of reflection are just those which have been formed in the constant give and take of relationship with others (Dewey, 1916: 18).

Social studies teaching and learning should be about uncovering the taken-for granted elements in our everyday experience and making them the target of inquiry. Critical examination of the intersection of language, social relations, and practice can provide insights into our work as teachers and uncover constraints that affect our approaches to and goals for social studies education. The teacher and curriculum are inextricably linked. Our efforts to improve and transform the social studies curriculum

hinge on developing practices among teachers and their collaborators (colleagues, students, research workers, teacher educators, parents) that emerge from critical analyses of teaching and schooling as well as self-reflection—the exploration of practical theories employed by teachers and the actions that they guide.

In the end, the question is whether social studies education will promote citizenship that is adaptive to the status quo and interests of the socially powerful or whether it will promote atransformative citizenship that aims to reconstruct society in more equitable and socially just ways. Social studies teachers are positioned to provide the answer.

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48