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# Theory and Research in Social Education

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# **Theory and Research in Social Education**

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# Moral Dilemmas and Moral Education

Daniel Pekarsky

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## Introduction

A major focus of recent social studies instruction is the area of moral education, and among the most prominent approaches to moral education is the one associated with the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. As is well known, Kohlberg believes that there are stages to moral development, comparable to Piaget's stages of cognitive development; at each stage, individuals conceptualize moral problems differently and bring different kinds of considerations to bear on their solution. Since the higher stages are said to be "more adequate" than the lower ones, the aim of moral education as understood by Kohlberg is to stimulate stage-progression. Since Kohlberg further believes that progression can be stimulated by getting a student to discuss moral issues with others who are at a higher stage of moral development (preferably, just one), moral education takes the following form: students are asked to solve selected moral dilemmas with attention to the reasoning that guides their respective solutions; they are then encouraged to discuss their views with one another (in groups containing the proper mix of stages). Through this process over a period of time, students are expected to jump to higher stages of moral development.

It is beyond my purpose to appraise Kohlberg's claim that the recommended practice will catalyze the kind of moral growth he expects. What I *do* want to suggest is that even if Kohlberg is correct about this, there remain serious problems with a moral education program that is built around the analysis of pre-designated moral dilemmas. At best, such an approach to moral education is useful but very incomplete; at worst, it may tacitly encourage an approach to human problems that is highly undesirable.

Before elaborating on these remarks, it is worth recalling that although Kohlberg's rationale is new, moral educators of various persuasions have long attempted to stimulate moral growth by getting children to reflect on moral dilemmas; and one of the larger purposes of the paper is to cast doubt on all approaches that rely heavily on this tool. In order to achieve this kind of generality, I focus on the intuitive idea at the heart of the Kohlberg approach, ignoring recent refinements introduced by Kohlberg

and some of his followers. In order to avoid unfairness to Kohlbergians, I consider these refinements in the last part of the paper, where I try to show that the more refined version of the approach may escape some but not the most important of the criticisms I advance in preceding sections.

## I

A moral dilemma is introduced and the children proceed to analyze it. They discuss the competing claims at work in the situation, offering and then critically appraising their respective solutions. Supposing that students regularly and ably engage in this kind of analysis in the social studies class devoted to moral development, and even supposing that as a result of such engagements they approach new dilemmas in the light of moral considerations that announce their arrival at higher stages of moral development, I want to suggest that there is little reason to expect that these skills in moral analysis will be exhibited outside the context of this class.

Recall, in the first place, that the various happenings we witness or are engaged in do not present themselves as demanding analysis in moral or any other terms but take shape as situations of certain kinds through the perspective that we bring to bear on them. Depending on our perspective, different features of what is given will come to the foreground and receive a particular characterization, while the others will either recede into the background or else be lost from view altogether. Since the way in which we do in fact grasp what is happening is generally only one of many possible ways we are capable of grasping it, it follows that the mere availability of any one of these ways gives little reason to suppose that it will actually be used. Nor does the fact that a person regularly uses a certain perspective and the skills associated with it in one kind of situation warrant the inference that he will use them in others where we might think them equally appropriate. For example, a high school teacher who regularly and ably dissects literature in a particular way in the classroom because he regards this as part of his job may, for a variety of reasons, not do so when he reads novels outside the classroom. (Freud is reputed to have said: "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." But such a view is more likely to be taken by a psychoanalyst in his or her dealings with friends than with a client.) But if this is true, and the perspective and associated skills that are regularly exhibited in one context need not transfer to others, it is at least possible that even if students assume the moral point of view in addressing situations presented to them in a social studies class concerned with moral development, they will not use this point of view when it comes to interpreting and appraising their own activities or those of others outside the context of this class. It is, of course, also possible that the skills learned and exhibited in the class *will* spread or generalize to happenings outside the class; but because the moral education context differs from others in certain crucial respects, there is little reason to expect this.

In the first place, in the moral education class, situations are pre-designated as requiring analysis in moral terms; this is what is meant by describing a class as being about morality. In the second place, the rewards in such a class go precisely to those who use this perspective intelligently to



address problems presented for consideration. Neither of these conditions routinely obtains outside the school. On the contrary, outside the school (and, indeed, in other classes), the adoption of a moral perspective in addressing what is going on is often viewed as an irritating hindrance to getting things done, and not the rewards but the penalties go to those who insist on adopting this perspective. In the end, it is an empirical question, but such considerations at least give cause for doubting whether the skills in conceptualization and analysis developed and exhibited in the context of moral education will transfer to other contexts of activity.

One might, indeed, consider a somewhat bolder hypothesis: namely, that the very principle which explains why individuals *do* adopt a moral frame of reference in the context of moral education also explains why they will be *unlikely* to do so in everyday situations outside the school. One of the first and best learned lessons in school is that it is in our interests to adopt the perspective of those in authority over us, to act in accordance with their definition of the situation in which we are together bound up. In math class, we view the world mathematically (at least after a few years of schooling we do — in the early grades we tend to introduce “irrelevant” material), in the class on morality we pick out the world’s moral dimensions, only to adopt sociological, historical, geographical, esthetic and other perspectives as we move on to other classes. If this speculation is correct and schooling does engender in children a disposition to adopt the perspective legitimized by those in authority or by convention, while actively discouraging efforts to view situations in unauthorized ways, this would tend to work against their routinely employing a moral perspective in addressing everyday problems outside the school; for across a wide range of extra-school situations, the conventional or official definition of what is going on does not point us to moral dimensions of the situation. More generally, while moral education classes try to cultivate individuals who reflect seriously on moral problems in their daily lives, the social system of which such classes are an element may convey something very different to the students and this lesson may effectively subvert what is hoped for by moral educators.

Individuals who approach the everyday happenings in which they are engaged with attention to their moral import do so not because these happenings demand such a perspective but because they actively impose it on them, possibly in defiance of authorized perspectives. If children are to grow into adults who do this regularly across the situations in which they find themselves, much more may be necessary than giving them opportunities to employ this perspective. As Dewey remarked, if the conditions of learning differ too drastically from conditions of life outside the learning-context (be they outside the school or in other areas of school life), it is questionable whether what is learned will be used — or, if used, used intelligently — under the new conditions (Dewey, 1967, pp. 47-48). His observation applies pointedly to the area of moral education.

There is, moreover, a closely related difficulty with the moral dilemma approach: to the extent that moral education *begins* with identifiable dilemmas, it fails to do justice to an important phase of moral agency, to

that phase in which we come to recognize that there is a dilemma. In actual life-situations where the moral issues worth taking up are often camouflaged, sometimes by the very language that we use and where we are busy trying to get something done, it often takes patient examination and sensitivity even to recognize that there is a moral problem that needs to be addressed. Even a person who is deeply committed to “doing the right thing” may fail to recognize or appreciate the morally relevant features of a situation in which he is engaged; hence, the frequency with which we find ourselves surprised and embarrassed when someone identifies a moral problem in a situation that we had accepted as unproblematic or exhibits for us the full complexity of a moral problem that we had understood very crudely and incompletely. To know how to solve a moral dilemma once it has been laid out is one thing; to be able to identify the morally relevant features of an everyday situation and thus to become aware that there is a moral problem, and to do so in a way that does justice to the complexity of the situation, is quite another. A program in moral education that takes pre-designated moral dilemmas as its starting-point fails to take seriously enough the dispositions and skills that are necessary if the morally problematic is to be uncovered in the midst of the everyday. The belief that exposure to moral dilemmas is sufficient to enable an individual to uncover such dilemmas in everyday life is no more plausible than, though closely kin to, the view that practice in following arguments renders us adept at constructing them.

To this point I have assumed that moral education is properly concerned with the way we solve moral dilemmas which require us to choose between situationally conflicting moral commitments. This assumption is consistent with the Kohlberg approach to moral education which is guided by the hope that, as a result of moral education, students will come to interpret and resolve the dilemmas they face from a point of view that reflects a high stage of moral development. But this assumption is itself highly questionable.

## II

When I have presented students with Kohlberg-like moral dilemmas, e.g. Heinz who must decide whether to steal the drug from the pharmacist or to let his wife die, their immediate response is usually to escape the dilemma. Heinz should try to get a loan from the bank; or he should plead with the pharmacist, perhaps taking him along on a visit to the hospital; and so forth. It is difficult to get them to accept the dilemma as intractable, and some never do; even those who accept the terms of the problem can be heard muttering that “it’s unrealistic.”

Retrospectively, it seems to me that these students showed considerable wisdom in refusing to accept these dilemmas at face-value. For these dilemmas *are* often unrealistic; and if we ourselves were confronted with analogous situations in everyday life, we too, it is to be hoped, would begin by looking for a way out, for a strategy that would relieve us of having to make a difficult choice among cherished values that compete in the situation as it initially presents itself.

This is not to deny that from the standpoint of trying to get children to reflect systematically about their basic moral commitments it may be useful to discourage escape routes from the dilemma as it is initially posed. But from the standpoint of equipping them to address problematic human situations intelligently, such a policy may be pernicious, particularly if it guides the whole of moral education. In the first place, it is a by-product of such a policy that we do little to equip children with the attitudes and skills that enter into intelligent efforts to find courses of action that might reconcile claims that initially seem to compete. Secondly, by looking askance at the attempts of children to dissolve such apparent conflicts through a unifying plan of action, we tacitly endorse a destructive approach to problematic human situations. It is an approach that is quick to identify conflicts as irresolvable except through the grand gesture, the Either/Or choice, one that would direct us to the courts — indeed, to the Supreme Court — before we have exhausted extra-judicial, informal remedies to the problems that we face. In resisting this approach, children show a good measure of common sense. It is, of course, true that the task of education is to improve on the common sense with which children begin — but not by throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

The defender of the moral dilemma approach will counter that what is really being recommended is that we do away with moral education; for it is only where there are real dilemmas that force us to decide between intuitively compelling but competing moral claims that we enter the distinctively moral sphere. Such a response is consistent with the Kohlberg view, for Kohlberg defines a moral choice in the following terms: “A moral choice involves choosing between two or more of these values [for example, liberty, life, property] as they *conflict* in concrete situations of choice” (Kohlberg, 1976, p. 180). But what this shows is not that moral education should be guided by this understanding of moral choice, but that Kohlberg operates with an unduly narrow interpretation of moral choice. Suppose that Heinz, though sorely tempted to steal the drug in order to save his wife’s life, is so deeply troubled by the prospect of stealing that he restrains himself and carefully devises a strategy designed to convince the druggist to sell him the drug at a price he can afford. Such a decision, I submit, is a “moral choice” in spite of the fact that he does not choose *between* the initially competing moral imperatives that present themselves. It is a moral decision in the sense that it grows out of his awareness of two obligations, both of which are taken into account and honored in the decision on which he acts. To suggest that it is only if such a strategy fails and Heinz is pushed to decide between these claims that he enters the distinctively moral sphere is to adopt a view of morality that cuts it off from everyday life and reserves it for extreme situations. There is, of course, much to be said for thinking intelligently in extreme situations in which our moral commitments are irreducibly in conflict, but there is as much to be said for thinking intelligently in those that are less than extreme; and part of what is meant by “thinking intelligently” in these situations is precisely not construing them as more extreme and gruesome than they need be.

What I am suggesting is that an adequate program in moral education

must begin with a much broader notion of moral experience and choice than does the Kohlberg approach. Even if we grant that moral choice begins with situationally competing claims (an assumption which is itself doubtful), it would be a mistake to assume that the individual must choose *between* them in order for his choice to count as “moral”; it is just as moral — and often wiser, in everyday life — to find a course of action that harmonizes these claims. An adequate program in moral education would attend to the cultivation of the skills and dispositions that enter into such efforts.

### III

Whether or not reflection on moral dilemmas will catalyze the kinds of changes in moral outlook that Kohlberg expects is beyond the scope of this paper. My more immediate concern has been with the incompleteness and possible danger of a program that revolves around getting students to solve pre-designated moral dilemmas by choosing among the competing claims that make for the dilemma. More specifically, I have advanced the following criticisms. First, this kind of program gives little reason to hope that the skills in moral conceptualization and argumentation exhibited in the social studies class devoted to moral education will transfer even to other classes — much less to the world outside the school. Second, it fails to pay attention to the skills and dispositions that enter into discovering, as distinct from solving, a dilemma. Third, an approach that insists on choosing between competing moral claims tacitly discourages students from trying to find ways of resolving the problem at hand in ways that do justice to all of the (apparently) competing claims arising out of the situation: certainly, it does little to equip them with the tools that will enable them to address such situations without having to make a dramatic either/or choice. If the aim of moral education is not just to cultivate people who can respond to hypothetical moral dilemmas with an exhibition of high-minded moral principles but to help them to approach human problems intelligently and humanely, this approach is thus too limited — and possibly pernicious, to the extent that we convince ourselves that it is adequate.

While it is not my purpose to present a comprehensive alternative to the dilemma-centered approach I have been considering, certain conclusions do follow from the preceding analysis. In the first place, if we are interested in cultivating the ability to experiment with different conceptualizations of a problem and solutions to it, and particularly if we want students to learn how to come up with and test strategies that harmonize what initially seem to be competing claims, the Kohlberg-dilemmas will not do; for in the absence of more detailed and concrete knowledge of the protagonists and their situation — the kinds of people they are, why they act as they do, what resources are available to them, and so forth — speculation about alternative ways of construing and dealing with the problem is unlikely to be very compelling. A good novel, on the other hand, (or a movie or a situation drawn from out of the life-experiences of the students) is likely to provide numerous opportunities for uncovering and specifying the nature of the problematic situations as well as for investigating possible solutions.

I want to stress that in recommending richer materials that allow for seriously considering a variety of interpretations of and solutions to problematic situations which may not require choosing between competing values (à la Kohlberg), I do not mean to rule out the possibility that a student will on occasion have to make the latter kind of choice; on the contrary, it is likely and desirable that such choices will have to be made. What I do insist on is that the effort to choose between situationally competing values arise against a background of efforts to find a plan of action that will harmonize these competing claims. It is only if and when such strategies fail — as undoubtedly they sometimes will — that attention should focus on how to decide between these claims; and on such occasions, the problem could be explored, as Kohlberg suggests, with an eye towards stimulating the evolution of the student's existing moral universe. Such an approach, I submit, allows us to reap the benefits of the Kohlberg approach without at the same time encouraging a very skewed, and ultimately destructive, approach to problematic human situations.

Finally, while it is important that social studies programs continue to encourage students to reflect on the moral dimensions of everyday experience, the preceding analysis suggests that this task ought not to be left to them alone. While this kind of compartmentalization might well encourage students to employ moral categories and concerns in considering problems dealt with in social studies class, it is at least questionable whether these skills will transfer to other situations in which students find themselves. If we want children to grow into adults who are sensitive to the moral dimension of experience across the situations in which they find themselves, then this hope must be reflected not just in a single compartment in the curriculum but in its very structure — which means that the opportunity to reflect on the moral dimensions of experience should be encouraged throughout the life of the school.

To round out this account, a few observations concerning recent refinements in the Kohlberg approach which might be thought to protect it against the critique of dilemma-centered programs that I have developed. The most important of these is a move towards more real-life problems as against exclusive reliance on hypothetical dilemmas. Thus in an experimental program developed by Kohlberg in 1974 and referred to as the just community approach, the school itself was run democratically and problems that arose in the life of the school were brought to the entire community for resolution. More recently, followers of the Kohlberg approach have been urging that in the classroom a mixture of hypothetical and real-life dilemmas be used, the latter to be drawn from the lives of the children including their school experience (Hersh *et al.*, 1979).

These changes help meet some of the criticisms discussed above, particularly those detailed in Section I. The emphasis on dilemmas that come from the children's own experience may provide them with the encouragement to look for and to experiment with articulations of what may be morally problematic in their experience. And the more moral concerns come to permeate school-life as a whole, the less likely is it that students will

compartmentalize moral concerns and categories, reserving them for a particular classroom.

But – and this is a big “but” – these improvements leave untouched what is perhaps the most important problem with the moral dilemma approach: its emphasis on choosing between the competing claims that initially make for the dilemma. So important is this feature of the approach that its most recent interpreters (whose views are endorsed by Kohlberg on the back cover of their book) develop a special term (“escape hatching from the moral issue”) to characterize efforts to resolve dilemmas without an either/or choice:

Escape hatching usually occurs when students first discuss moral dilemmas. Often they feel uncomfortable taking the risk of facing squarely the question of what is right. They would rather escape from the moral problem entirely by changing the whole dilemma. . . . For example, in a dilemma concerning the decision to throw certain people overboard from an overcrowded lifeboat drifting at sea, students often avoid confronting the dilemma by wanting to tie extra people to the side of the boat with ropes. To help students face the moral question in this case, the teacher might say, “For the moment, let’s assume we can’t tie them to the boat” or “Suppose there were no ropes in the lifeboat.” (Hersh *et al.*, 1979, pp. 154-55)

In fact, the suggestion made by the students is an ingenious one, and in real life we would want people to experiment with such solutions before deciding whom to throw overboard. But not so even in this latest version of the Kohlberg approach. Efforts to find such solutions are discouraged, and eventually the students may stop looking for them. And this, as argued above, is by no means a positive outcome. Moreover, although the example just cited revolves around a hypothetical moral dilemma, one can only wonder whether teachers enamoured of the Kohlberg rationale will not tend to discourage escape-hatching when it comes to the real-life problems that play an important part in the newer version of the approach. If, as I suspect, they often will, this will be even more undesirable, so much so that it might counterbalance whatever benefits accrue from introducing more real-life problems. If the Kohlberg approach is to approach adequacy, its defenders will have to take a broader view of moral experience, one which will make it possible to remedy this deficiency in their theoretical and practical approach to moral development.

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## Four Types of Theory: Implications for Research in Social Education

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Research should be grounded in theory. This is only one of many suggestions in the literature on improving educational studies. For example, Campbell and Stanley (1963) urge the experiment:

. . . as the only means for settling disputes regarding education practice, as the only way of verifying educational improvements, and as the only way of establishing a cumulative tradition. (p. 2)

Larkins (1978) and Shaver and Norton (1979) lament the scarcity of replication, which they claim is essential for building knowledge. Carver (1978) makes a case against statistical significance testing. Smith and Geoffrey (1968) argue persuasively for using micro-ethnography to generate scientific theory. Smith and Pohland (1969) illustrate the advantages of using participant observation in triangulation designs for assessing the impact of educational innovations. Van Manen (1975) regrets that educational researchers are caught in an intellectual limit situation, that they are blindly committed to a mechanistic empiricism and need to be informed about other radically different views of science. The authors are sympathetic with most of these concerns. They are listed so that recommendations on theory will be seen in proper perspective, not as a panacea.

The potential importance of theory to research scholars is implied by the title of the CUFA organ, *Theory and Research in Social Education*. However, virtually no articles published in either the CUFA journal or the "Research Supplement" of *Social Education* report attempt to generate or verify scientific theory, and articles which are obviously theory-relevant in other ways are rare. This apparent scarcity of studies intended to build theory may be due to lack of information about the nature of theory. It is our impression that few doctoral students in education have formal study of the structure of theory built into their programs, and our informal review of current texts in educational research indicates that most either ignore theory or provide grossly inadequate descriptions of what it is and how it is built.

Failure to produce theory-relevant research may also be due to confu-

sion over its multiple meanings. In everyday use, it sometimes refers to ideas that are speculative, abstract or impractical. Theory sometimes refers to normative rules, for instance, for producing good art or literature. Theory sometimes focuses on the structure of a discipline, as in musical theory. There are origin theories, even one about the beginnings of schooling (Stephens, 1967). The term also has special uses in mathematics, philosophy and education. A curriculum theory and a theory of learning sometimes differ in kind as well as content. The former most often combines empirical and normative elements, as when Metcalf speaks of theory in the *First Handbook of Research on Teaching* (1963). The latter is most often an attempt to explain part of empirical reality. Little wonder that social science educators might be confused by the advice to make research theory-relevant.

What should we mean by theory in social education? In deciding that issue, we might turn to one or more of several different types of theory-relevant literature. One type of literature, among many, which may be examined contains analyses of meta-theory in which some authors distinguish between empirical-analytic, interpretive or symbolic, and critical traditions of social inquiry (Van Manen, 1975; Larkins, 1975; Popkewitz, 1980). These three traditions contain pronounced differences in world-view concerning the nature of reality, truth and evidence. Consideration of meta-theory could be useful for social educators who might be locked into one tradition or scholarship, most likely the empirical-analytic, without realizing the nature of the assumptions underlying that tradition or how those assumptions are challenged by other world views. Educators who have not received formal training in theory, however, might consider this literature too esoteric.

Another type of literature, upon which this paper is based, attempts to explain what some scholars mean by theory in a narrower context, i.e. how do historians, political scientists or economists use the word "theory"? The purpose of this paper is to introduce elementary ideas about the components of empirical-analytic theory by presenting one view of alternative ways in which "theory" has been used in sociology.

### **Types of Theory in Sociology**

Sociologists (Zetterberg, 1965) refer to at least four types of theory: theory as classical literature in sociology, theory as sociological criticism, taxonomic theory, and scientific theory. These types of theory have at least rough parallels in social education. Some of them might be useful for guiding research.

**Theory as classics.** The education of sociologists is incomplete unless they are familiar with the best contributions of the early scholars, such as Comte, Weber and Durkheim, whose efforts sometimes appear in anthologies labeled "social theory" (Parsons, *et al.*, 1961).

The classics represent turning points, occasions when past formulations were superseded in giant steps by more far-reaching and inclusive formulations. In this way the classics highlight the history of the field. Furthermore, they



were written by men of foresight, men with a sense for the essentials, men who had a rare gift of feeling the crucial problems of their topic. Therefore, contemporary scholars return to them over and over again, not only to learn about this history of their discipline, but in search of new clues and insights (Zetterberg, 1965, p. 3).

In sociology, few books qualify as classical. Are there any which merit that designation in social education? Are there books which represent turning points, books written with a special feeling for the crucial topics, books which present critical insights for scholarly research?

Serious candidates for the designation "social education classic" might include, among others: *The Study of History in the Schools: Report to the American Historical Association* (Committee of Seven, 1899), the NEA report on the reorganization of secondary social studies (Dunn, 1916), some of the American Historical Association reports published during the 1930's (Beard, 1932; Beard, 1934) and Yearbook I of the John Dewey Society (Kilpatrick, 1937). Like classics in sociology, these works provide historical perspective on those ideas which the profession has considered important over time; they help scholars identify enduring ideas, goals and problems. They provide insights by some of the best scholars: Dewey, Beard and Taba. If the titles and topics sound dry as dust and perhaps irrelevant to the 1970's and 1980's, reading the oldest of these reports (Committee of Seven, 1899) is enlightening. The power of the ideas and the quality of the writing are clearly superior to much of the current literature in our field.

A characteristic of classics-as-theory in sociology is that they orient scholarship: they can be used to document the development of ongoing arguments within the discipline, to mark shifts in scholarly concerns and challenges to accepted frames of reference. The better literature in social education is capable of orienting instruction and inquiry in similar ways. For instance, each generation seems to debate anew the proper definition and goals of social education, apparently ignorant that prior generations, going back at least eighty years, have debated the same issues in largely the same terms.

One of the long debated issues concerns the relevance of social education to citizenship education. It has been our experience that each crop of graduate students at the university stereotypes social studies curriculum and instruction in former days as characterized by slavish adherence to lectures which survey history and the social sciences. That stereotypical view may or may not be true of the history of social education in the public schools, but it is clearly not true of the advocacy literature suggested earlier in this paper as social studies classics. That literature has consistently identified social education as education for political citizenship. Despite the fact that much of this literature was sponsored by the American Historical Association, none of it argues that the academic disciplines should be taught for their own sake, and each of them favors innovative teaching procedures. This does not mean that those reports have spoken with one voice about the nature of citizenship education, but as in sociology, classics can be used to document developments in the ongoing argument, as a comparison of the

report of the Committee of Seven (1899), the reports by Beard (1932, 1934), the analysis by Oliver and Shaver (1974) and the NCSS Curriculum Guidelines (1971) makes clear.

**Theory as criticism.** Analysis and critique of developments in the accumulation of sociological knowledge are sometimes labeled social theory (Becker and Boskoff, 1957). Theory in this sense is commentary on sociological writing (Zetterberg, 1965, p. 6). A roughly parallel literature can be found in social education, except that theory as classics and theory as critique probably collapse into a single category.

Examples of social education theory as criticism can be found in each of the classics cited previously. Hunt and Metcalf (1955) criticize public education for stifling students' freedom of inquiry, and recommend that closed areas of the curriculum, such as sex and communism, be opened to free study and debate in public school social studies classrooms. To grasp the radical nature of this criticism, the reader should note that the first edition of Hunt and Metcalf was published in 1955 during Eisenhower's first term.

Oliver and Shaver (1966) challenge the dominant assumption, reflected in Wesley's definition of the social studies, that the content of social education should be dictated by history and social sciences. They argue that social education should not aim simply to make students more knowledgeable, but should promote human dignity, freedom and social cohesion within a democratic society. They claim that human dignity can best be promoted within a pluralistic society which encourages considerable political conflict as an expression of freedom. They depart from common public school practice by arguing that conflict and debate should be at the heart of social studies instruction, that diversity of informed student opinion about controversial public issues should be not only tolerated but cultivated. The potential impact of their critique can be appreciated by examining the content of current social studies texts, which are still locked in harness to Wesley's definition of social studies as history and the social sciences adapted for public school instruction. Implementation of Oliver and Shaver's recommendations would require at least a major overhaul of the social studies curriculum.

Hunt and Metcalf (1955) and Oliver and Shaver (1966), like most authors in social education, limit their criticism to the nature of the school; the nature of society is largely unchallenged. That is not true of some of the best literature produced during the depression. The authors of the first yearbook of the John Dewey Society (Kilpatrick, 1937) not only criticize the schools but repeatedly attack the economic system in addition to various social problems such as racial and sexual discrimination.

The few examples cited above indicate the potential of theory as criticism for orienting social studies instruction and research. When the original sources are read in full, they offer vigorous, conflicting views of appropriate social education. The analysis of public issues is obviously a different agenda from an introduction to history and the social sciences. The reconstruction of society and the elimination of social evils is clearly a

different agenda from the analysis of public issues. Each suggests a different orientation toward the content of social education.

Although classics in social education combine criticism of prior recommendations and criticism of current practice with recommendations for innovation, the criticism and the supposed benefits of innovation are seldom supported by evidence. Conducting studies to test claims found in the critical literature is one way for scholars to ground their research in this type of theory. For instance, the issue of whether citizenship education produces citizens who make rational political choices is far from resolved.

**Taxonomic theory.** Zetterberg (1965) associates the first two types of theory with sociology as a humanistic discipline. He claims that some of the scholarly traditions of sociology have more in common with the humanities such as literature, philosophy and the arts than with the sciences:

It is not surprising, then, that the vocabulary used most comfortably by today's sociologists has come from the world of letters. It is especially the language of drama. Sociologists talk about roles, publics, actors, decisions, choice, charisma, achievement, domination, and so forth . . . Some prominent sociologists, e.g. Hugh D. Duncan, effectively use even such terms as hero, villain, victim, tragedy and comedy in sociological discourse. (Zetterberg, 1965, p. 2).

This humanistic tradition in sociology has parallels in political science and economics, both of which have roots in philosophy and history. But sociology, economics and political science also aspire to the production of social science, and science requires adequate taxonomies. But what are those?

Any academic discipline must discriminate between the relevant and irrelevant, the important and the trivial. Chemists do not study the validity of intelligence tests; psychologists do not study the composition of matter; historians do not develop mathematical proofs. The substance and boundaries of a discipline are communicated in part by the concepts which are considered essential to that discipline. Attempts to order and define these concepts are taxonomies in the sense meant by Zetterberg (1965).

The glossary of *The Complexities of an Urban Classroom: An Analysis Toward a General Theory of Teaching* (Smith and Geoffrey, 1968, pp. 262-268) is a taxonomy. In it, Smith and Geoffrey attempt to define all of the concepts used in their analysis of classroom teaching. Concepts which they define range from "ability" to "vicious circle" and include approximately 150 other terms. Concepts are ordered in the sense that basic terms, sometimes called primitive terms, are identified, and all other terms are ultimately derived from them. For instance, "breaking the spiral" is defined in reference to "vicious circle" which is defined in reference to "behavior" which is a basic or primitive term.

Taxonomies are important to scientific theory because they identify the elements, the concepts, which enter into scientific propositions. They are the building blocks of scientific theory. In a sense, taxonomies are in-

complete scientific theory; they make the building blocks available but do not contain the completed structure.

Taxonomic theory is desperately needed in social education. Scholars would likely agree that concepts such as "inquiry," "critical thinking," "values," "values clarification," "values analysis," "citizenship education," and many others occur frequently in the literature, but the accumulation of knowledge concerning the causes or effects of these variables is hampered by inadequate definition and lack of agreement as to their meanings.

Prospects for producing adequate taxonomic theory in social education may be discouraging, partly because it is unlikely that social science educators will be willing to agree on the meanings of many key terms, and partly because most of us have little experience or training in concept generation. We suspect that few of us in social education have been trained to distinguish between primitive and derived terms (Zetterberg, 1966, p. 47; Reynolds, 1977, p. 46; Hage, 1972, pp. 111-112), to use primitive and derived terms to order our constructs, to order our constructs by levels of abstraction (Hage, 1972, pp. 118-119), or to distinguish between general variables and specific non-variables (Hage, 1972, p. 10). Nor have most of us been trained in techniques for converting non-variables to general variables, reducing several variables to a basic dimension, or combining basic elements to generate new variables (Hage, 1972). If we are to produce adequate taxonomies, formal training in construct generation may be necessary.

**Scientific theory.** Just as theory has multiple meanings both in everyday and scholarly use, scientific theory has multiple names in social research. Zetterberg (1975, pp. 87-100, 159-166) refers to axiomatic theory when discussing two of six formats for ordering sociological propositions, and the term axiomatic theory is frequently used by other scholars (Smith and Geoffrey, 1968, p. 262). Similarly, Reynolds (1977, pp. 83-114) refers to three forms of theory: "(1) set of laws, (2) axiomatic, and (3) causal process." Others compare inductive to deductive theories (Van Dalen, 1973). Despite substantial differences between the forms in which theories are reported, each of the social science references with which we are familiar appears to refer to what Zetterberg (1965) calls scientific theory.

Scientific theories have three component parts: concepts or constructs, propositions or hypotheses or laws, and, if necessary, nomothetic nets. A nomothetic net is a set of propositions which adequately explains the target segment of reality. A proposition is a causal statement linking two or more concepts. A concept labels some element of social reality. For example, Smith and Geoffrey (1968, pp. 262-268) identified the concepts "academic achievement," "teacher awareness," and "pupil esteem" as important in their analysis of teaching. In that analysis, "achievement" has its usual meaning, "teacher awareness" means that the teacher "knows information important in the group members' lives and indicates his knowledge to the group," and "pupil esteem" means positive regard by students for their teacher. These three concepts are linked in the causal proposition; teacher awareness increases pupil esteem which increases academic achievement (Smith and

Geoffrey, 1968, pp. 102-107). Obviously, the combination of teacher awareness and pupil esteem does not adequately explain academic achievement. This proposition is, therefore, only a part of a theory which might explain achievement. To complete the theory a large and complex set of related propositions would probably be needed. Such a set, or completed theory, is called a nomothetic net.

Education scholars, including Smith and Geoffrey (1968, p. 262), often admit their inability to produce complete theories. The reason may be that specifying all the relevant constructs and their causal linkages to explain, for instance, school learning is an impossibly complex task. Or perhaps we have had too little effort by too few scholars working on these tasks for too little time. A third explanation might be that our conception of the nature of theory is inadequate. Regardless, failure to produce complete theories does not demonstrate that theoretical work is fruitless. Our conception of educational problems, and our interest in them, have been enriched by the work of those few theorists with whom we are acquainted.

What are the prospects of doing scientific theory in social education? Some may think the prospects unpromising on the grounds that social education is not an academic discipline, that there is no well-defined scientific subject matter, that the boundaries of social education are the boundaries of a curriculum area in the schools or the boundaries of a certification program in the colleges but not the boundaries of a science. That claim has some merit. It appears that we have university departments of social science education and degree programs in social science education, not because a group of scholars have a common interest in studying social education, but to aid state departments of education to control entry into teaching.

Despite the apparent merit of this argument, social science educators who want to do theory-relevant research have several options. One option is to identify with a well-established academic discipline such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, or political science. Sociologists, for instance, may generate or verify sociological theory using social studies classes as the source of data, or they may use concepts from sociological theory to analyze behavior in social studies settings. A limitation of this approach is that sociological theory may not focus on legitimate concerns of educationists.

A second option is for scholars to identify with education in general as their academic discipline. One advantage to this approach, over the narrower identification with social education, is that many of the research topics appropriate to social education are not limited to that field. The research, for instance, on teacher effectiveness may be appropriate for but not limited to social studies settings. A second advantage to this approach is simply that there is a longer and more established tradition of scholarship in education in general than in social education specifically. The scholar who decides to take this approach may select a topic such as classroom discipline, generate or verify theory related to discipline and determine whether it applies to social studies settings. There would be no intention,

however, of developing a theory of discipline applicable only to social education.

A third approach is for scholars to develop theory on those topics which are clearly central to or specific to social education. For instance, scholars might identify pupil outcomes expected under some rationale for citizenship education. An attempt could be made to specify the conditions necessary to produce those outcomes. The outcomes and pre-conditions become concepts, and their causal linkage becomes propositions in a scientific theory explaining citizenship education.

Of course, in reality, the construction of scientifically powerful theory is not as simple as this brief explanation makes it appear, but theory is possible and the first step towards its production and verification might be to begin to think in terms of basic components of theory and how they apply to our studies.

### **Postscript**

The content of this paper is limited to the four types of theory discussed by Zetterberg (1965), culminating in a brief explanation of scientific theory. The purpose of this postscript is to warn the reader against assuming that the authors believe that theoretical research is necessarily better than atheoretical research, or that one type of theory is necessarily better than another. We believe that there has been too little theoretical research, but we also believe that atheoretical studies can be intellectually and morally stimulating. When doing research or reading about it, we are more comfortable with theoretical studies in the scientific or empirical-analytic tradition, rather than interpretive or critical studies (Van Manen, 1975), but we believe the latter traditions are worthy of consideration. The authors suspect that curriculum theory which combines elements of scientific theory and ethical analysis might be even more important or appropriate for social education than is scientific theory. This view is supported in part by the fact that the classical literature in social education is largely curriculum theory or theory as rationale for teaching. An explication of that type of theory, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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# A Criterion-Based Model for the Formulation of Curricular Rationales

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Why do we teach what we teach? What greater purpose does our instruction serve? Following our endeavors, how will the learner be different, better, more prepared for adult life? The answers to these important questions are varied indeed. Their formulation, however, is critical to the ultimate success of any instructional process. And, such answers must be conceived prior to the beginning of the teaching act and not represent mere verbal rationalizations which occur following instruction.

Most methods textbooks instruct the preservice teacher in a variety of skill areas related to teaching (Ehman, Mehlinger, and Patrick, 1974; Merwin, Schneider, and Stephens, 1974; Pierce and Lorber, 1977). The development of educational goals, lesson plans, and general evaluation techniques are all areas most generally a part of what is included. Permeating the presentations of such method-related content is the charge that whatever is to be taught is to be relevant to and purposeful for the populus being instructed. Common areas of consideration to be included in lesson plans, for example, are goal statements, objectives (now to be written in behavioral terms), instructional strategies, resources to be utilized, evaluative criteria, and last but certainly not least the rationale statement.

It regrettably appears that with such a growing concern over dealing with the "how" of teaching, the question of "why" has taken a secondary role. An evident preoccupation with a search for instructional strategies which will guarantee classroom success has clouded the issue for many teachers as to just why they are teaching their selected material. What benefit does the material have? Why should it be taught to this or that particular student? What role does it play? Responses to these questions take time to become completely formulated. Many teachers claim such intellectual activity requires too much of their time when the immediate benefits are considered. Without doubt, time is involved; greater time for some than for others. Even as this is the case, those who are willing and able to set to one side the time argument will find a clearly thought-through and stable curriculum the end result of their efforts. Rationale development requires logical thought. It necessitates not only the teacher's knowing a great deal



about the specific content area in question but also, undoubtedly, an understanding of the worthwhileness of the material in relation to the development of the learner. Prior to beginning any instructional sequence the teacher must think seriously about what is about to occur in the classroom.

The curriculum rationale statement, albeit too often taken for granted, exemplifies the very crux of the question of relevancy in instruction so often asked by students, parents, teachers, local citizens, politicians, etc. Simply put, a rationale is a justification or reason for doing something. In this case, the reason or justification for selecting certain material to be taught to certain students. Teachers today more than ever before are being called upon for various sound and some not-so-sound reasons to justify what they have chosen to teach. English teachers have their Shakespeares and social studies teachers have their Wars of 1812. These are only two of many "popular" content areas that consistently appear in the instruction of the disciplines of English and social studies. But why? One would assume that from time to time teachers have formulated good educational support rationales for instruction in these areas. Others perhaps have not developed such rationales but have made the material exciting, interesting, enjoyable, not painful, etc. Nevertheless, reasoning to support instruction in these areas and others has often been faulty and shallow.

Perhaps if the sound rationale statement cannot be formulated the content should not be taught, no matter how "obvious" its virtues. This is the position taken in this discussion. It is considered by many to be better to have a poor lesson with a good supportive rationale than to have a good instructional experience with no solid foundation. This paper purports that good teachers, and the definitions of this term are about as numerous as there are teachers, are not born, they are made. To be sure, some students enter teacher preparatory programs with better skills in human interaction than others; some are even able to excel without much evidence of prior preparation in those objectives referred to as performance objectives. Nevertheless, all of these candidates to the teaching profession seem to need the experience of making and defending major decisions related to what content will be taught in their classrooms.

Sound rationales for curriculum selection are not developed without clear thought and consideration. We most generally assume, and hope, that the classroom teacher's improvement and effectiveness are highly correlated with increased years of experience. An important area where improved efficiency should take place is in the area of decision-making related to content selected for instruction. Again, the rationale statement. It might be thought that for most teachers this increased experience has provided the opportunity to reflect, weigh, and seriously consider what should be taught. Content selected for instruction during the beginning years in the profession might no longer be considered relevant later. And if still taught, it will be accompanied by a more solid rationale for instruction. A good teacher education program will attempt to enhance the possibility that good defenses or rationales will not take years in the profession to develop. Such a program should provide the preservice teacher with opportunities to for-

multate, test, defend, reformulate, and defend again self-selected choices for instructional material. A sound rationale will be the direct outcome of such practice in this type of mental process.

Ralph Tyler's Rationale (Tyler, 1950) for curriculum selection is useful in the development of defensible rationale position statements. Tyler offers a comprehensive and unique model for justifying the selection of educational material for instruction. While the purpose of the model is in part to encourage the teacher or curriculum writer to take account of relevant sources of data in the derivation of objectives, the model also serves as a foundation for in-depth development of rationale positions. Tyler has identified the use of three major sources of data from which objectives may be constructed: the *learner*, the *society*, and the *subject-matter discipline*. Tentative objectives selected from each of these three major areas are to be examined with respect to two screening checks: one's philosophical position concerning education and what is known about the psychology of learning. Properly followed, Tyler's Rationale provides a procedure reinforced by logical thinking with a rational curriculum as the end result. If material in question selected from any of the three data sources passes through the two checking screens, it may then be taught; if not it should be re-evaluated or discarded as not relevant.

The Tyler Rationale, first developed in 1950, has been reviewed, criticized, and utilized by numerous curriculum developers in the years since its identification. Kliebard (1970) has provided the field with perhaps the most recent formal critique of the Tyler design. Kliebard raises many points of question with the Tyler approach but in the end offers praise for both the wisdom of Tyler and the impact the model has had on the field of education.

One important area of concern especially relevant to this discussion relates to the use of the teacher's or curriculum developer's philosophical screen to help in the determination of what is to be taught. Kliebard has identified that the Tyler model provides little direction in this area. He comments:

Filtering educational objectives through a philosophical screen is simply another way of saying that one is forced to make choices from among the thousands or perhaps millions of objectives that one can draw from the sources that Tyler cites . . . it is actually the philosophical screen that determines the nature and scope of the objectives. To say that educational objectives are drawn from one's philosophy, in turn, is only to say that one must make choices about educational objectives in some way related to one's own value structure. This is to say so little about the process of selecting objectives as to be virtually meaningless. (p. 266)

While one's philosophy of education is crucial to the selection of a quality curriculum, the appropriate establishment of such a philosophy is still a moot question. Certainly all philosophies are not equally valid. All philosophies are not universally accepted by the education community. With this in mind, where does a sound philosophy of education come from? The

answer to this important goes far beyond the scope of this paper. Indeed, the answer has existed as an illusive thread running throughout the history of education. Suffice it to say, the philosophical position one assumes plays the major role in the ultimate selection of curriculum for instruction. The formulation of this philosophy occurs and recurs at various points in individual educational careers. A sound rationale statement, as in Tyler's Rationale, has its own checks and balance system. Many rationales found related to the instructional process are unfortunately mere statements of fact, often questionable at that. An acceptable rationale, to be appropriate for curriculum selection, must go beyond such simplicity, although factual points will be included. While such factual points will be found in good rationales, this alone is not the determining criterion related to the question of the rationale's acceptability. Inherent to good rationale statements are the following three components:

1. A sound rationale statement must make reference to the validity of study in the chosen field. For example, the statement should include information identifying the material as related to the desired final outcomes of instruction in the particular content area. This validity question must be satisfied with information having either an empirical or sound conceptual origin to legitimize the instruction. Once this criterion is met the rationale statement may be considered to have *Desired Outcome Validity*.
2. Indication should be obvious that study in the area does appropriately apply to the individual being instructed. This is, study in the field is especially relevant to the student of immediate concern. What does this particular 7th grader need? Reference should be made to the actual importance of the material for the student in question. The justification for instruction must go beyond mere opinion to empirical or sound conceptual support. Once this criterion is met the rationale statement may be considered to have *Student Related Validity*.
3. Factual position statements must be made in consideration of both criteria 1 and 2. Fulfillment of this component requirement will lay solid groundwork in the establishment of the relevance of the material being taught. This component will deal with the providing of some form of factual or intellectual evidence to defend the content to the chosen field and/or the need of the learner. In some areas of instruction such intellectual support having an empirical origin is difficult if not impossible to present. Nevertheless, the teacher must realize the importance of this component and attempt to address it through appropriate examples. Once this criterion is satisfied the rationale statement may be thought of as having *Intellectual Support Validity*.

The fact that there are three basic components to an acceptable rationale statement as presented here should not be thought to mean that there need be merely three sentences present, one in direct reference to each component. One should consider the likely possibility that three sentences will not be sufficient to formulate an acceptable written statement, at least not

sufficient to prepare the justification “mentally.” Too, a criterion might perhaps be satisfied through a form of implied intent rather than the simple matching of one sentence to one criterion. There will often be overlap in the fulfilling of the three component requirements.

The direct decision made to teach any material must be made with special reference to both the type of pupil to be instructed and the desired final outcomes which are to follow the instructional process. In consideration of the student one must bear in mind that a teacher could employ more than one rationale, each valid, for different student populations. A teacher might have different but at the same time acceptable rationale statements for teaching indential material to the college-bound as well as the lower-tracked learner. The point is, sound rationales can be found for some areas of instruction and not for others, for some students but not for others. The same rationale may be both valid or invalid depending upon who is being taught and the instructional outcomes desired.

The sound rationale statement might be looked upon as taking the form of a syllogistic reasoning sequence. In the syllogistic form of reasoning two statements or premises are made and a logical conclusion is drawn from them.

For example:

Major Premise	A. All mammals are warm-blooded.
Minor Premise	B. Whales are mammals.
Conclusion	C. Whales are warm-blooded.

The syllogistic form of reasoning leads from the general to the particular and is obvious in its logic. The need for exactness and accuracy in both the major and minor premises of the syllogism is crucial. As the conclusion is solely based on this exactness, error at this point results in an entire breakdown of the logical procedure.

A rationale statement would obviously be much more elaborate than the relatively simple example shown above. The basis of the syllogistic procedure, however, is to show that the final decision made to teach any piece of curriculum must be logical in this sense. It is remembered that the ultimate decision to teach any content is not made without a consideration of the teacher’s philosophy of education and instructional intent. While this may not greatly effect the exactness or proper logic of the syllogism, it is of value when considering the initial justification question being raised.

For analysis consider the following examples of rationale statements. Before reading beyond the rationale, make your own decision as to the appropriateness and validity of the statement.

*Rationale #1*                      *Student Group: 9th/10th Grade*                      *Social Studies*  
The book *Seize the Time* by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton is a relevant piece of literary work depicting contemporary America.

Although this is an example of a rationale which has been offered for the instruction of this material, a thorough analysis of the statement will

show some glaring weaknesses. This is not to say, however, that the assignment will not ultimately be proven to be a good one. It may in fact be quite successful; but, a better justification position is needed. The rationale makes no reference to the actual content of the book in relation to desired outcomes in the content area and thus does not satisfy the *Desired Outcome Validity* criterion of a sound rationale statement. There is no reference as to its appropriateness for the 9th/10th grade social studies group leaving the *Student Related Validity* criterion unattended. Who is the judge of the relevance of the work: the teacher, the student, the school board? The text does perhaps offer at some point a descriptive reference to contemporary America but this is possibly not the most preferred reason, if it is indeed a true one, for reading the material. It is also apparent that at this point the *Intellectual Support Validity* requirement has not been considered. Proceeding into the assignment with such a weak foundation would be an error when one considers the great need for a solid basis for instructional thought. Consider the following rationale as an alternative to Rationale #1:

The text *Seize the Time* acquaints the reader with a component of the history of this country's largest minority group. Such a book expands the scope of thought of the student and therefore makes him/her more aware of life around him/her. Because of the present world awareness level of most adolescents, this is appropriate reading for the secondary social studies classroom.

This rationale, which at first glance may seem a bit lengthy, is appropriate for the content and student group under consideration. Obviously a lot of behind-the-scene thinking has taken place. It should be noted that the length of the rationale statement must not be the determining factor in reference to its validity. The intent is to answer the question of "why" the material should be studied. Some questions will naturally have longer answers than others.

Considering the instructional goal related to understanding America today based on significant influences, the syllogistic reasoning format is most aptly applied. This syllogism would read as follows:

- A. Information broadening one's horizons concerning current American circumstances and potential future is relevant, important, and should be taught.
- B. The reading of the text *Seize the Time*, because of its relationship to such a significant portion of American society and its dealings with a valid influence on the American scene, does broaden one's horizons concerning current as well as potential American circumstances.
- C. Therefore, the text *Seize the Time* should be taught.

We may assume that the social studies teacher in this situation has as a desired outcome the obtaining on the part of the student a greater awareness of groups which have influenced present-day America and the conditions which surrounded the development of these influences. It would be difficult to argue against the relevancy of the most recent influence of

this country's largest minority group. Information of this nature is relevant as to both interest and need of the 9th/10th grade social studies group as has been stated. While there are no doubt many readings which could serve the same purpose which has been identified for this text, the rationale is an appropriate one and does meet the criteria for acceptability.

It is important to make special note of this final point. Other works beyond the text cited here might obviously fit neatly in the syllogistic reasoning sequence. Authors such as Langston Hughes, Eldridge Cleaver, and Angela Davis, only to name a few, have all published literature which could appear relevant according to this syllogistic format. At this juncture one must observe that the syllogism is necessary but not sufficient in determining the rationale statement. Other factors such as Tyler's three sources of data, the nature of the teacher's course (e.g., Current Events versus Economics), text vocabulary, familiarity of students with the issues to be raised, etc., must be dealt with. The syllogistic reasoning sequence serves well to isolate from the many readings available a core of legitimate "possibilities" for the teacher to select from. As has been suggested, other indicators of relevance will also need to be employed.

Consider the following example from the elementary level:

*Rationale #2*

*Student Group: 1st Grade*

*Colors*

From red stop signs, to green go lights, to the policeman's blue uniform, one can observe the need to be color-aware in this society. Young children continually display an interest in working with colors and their meanings. The need is obvious. Such information has significant importance in later school and life experiences.

The above rationale for the study of colors in the 1st grade, or even in the lower primary grades, is a sound one. All three basic components of an acceptable rationale statement (*Desired Outcome Validity*, *Student Related Validity*, and *Intellectual Support Validity*) are present. The material is a significant area of study as skills in recognizing colors, or at least adjusting to the problems of color blindness, are essential. It is obviously a part of the teacher's desired outcome to assist the student in becoming better prepared to function in today's world. Factual statements, often through example, add to the justification of this position. Psychologically speaking, the early grades, from both a student interest and need position, should be a most appropriate place to include this material. The appropriateness might be less obvious if the student body was the 9th/10th grade social studies group from Rationale #1. And in the other direction, we would hardly offer *Seize the Time* as required reading for the 1st grade.

The following syllogistic sequence might be considered for this rationale:

- A. Any information that enables an individual to adjust to and possibly influence the dominant culture is important and should be taught.
- B. The knowledge of colors does assist the individual in adjusting to and coping with the dominant culture.

C. Therefore, the knowledge of colors should be taught.

Before leaving this particular content area an extension of the basic syllogism should be made. In addition to the syllogistic base for the rationale another characteristic of the content might well be considered. This is the historical use of instruction in colors related to classroom management techniques. Initially, the teaching of colors in classrooms was linked not first to any functioning in the dominant out-of-school culture but rather to the understanding of various materials in the classroom which were color coded. As presented in this area, the historical perspective is perhaps as relevant to instruction as the current reference to present societal conditions.

One final example with discussion has been provided. Consider the following rationale statement concerning instruction in mathematics at the elementary level:

*Rationale #3*                      *Student Group: 2nd Grade*                      *Mathematics*  
In order to function successfully in today's society each individual needs to be able to utilize the skills of addition and subtraction.

As with the intent of Rationale #1, Rationale #3 is, on the surface, difficult to take issue with. Nevertheless, there are some points which might be questioned. First, how does the teacher know that there is a positive correlation between these specified mathematics skills and success in today's society? How is success defined? This question shows that as presently stated the *Desired Outcome Validity* criterion is present but without support. Too, why is this content being taught in Grade 2 as opposed to Grade 11 or 12? This point indicates that the rationale statement lacks *Student Related Validity*. As it now stands, the rationale does attend somewhat to the *Intellectual Support Validity* criterion but in no way satisfies it. Consider the following reconstruction of Rationale #3 in relation to the criteria specified for a valid rationale statement:

Whether balancing a checkbook or checking on change after a purchase, individuals encounter instances where skills in adding and subtracting are needed. The elementary youngster will continually be faced with a need for these skills throughout the formal schooling years and beyond. As this is the case instruction in addition and subtraction is imperative.

The rationale is now a convincing justification for instruction of this content. It is legitimate for supporting desired instructional outcomes and thus contains *Desired Outcome Validity*. While this may seem obvious upon first glance, relevant and valid evidence is quickly obtainable (*Intellectual Support Validity*). Too, with earlier foundational preparation at the lower grades, more complex study in the field of mathematics can be undertaken at the upper levels (*Student Related Validity*).

One final consideration before leaving Rationale #3 is the syllogism. In completing the syllogistic procedure, Rationale #3 would appear as follows:

A. Content areas that have a direct relationship to successful functioning in today's society should be taught.

B. The study of addition and subtraction in mathematics, shown through many obvious examples, is directly related to successful functioning in today's society.

C. Therefore, the skills in addition and subtraction should be taught.

A criterion-based rationale format such as has been presented here may at first seem rather unwieldy. However, it could perhaps be the one approach to teaching that will finally separate the teacher who knows what he/she is doing and why he/she is doing it from the teacher who knows neither where he/she has been nor where he/she is going. It is true that a great many teachers who have taught for a great many years, and a significant number of beginning teachers as well, believe that they simply "know" what should be taught. Unfortunately, these are the same individuals who react negatively and sometimes resentfully to questioning concerning their teaching practices. In many instances these are the very teachers who need to come to grips with the realities and consequences of their instruction. The consistent practice and experience of choosing and defending curricular selections is seriously absent in the education profession. Constant attention to strategies and activities is not the answer to improving classroom instruction. The rational curriculum and its selection is of much more significant importance. While strategies cannot be ignored, and they play a very major role in the instructional process, their position most appropriately comes after the query of what is important to teach.

The teacher who is able to respond justifiably to the question of "why" in the teaching process is an individual who has devoted time to considering the far-reaching ramifications of instruction. All too often a teacher's curriculum planning consists of looking ahead to the end of the week, sometimes to the end of a grading period, and only infrequently to the end of a semester. In reality, planning and rationale development should consider nothing less than the student's life after public schooling. For this to occur, the teacher will be virtually required to weigh the long-range impact of his or her teaching. Thought with regard to where this or that content fits into the greater schema of the overall school curriculum design will need to be made. This is not beyond the realm of possibility. It may, however, require making determinations related to purpose and practice that have been only lightly considered before.

All too frequently teachers at the elementary level regard their classroom practices as natural and pure simply due to the lower age groups with whom they are working. There is a strong tendency to speak at this level only in terms of happiness, positive self-concepts, and good manners. While this is not to downgrade such educational goals, too often these terms are defined solely by the teacher in isolation from other relevant influences. This position does not intend to imply that elementary classrooms are content free. It does say, however, that there seems to be a limited level of deep intellectual and logical decision-making being made by many teachers in relation to the material dealt with, students taught, and long range goals and rationales of classroom instruction.



While this may exemplify much of the elementary scene, secondary level classrooms are not without serious rationale problems as well. Junior high and high school teachers have traditionally been the “content” specialists secure in their chosen fields. There seems to be a prevailing atmosphere at the secondary level that the teacher’s position is dominant, powerful, and above question. In many instances this is indeed the case. An interrogative statement concerning curriculum selection too often finds the secondary as well as the elementary teacher retreating into a defensive posture where almost total closure of an open mind is the predictable result. Or if confronted in such a manner, the teacher at both levels may all too quickly acquiesce and yield the original position to the questioner. Such behavior also indicates a serious concern. When this is the end result of questioning related to curricular decisions, the individual has undoubtedly made considerations of a superficial nature in the development and follow-through of content selection.

The rationale statement format proposed in this paper, incorporating *Desired Outcome Validity*, *Student Related Validity*, *Intellectual Support Validity*, and the syllogistic reasoning sequence, is both functional and highly relevant at this point in time. Appropriate thought, however, should be given to the possible limitations of total reliance on the syllogism. As has been noted, other factors beyond the syllogistic format are to be considered in developing the sound curriculum rationale. The availability of a number of relevant curriculum materials for any classroom instruction, discussed in relation to Rationale #1 of this paper, along with the need to note relevant historical perspectives with regard to Rationale #2, are examples of such factors. These points should not be seen as weaknesses of the approach but rather as further observations which will need to be made by the curriculum developer.

The utilization of the format which has been described will assist the teacher in making well-grounded curricular decisions that can be both applied and defended. Where previous decisions may have been made in haste or without thorough analysis, decisions made in this prescribed manner will be heavily weighed and logically determined. It is not the intent of this procedure to see the teacher spending undue time merely putting sentences on paper. It is the intent, however, to influence the teacher to spend more time thinking through the “why” of instruction and content selection. While there is of course no guarantee that irrelevant and inappropriate material will not be introduced into the classroom, if the criteria related to the stipulated procedural approach as well as the syllogistic reasoning format suggested here are followed, such situations should be reduced to a minimal level.

The end result will be a supportable curriculum. It will be defensible and justifiable. The teacher will have realized that such a reflective endeavor provides better direction, a more solid foundation for instruction, and a rationally selected curriculum that can be defended to peers, parents, and, perhaps most important of all, students.

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# Urban Adolescents and the Political System: Dimensions of Disaffection

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Educators, in planning the secondary school curricula, usually do not take into account students' sociopolitical values and attitudes (Long, 1978b; Long and Strong, 1976). This state of affairs probably makes little difference in implementing the science or mathematics curricula, but the success or failure of the social studies curricula, for example, might be considerably dependent on its relationship to the sociopolitical orientations of the students for which it has been designed. Moreover, not only the content of such a curriculum must be appropriate for specific student clientele, but the style with which the curriculum is taught must also be positively received by students if social studies goals are to be effected (Long and Long, 1974; Long, 1974b; Long and Long, 1975).

This paper reports on a set of political attitudes which should be especially pertinent to the secondary school curricula, particularly the social studies — feelings of political alienation. Research over the past decade has shown that feelings of political alienation have not only been steadily increasing, but, in fact, are presently at an all-time high among American adults (Wright, 1976). Unfortunately, the utility of these findings is greatly restricted for educational planners for two reasons. First, because the data are limited to adult samples; and second, because the research is typically limited to two dimensions of political alienation, powerlessness and distrust.

In overcoming these two deficiencies, the research reported here has set three objectives in studying feelings of political alienation among urban adolescents. First, adolescents' responses to seven different dimensions of political alienation will be reported. Second, the intercorrelations between the adolescents' responses on these seven different dimensions will be investigated. Third, the effect of adolescents' attributes on these measures of political alienation will also be ascertained.

**Sample.** The data for this study were collected by means of a written questionnaire, which was self-administered by a random sample of 269 students enrolled in two public, inner-city high schools in Hartford, Connecticut in May 1976. In making their responses on the questionnaire, these

students were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality, which should contribute to the validity of the findings reported here.

In composition, the student sample was comprised of more girls (64%) than boys (36%) and more blacks (45%) than whites (44%) or Hispanics (11%). Twenty-nine percent of the students were freshmen, 17 percent were sophomores, 26 percent were juniors, and 28 percent were seniors. Twenty-three percent of the students reported earning A grade-point averages, 53 percent had earned Bs, 22 percent had earned Cs, and the remainder (3%) reported earning Ds or Fs. Finally, approximately 40 percent of the students' parents had grade school education levels, 35 percent of the parents were high school graduates, and 25 percent had attended or graduated from college.

**Table 1. Political Powerlessness Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain/ Don't Know</i>
Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that I can't really understand what's going on.	77.7%	16.4%	5.9%
People like me and my parents don't have any say about what the government does.	42.4	49.8	7.8
There is no way other than voting that people like me and my parents can influence actions of the government.	37.2	39.0	23.8
I believe public officials don't care much what people like me and my parents think.	50.6	27.1	22.3
Average Response	52.0	33.1	15.0

**Results.** The most frequently encountered political alienation indicator is powerlessness or inefficacy (Abramson, 1972). Considerable research and theory in the social sciences suggests that as levels of political powerlessness increase, political participation declines. Moreover, if feelings of political powerlessness remain at abnormally high levels, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the functioning of a democratic political system (Milbrath, 1965).

The Hartford students' responses to one such measure of political powerlessness (Olsen, 1969) appear in Table 1, where two findings are of particular interest. First, it is noteworthy that one student in two responds, on the average, in the politically alienated direction on this measure. And, interestingly, on the four items on this measure, four out of five students agree with the one stating that the operations of the sociopolitical system are so complex that they cannot be understood. With half of these students exhibiting feelings of political powerlessness, it must be concluded that the social studies program is faced with a major obstacle in achieving its civic education goals, especially those germane to encouraging greater political involvement and participation (Patterson, 1960).

**Table 2. Political Discontentment Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain Don't Know</i>
As the government is now organized and operated, I think it is hopelessly incapable of dealing with all the crucial problems facing the country today.	39.8%	35.3%	24.9%
It seems to me that the government often fails to take necessary actions on important matters, even when people favor such actions.	62.1	14.9	23.0
These days the government is trying to do too many things, including some activities that I don't think it has the right to do.	59.1	16.7	24.2
For the most part, the government serves the interests of a few organized groups, such as business or labor, and isn't very concerned about the needs of people like my parents and me.	44.6	29.7	25.7
Average Response	51.4	24.2	24.4

A second dimension of political alienation, less commonly found in the journalistic and professional literature, concerns reactions to public policy outputs from the political system (Olsen, 1969). In this case, it is assumed that the more an individual is discontented with what the government is or is not doing, the greater the individual's political alienation level. Two patterns of response are evident on such an attitudinal measure in Table 2. Again, as with the measure of political powerlessness, one out of two of the Hartford students evinces dissatisfaction with public policy outputs. Furthermore, the source of this dissatisfaction is not that the government is incapable of solving problems or that the wrong interests are being represented, but rather that the government is engaging in activities that it should not, and avoiding engagement in activities it should, be involved in. Given the fact that 50 percent of these students express such policy discontentment, it is obvious that these students are relatively sophisticated in their perceptions of the system's operation and that this might make it difficult for educators to conduct a traditionally-oriented social studies curriculum.

Political theorists have repeatedly argued that the viability of a democratic political system is founded on political trust (Almond and Verba, 1963) and on the notion that political leaders represent the general interest, are competent, and do not cater solely to the demands of special interests. The Hartford students' responses to a measure tapping their political trust (Agger *et al.*, 1961) in Table 3 indicate that half of them do not manifest such trust. In this case, distrust or cynicism is most pronounced with regard to the ethics of political leaders' conduct, e.g., being

**Table 3. Political Cynicism Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain/ Don't Know</i>
Money is the most important factor influencing public policies.	76.7%	13.8%	9.7%
Politicians represent the general interest more frequently than they represent special interests. (Reflected)	38.3	24.9	36.8
In order to get nominated, most candidates for political office have to make basic compromises and undesirable commitments.	57.2	15.6	27.1
Politicians spend most of their time getting re-elected or re-appointed.	61.0	16.0	23.0
People are very frequently manipulated by politicians.	50.9	14.5	34.6
A large number of city and county politicians are political hacks.	38.3	13.0	48.7
Average Response	51.5	18.5	30.0

influenced by financial factors, being willing to compromise basic principles to achieve political power, being too self-serving. With one of two students expressing political distrust, the challenge is clear for social studies educators.

Perhaps the most fundamental political orientation is that of identification (Easton and Dennis, 1969). Does the individual consider himself to be a member of the political system or does he consider himself an outsider? As the findings in Table 4 show, over half of the students in this sample

**Table 4. Political Detachment Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain Don't Know</i>
When I think about politics and government in the United States, I consider myself an outsider.	52.4%	37.2%	10.4%
I tend to identify myself with and feel closely associated with American politics and government. (Reflected)	24.5	56.1	19.3
When I hear or read about the politics and governmental system of the United States, I feel that I am a part of that system. (Reflected)	34.9	52.4	12.6
When I think about the government in Washington, I don't feel as if it's my government.	49.4	33.8	16.7
Average Response	52.6	32.6	14.8

respond in the “detached” direction to this measure of political alienation. Obviously, attitudes, not overt behaviors, are being measured here, but, even so, the implications of this finding are quite profound. Most discussions of political alienation rest on the assumption that alienation is considered by most people to be something to be avoided, something which the individual regrets (Schacht, 1970). These findings, and other related research (Long, 1976c), strongly suggest that adolescents today not only feel apart from the political system, but actively reject it and the values it symbolizes. Furthermore, they appear to be proud of this detached stance. With half of this sample expressing such sentiments, it would seem that certain educational objectives in the high school, particularly those pertinent to fostering a sense of community and encouraging civic involvement, would be most difficult to meet.

**Table 5. Political Hopelessness Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain/ Don't Know</i>
The future of this country seems dark to me.	52.4%	33.5%	14.1%
All I can see ahead for the United States is unpleasantness, rather than pleasantness.	40.9	36.4	22.7
The future of the U.S. seems vague and uncertain to me.	55.8	28.3	16.0
I have great faith in the future of this country. (Reflected)	36.4	40.9	22.7
I can look forward to more good times for the United States than bad times. (Reflected)	42.8	26.8	30.5
I look forward to the future for this country with hope and enthusiasm. (Reflected)	57.6	21.6	20.8
Average Response	39.7	39.2	21.1

To this point, emphasis has been placed on adolescents' attitudes concerning the current functioning of the sociopolitical system. What sort of prognosis do they offer for the system's future? Forty percent of the Hartford students sampled view the future of the sociopolitical system as being bleak, an equal number are more sanguine in their predictions, and about 20 percent are undecided (Table 5). Since only 40 percent of these students are hopeful regarding the future and since 50 percent are politically detached from the system, the pervasiveness of the problem is clear. Earlier research has typically concluded with the notion that shifts in public policy emphases and greater discretion on the part of political leaders would result in greater political allegiance on the part of the masses. These results, however, put into question these earlier conclusions.

One comparatively unexplored political alienation dimension concerns attitudes about the source of political influence in the political system. Are most decisions made by a small elite or do the masses, or at least groups of individuals, influence major political decisions? If these Hartford students

are truly alienated, they should perceive the political system as being basically elitist in nature. The data in Table 6 indicate this to be the case, although a significant percentage (31%) of the sample appears to be uncertain of the system's decision-making structure. This finding is especially interesting, since this topic is not stressed in social studies textbooks, although the student is usually left with the impression that all citizens have relatively equal influence in the sociopolitical system (Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education, 1971).

Observers of contemporary American pre-adults have suggested that one of the greatest sources of dissatisfaction among this group is the failure to subscribe to or act upon fundamental democratic values (Coles, 1975). This observation appears to apply as well to the adolescents investigated. As the

**Table 6. Elitism Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain/ Don't Know</i>
In the United States, very wealthy people, such as leaders in industry and banking, have much more influence over what the government does than do most other Americans.	78.1%	13.8%	8.2%
In the United States, the major decisions made in each of the major areas of the society, such as industry, foreign affairs, race relations, and so on, are made by the same group of people.	42.4	19.7	37.9
In the United States, the major decisions made in each of the major areas of the society, such as industry, foreign affairs, race relations, and so on, represent the will of the majority of Americans. (Reflected)	36.1	33.1	30.9
In the United States, there are no elites or masses since all citizens have the opportunity to participate in politics and to influence the major decisions of the society. (Reflected)	19.0	37.2	43.9
In the United States, people who are knowledgeable about politics, skilled in public relations, and who have a lot of information about public issues have as much influence on what the government does as do people with wealth or high economic status. (Reflected)	40.1	26.0	33.8
In the United States, most major decisions that shape the future of the country are made by an elite or small group of people, and the great mass of Americans has no real chance of becoming members of this elite.	39.4	27.1	33.5
Average Response	40.6	26.0	31.4



**Table 7. Democratic Deficiency Item Response Distributions**

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain/ Don't Know</i>
People like me probably believe in basic democratic principles more than our political leaders do.	42.0%	31.2%	26.8%
This country is becoming less democratic every day.	40.1	33.1	26.8
It's very disturbing to me that the interests of some groups of people aren't fully represented in our political system.	62.1	16.4	21.6
Although our government is supposed to be based on justice for everyone, it really isn't just at all.	61.7	26.0	12.3
I regret very much that there isn't more racial equality in this country today.	57.2	22.7	20.1
No matter what the civics books say, all people are not treated politically equally.	77.0	13.0	10.0
I'm very much concerned about many people in this country today not having as much political equality as they should.	58.0	19.3	22.7
Personal liberty is something that's only written about in textbooks, not something that really exists in this country today.	37.9	35.7	26.4
Although I wish it were otherwise, no one in this country today has as much freedom as the Constitution says they should have.	59.9	21.9	18.2
Average Response	55.0	24.4	20.5

results in Table 7 indicate, 55 percent of the students perceive basic deficiencies in the system's implementation of democratic values. From the students' responses, it would seem that they are particularly disturbed regarding inequality and injustice. Two implications follow from this pattern of responses. First, it could be argued that these students, in expressing such levels of dissatisfaction, have been successfully inculcated with democratic theory. This introduces a problem for the educator, however: if such failures are stressed in the classroom, student alienation may be exacerbated; if such failures are not cited or are contradicted, student alienation may also be reinforced.

Analysis of the adolescents' responses on these seven measures of political alienation indicates a general pattern of disaffection ranging from a low of 40 percent to a high of 55 percent and averaging across all items 49 percent. This information, however, does not indicate the association between these seven dimensions of political alienation. If a student feels politically powerless, does he also feel politically detached? The correlation matrix in Table 8 answers this type of question. Given the relatively strong

correlations between the seven measures of political alienation, and given the average intercorrelation in the table of 0.65, it must be concluded that these seven dimensions of political disaffection are interrelated.

**Table 8. Intercorrelations (r) Between Political Alienation Indicators**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
(1) Political Powerlessness	1.00	0.85	0.62	0.80	0.49	0.70	0.65
(2) Political Discontentment		1.00	0.98	0.46	0.55	0.59	1.00
(3) Political Cynicism			1.00	0.52	0.58	0.70	1.00
(4) Political Detachment				1.00	0.48	0.51	0.49
(5) Political Hopelessness					1.00	0.35	0.62
(6) Elitism						1.00	0.64
(7) Democratic Deficiency							1.00

NOTE: All correlations corrected for attenuation.

This leads to a second question: Are seven dimensions of political alienation being measured in this study, or could political disaffection among these Hartford adolescents be described using a smaller number of dimensions (Simmons, 1966)? The factor analysis results reported in Table 9 show that, in fact, these seven dimensions can be reduced to two, with the initial dimension accounting for most of the variance. In this instance, the first factor might be labelled a system-oriented dimension, in that it contains high factor loadings on discontentment, cynicism, hopelessness, elitism, and democratic deficiency. On the other hand, the second factor, with high loading on powerlessness and detachment, appears to be more individual-oriented. Thus, these adolescents seem to be expressing two views of disaffection, the first, and most important, concerned with the perfor-

**Table 9. Principal Components Factor Analysis of Political Alienation Indicators**

	<i>Factor 1</i>	<i>Factor 2</i>	<i>Communalities</i>
Political Powerlessness	0.13	0.81*	0.67
Political Discontentment	0.72*	0.24	0.58
Political Cynicism	0.77*	0.10	0.60
Political Detachment	0.20	0.77*	0.64
Political Hopelessness	0.49*	0.39	0.39
Elitism	0.56*	0.13	0.33
Democratic Deficiency	0.79*	0.18	0.66
Eigenvalue	2.94	0.93	
Percentage of Variance	42.0	13.3	

\*Highest factor loading.

mance of the political system, and the second view concerned more with their behavior in relationship to the system.

The third objective set for this study concerned determining the effects of students' personal characteristics on their responses to the political alienation measures. A good case could be made for political alienation occurring among girls more than boys (because the former are typically less politically involved), occurring among non-whites more than among whites (because the former are typically more disadvantaged), occurring among freshmen more than seniors (because the former are less informed), occurring among students with lower socioeconomic status (because of their typical lack of political resources), and occurring among students with lower grade-point-averages (because of their relative lack of sophistication).

The results of a multiple regression analysis, appearing in Table 10, show all of these expectations to be incorrect. Indeed, none of these factors has a significant effect on either terminal dimension of systemic disaffection, with the exception of grade-point-average which has a slight effect on system-oriented political alienation. In this case, though, the hypothesis is also disconfirmed: the higher a student's grade-point average, the higher the level of alienation. The most important conclusion to be drawn from these statistics, however, is that personal attributes do not have an appreciable effect on levels of student political alienation. The causes of such disaffection must reside elsewhere.

**Conclusion.** Four major findings emerge from this research. First, levels of political alienation appear to be moderately high among the adolescents surveyed, with about 55 percent typically expressing such disaffection. Second, the adolescents' political alienation generalizes across seven different dimensions, all of which are strongly interrelated. Third, two basic alienation dimensions are being described here, a system-oriented variant and an individual-oriented variant. Last, demographic factors have almost no effect on adolescents' feelings of political alienation.

What, in fact, does influence levels of political disaffection or alienation among preadults? Recent research suggests three possible determinants, all

**Table 10. Demographic-Categoric Variables Regressed on Political Alienation Composite Indicators**

	<i>Individual-Orientation</i>	<i>System-Orientation</i>
Sex	0.07	0.05
Race	-0.12	-0.03
Grade Level	-0.02	0.04
Socioeconomic Status	-0.06	0.02
Grade-Point-Average	0.03	0.14*
r <sup>2</sup>	0.02	0.03

\*Standardized regression coefficient greater than twice its standard error.

of which have implications for the educational system. Perhaps the most powerful predictor of political alienation feelings among preadults found to date are perceptions of system discrimination, both on racial and economic grounds (Long, 1976c; Long, 1980a; Long, 1980b). A very strong relationship exists between such perceptions of discrimination and feelings of political alienation among adolescents. The research on this subject suggests that one reason for the strong association between these two variables is that adolescents typically manifest firm beliefs in fundamental democratic values, especially political, economic and social equality (Long, 1974a).

Another powerful predictor of political disaffection among adolescents is perceptions of threat from the political system. Research has rather consistently shown that adolescents who are sensitive to the functioning of the political system, who view the present operations of the system as detrimentally affecting their personal well-being, or who fear the political system tend to possess high levels of political alienation (Long, 1976d; Long, 1979; Long, 1978a). This tendency appears to emanate from the individual's need for personal freedom (Brehm, 1966). Moreover, this tendency seems most affected by critical perceptions of sociopolitical reality.

Finally, adolescents possess a predilection for irrational, illogical thinking which also contributes to high levels of political alienation. Of particular interest in this context is the adolescent's perfectionistic demands on the system, demands which derive in part from the social studies curriculum's emphasis on classical democratic theory (Long, 1976a; Long, 1976b). In this instance, the adolescent is taught to subscribe to an idealized conception of the political system which, given the underlying structure of the social system, is impossible to implement (Levin, 1960). In any case, such idealized expectations lead to feelings of systemic disaffection among contemporary adolescents.

What can the educational system do to counter these heightened feelings of political alienation among American adolescents? First, regarding inequality in the American sociopolitical sphere, the educational system might stress the societal bases for discrimination, its historical and economic roots, and how and why it is perpetuated. Moreover, emphasis might be placed on how discrimination and inequality might be eradicated. Second, students might be better informed about the sociopolitical system's impact on their daily lives, the extent to which it actually threatens their well-being, and what measures they might employ to protect their self-interest. Last, the adolescent's propensity to make extreme demands on the sociopolitical system and to set unrealistic standards for systemic performance should be brought to his/her attention, and the irrational bases of such demands and standards indicated and modified.

Inasmuch as the sociopolitical system's limitations have been especially patent in the last decade, it should be recognized that perhaps only the last suggestion can be successfully effected by educators in the near future. And, too, it should be recognized that the educational system's role in this matter is probably one concentrating on coping with adolescent political alienation, not eradicating it (Just, 1974). Still, an awareness of the political

orientations of contemporary students will ease the situation of educators involved in this coping process, and may, as well, contribute to student learning in the social studies.

But should the educational system attempt to counter adolescents' feelings of political disaffection? Indeed, what is inherently wrong with such feelings when they reflect citizens' evaluations of governmental performance? In fact, such feelings on the part of secondary school students appear to indicate student awareness of public affairs, a mature critical ability and the sophisticated application of evaluative standards to the political performances of both leaders and institutions. Furthermore, such sentiments would appear congruent with one variant of the "good citizen" role propounded by social studies educators, i.e., the skeptical citizen, ever vigilant, distrusting, cautious in reacting to the behavior of politicians and in responding to the influence attempts of the political system.

This position seems even more reasonable from the perspective of an elitist model of the American political system, a model in considerable conflict with the dominant model held by social studies educators which stresses the pluralistic nature of power in the system. The elitist model, suggested by the attitudes of the adolescents reported in this study, holds that 1) an individual's power results from his/her role or position in the socioeconomic system and is not an attribute of individuals as they relate to others in the decision-making process; 2) such a power structure within the sociopolitical system tends to persist over time, regardless of the predominant issues of the day or of the results of specific electoral contests and does not typically change with the decision context; 3) within the system, leaders and followers can be clearly distinguished and these two groups do not typically exchange roles; 4) the fundamental distinction between leaders and followers involves control over societal economic resources, not differential levels of political involvement, information or leadership skill; 5) a small leadership group exercises influence in diverse sectors of the system and decision-making on different issues is not influenced by multiple competing groups in the system; 6) in contrast to the notion that competing groups subscribe to many different values and must negotiate to secure agreement on public policies, the elitist model asserts that elites share fundamental values which are generally conservative and which result in less disagreement over policy concerns; and 7) followers exert little influence over leaders, whether through voting or other forms of conventional political activity, which primarily serve symbolic functions within the political system (Dye and Zeigler, 1978; Prewitt and Stone, 1973).

Thus, it might be argued that any attempt to diminish adolescents' feelings of disaffection from the political system, assuming such an attempt were successful, would be status-quo oriented and would conflict markedly with the apparent political beliefs held by contemporary adolescents.

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## A Step Beyond Defining Social Problems: A Response to Shermis and Barth

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In the Spring issue of *Theory and Research in Social Education* Shermis and Barth assert that “the rationale for the study of social problems in social studies is ignored in theory and denied in practice.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, the goals of social education including developing skills in real-life decision making, integration of social science knowledge, social problem analysis, problem solving, and civic participation are not being achieved in the classroom. Instead, most teachers, textbook authors, and curriculum developers are defining problems for students, or renaming or labeling topics or concepts traditionally taught as “problems,” and are calling what takes place “decision making” or “problem solving.”<sup>2</sup>

Shermis and Barth argue that one essential component of Dewey’s approach to problem solving — true problem identification or problem definition — is not, and never has been, a major part of social studies education. As a result, there is (1) no problem solving in social studies classrooms, (2) no “true integration” of knowledge and data from a variety of sources and disciplines, (3) no development of decision making and problem solving skills, (4) “no sense” in talking “meaningfully about reaching” the essential goals of social studies, and (5) no preparation of citizens to “rule themselves” and cope in our complex, changing world.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Shermis and Barth conclude that “there is no defensible approach to social problems and no systematic mode of social problem analysis” in the fields of social education and sociology.<sup>4</sup>

### A Response

First, we would like to commend Shermis and Barth for their efforts in identifying social studies methodology and how it relates to the sociology of

<sup>1</sup>Shermis, Samuel S. and James L. Barth, “Defining Social Problems,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* VII (Spring, 1979), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 11.



social problems. We want to urge them and other social educators to take the most important step beyond just defining what a social problem is and to identify specific models or structured approaches for problem analysis and decision making. Only in this way can we help teachers use models which are supported by theory and research in the social sciences.<sup>5</sup>

Of further importance is the question of why the lag between theoretical sociology and social studies practice developed and continues. Shermis and Barth say only, “the answer apparently is that a *sine qua non* is teachers who have both a conception of ‘problem’ and a philosophy and methodology to enable them to employ problem solving.”<sup>6</sup> They then refer to Howard Beale’s criticism that the majority of teachers don’t know what a controversial subject really is and that they cannot identify real problems.

This may be a contributing factor to the lack of true problem solving in social studies classrooms, but historically there have been few institutional or professional rewards for teachers who emphasized process (e.g., discovery, inquiry, decision making or problem solving) rather than social science content. Teachers often do not move toward problem solving approaches because there is continual pressure calling for content learning, basic skills, and quiet, orderly classrooms. In addition, in very few arts and science and education classes during the education of teachers is true problem solving a major objective of the instructors.

By identifying specific approaches which provide sufficient structure and guidance social studies educators can help teachers stimulate “true problem solving” in their classrooms. In this response we will identify models which may provide defensible and systematic approaches to social problem analysis and problem solving. Most importantly, the field needs to examine such approaches because they emphasize the learning, practice and use of individual and group problem solving and decision making skills.

In one sense we disagree with Shermis and Barth when they argue that there are no approaches available. One mistake they made was to look only to sociology which resulted in ignoring the work of scholars who have defined, studied and attempted to solve social problems within the framework of other disciplines. We think that there are defensible approaches to real social problem solving and intend to discuss them in this response. We believe Barth and Shermis overlooked the work of economists, political scientists, behavioral scientists, and psychologists who have developed approaches to, and have designed instructional materials for, social problem analysis and problem solving.

<sup>5</sup>Berger, Peter and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967) pp. 185-189; Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), and Fox, Robert et al. *Diagnosing Professional Climate of Schools* (Fairfax, VA: NTL Learning Resources Corp., 1973) pp. 11-31.

<sup>6</sup>Shermis and Barth. “Defining,” p. 14.

## Problem Solving Approaches

A major contribution of Shermis and Barth is their emphasis that each individual construct her/his own definition of the problem, individual or social, under consideration. Constructing problem definitions provides us with the crucial link among models for true problem solving and the primary criterion for selecting decision making approaches for social studies classrooms. Once problems have been defined and analyzed, however incompletely, people are often compelled to act.<sup>7</sup> This action may involve individual, small group and social decision making about a personal or social problem. Several models from a variety of disciplines including sociology will be discussed in the next sections.

### Personal or Individual Problem Solving

There are a number of approaches to or models for individual problem solving and decision making. Some come from the fields of the psychology of creativity,<sup>8</sup> business planning,<sup>9</sup> economics and consumer decision making,<sup>10</sup> education,<sup>11</sup> and behavioral science.<sup>12</sup> One general approach to individual problem solving stresses "the creative process," various "conceptual blocks" that inhibit creativity, and "techniques" to overcome these blocks and augment one's own creative talents for solving problems.<sup>13</sup> According

<sup>7</sup>McCaskey, Michael B. "Goals and Direction in Personal Planning," *Academy of Management Review* (June, 1977), 458-459. This article discusses techniques for problem identification for situations when a big part of a problem is determining what the real problem is.

<sup>8</sup>Osborn, A. *Applied Imagination* (New York: Scribners, 1962); Parnes, S., *The Creative Behavior Guidebook* (New York: Scribners, 1965); Zwicky, F., *New Methods of Thought and Procedure* (N.Y.: Springer-Kerlog, 1970); DeBono, E., *New Think* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1967); Gordon, Wm., *Synerics* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961).

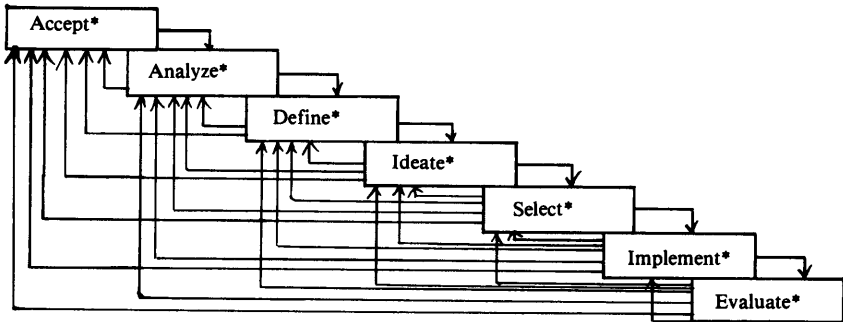
<sup>9</sup>Bouge, J. W. "Problem Recognition and Diagnosis: Basic Inputs to Business Policy," *J. of Business Policy*, 2 (1972), pp. 45-53; Baybrooke, David and Charles Lindbloom, *A Strategy of Decision* (New York: Free Press, 1963); Dessler, Gary, *Organization and Management: A Contingency Approach* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1976); Huse, Edgar and J. L. Bowditch, *Behavior In Organizations: A Systems Approach to Managing* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1978); and Elbing, C., *Behavioral Decisions in Organizations* (Glenview, Ill., Scott, Foresman and Co., 1978).

<sup>10</sup>Fels, Rendigs, Steven Buckles and Walter Johnson, *Casebook of Economic Problems and Policies: Practice in Thinking* (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Company, 1979), pp. 34-37; Jelley, Herbert M. and Robert O. Herrman, *The American Consumer: Issues and Decisions* (New York: Greg Division/McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1973), pp. 27-31; Behr, Michael R. and Dennis L. Nelson, *Economics: A Personal Consumer Approach* (Reston, VA.: Reston Publishing, Inc., 1975), pp. 45-66; Canfield, James, *Teaching a Course in Personal Economics* (New York: Joint Council on Economic Education), p. 1; and McCarthy, M. H., *Dollars and Sense: An Introduction to Economics* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foreman and Co., 1979), Chapter 1.

to Koberg and Bagnall, problem solving is a “process of creative, constructive behavior” which involves a “series or sequence of events, stages, phases or ENERGY STATES.”<sup>14</sup> The logical sequence of energy states includes (1) accept, (2) analyze, (3) define, (4) ideate, (5) select, (6) implement, and (7) evaluate<sup>15</sup> (see Figure 1). Each state has its own particular purposes and techniques for stimulating constructive, creative problem solving.

The strength of Koberg and Bagnall’s approach is in the practical techniques they provide. These techniques would aid social studies educators and student problem solvers in constructing problem definitions even though other general approaches or problem solving models were used. Throughout the seven phases the problem solver is constructing a clearer picture of her/his own view of the problem and making necessary changes in this picture along the way. As shown in Figure 1 this may involve many “sidetrips” and retracing of steps back and forth through the seven energy states.

### A PROCESS FOR CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING



\* Involves relevant fact finding, analysis, and interpretation in the phase and feedback loops and implies that true problem solving may “skip” steps and retrace throughout the process.

From Koberg and Bagnall. See footnote 14 below.

FIGURE 1

<sup>11</sup>Dewey, John, *How We Think* (New York: D. C. Heath, 1910); Beyer, Barry K., *Teaching Thinking in Social Studies* (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill, 1979); Banks, James A. and Ambrosce, Clegg, *Teaching Strategies for the Social Studies: Inquiry, Valuing and Decision Making* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1973).

<sup>12</sup>Enthoven, A. C., “Ten Practical Principles for Policy and Program Analysis,” in R. Zeckhauser *et al.* (eds.), *Benefit-Cost and Policy and Analysis 1974* (Chicago: Aldine, 1975); Revlin, Alice M., *Systematic Thinking For Social Action* (Washington, D.C., Brookings Institute, 1971); Steinbrunner, John, *The Cybernetic Theory of Decision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); and Behn, R. D. and Vaupal, James W., *Analytical Thinking for Busy Decision-Makers* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

<sup>13</sup>Adams, James L., *Conceptual Blockbusting* (San Fran.: W. H. Freeman, 1974), pp. 7-11.

<sup>14</sup>Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall, *The Universal Traveler: A Soft-Systems Guide to: Creativity, Problem-Solving and the Process of Reaching Goals* (Los Altos, CA.: William Kaufmann, Inc., 1976), p. 16.

A number of economists have recommended a systematic approach to solving problems and to making consumer decisions which is similar to Koerber and Bagnall's approach. These approaches are combined into one general six-step process: (1) Define the problem, (2) State goals, (3) Identify alternatives, (4) Collect and analyze relevant data, (5) Evaluate each alternative according to the goals, (6) Act.<sup>16</sup>

For example, the elementary and junior high school economic television film series, "Trade Offs," emphasizes the application of economics to real life personal and social problems and the learning of decision making skills.<sup>17</sup> Additional materials are available for stimulating individual problem solving in social studies classrooms from such disciplines as mathematics, language arts, English and career education.<sup>18</sup>

### Small Group Problem Solving

Groups often form, or are formed, to solve problems. Sometimes individuals have to work in and/or with groups to solve personal, local or social problems. One group problem solving approach, based upon the Research Utilization Problem Solving Model, is the Organizational Problem Solving Scheme.<sup>19</sup> The first two stages of the five stage model emphasize careful problem identification and analysis, or construction of the problem definition by looking for causes, goals, type of problem, supporting and blocking forces and a "picture" of current reality. Based upon Kurt Lewin's force field analysis,<sup>20</sup> the Organizational Problem Solving approach provides an orderly scheme for (1) "constructing" a group definition of any particular problem, (2) brainstorming solutions to the problem and (3) trying out and implementing chosen solutions.

A second approach, the nominal group technique, was developed by Delbecq and Van de Ven. It is a process for structuring a group meeting in

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup>Fels, *et al.*, *Casebook*; Jelly, *et al.*, *American Consumer*; Behr and Nelson, *Personal Consumer* and Canfield, *Teaching a Course*.

<sup>17</sup>"Trade Offs" developed by Agency for Instructional Television, Joint Council on Economic Education and the Canadian Foundation for Economic Education, 1978; see Bonnie Meszaros, *A Guide to Trade Offs* (Bloomington, Indiana: Agency for Instructional Television, 1978) and June Gilliard, *J.C.E.E. Workshop Leaders Handbook* (New York: Joint Council on Economic Education, 1978).

<sup>18</sup>Christ, Henry I., *Modern English In Action* (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1968); *Decision Making Skills* (New York: G. A. Guidance Associates, 1979); Kohlberg, L. and S. Simon, *Photo Study Card Kits* (St. Paul, Minn.: Greenhaven Press, 1979); and Unified Science and Mathematics in Elementary School (USMES) Project Guides (Newton, Mass: Education Development Project, 1973-75).

<sup>19</sup>Jung, Charles, Rene Pino and Ruth Emory, *RUPS: Research Utilizing Problem Solving: Leaders Manual* (Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1975), pp. 63-93.

<sup>20</sup>Lewin, Kurt, *Field Theory in Social Sciences* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951). Napier, R. and M. Gershenfeld, *Groups: Theory and Experience* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), pp. 225-231.

**THE SUBJECT MATTER OF POLITICAL ECONOMY**  
**A Framework for Analysis of Political-Economic Policies and Issues**

<b>ECONOMICS</b> (Economic Science)	<b>POLITICS</b> (Political Science)
<b>FOUNDATION</b>	
<p><b>THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM</b>            (Wants Resources Scarcity, i.e., our wants exceed available resources and therefore scarcity exists)</p>	<p><b>THE POLITICAL PROBLEM</b>            (Conflicts of interest)</p>
<b>THUS</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;">I. Political economy is the study of the <b>methods</b> by which society—</p>	
<p>employs its resources (human, capital, natural, time) productively for the fulfillment of human wants.</p>	<p>resolves conflicts of interest over the authoritative allocation of values; thus a study of power.</p>
Toward these ends	
<p>Economics is a study of how a society decides—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>What</b> to produce (i.e., what wants to fulfill) and <b>how much</b> to produce</li> <li>b. <b>How</b> to produce most efficiently (i.e., how to allocate resources most productively to their alternative possible uses)</li> <li>c. <b>For whom</b> to produce (i.e., who is to get what and how much and how is this to be decided)</li> </ol>	<p>Politics is a study of how a society decides—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>What</b> goal values are to be sought and given authority</li> <li>b. <b>How</b> societies are to be organized for the pursuit and use of power and authority (i.e., mechanisms for resolving conflicting values, achieving social goals)</li> <li>c. <b>For whom</b> the organization exists (i.e., who gets what, whose goals are served?)</li> </ol>
<p style="text-align: center;">II. Political economy is the study of <b>social problems</b> relating both to the functioning of the organization as a whole and to its particular institutions</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Both Economics and Political Science usually employ a problems approach involving four steps</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">a. <b>Definition of the Problem</b>—What desired goals are believed to be inadequately served by existing institutions? How does “what is” conflict with what many think “ought to be”?</p>	
<p>Economics is concerned with problems relating particularly to the goals of—</p>	<p>Politics is concerned with problems relating particularly to the goals of—</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Growth</li> <li>3. Stability (both full employment and general price stability)</li> <li>4. Security</li> <li>5. Equity in the distribution of income</li> </ol>	<p style="text-align: center;">... EQUITY IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF POWER</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Equity in the distribution of power (income, deference, security, influence)</li> <li>3. Freedom (both limits on the use of power and access to resources needed to realize individual potential)</li> <li>4. Effectiveness</li> </ol>
<p><b>b. Understanding the problem</b>—What concepts, what analytical tools, what facts do economics and political science have to contribute to an understanding of the problem and its proposed solutions?</p>	
<p>What do we know about how productively resources are being employed for the fulfillment of human wants (related to the problem and the consequences for other values?)</p>	<p>What do we know about value conflicts (i.e., conflicts of interest) related to the problem, how they are being resolved, and the resulting allocation and use of power?</p>
<p><b>c. Public policy alternatives</b>—What are their economic and political implications? How may citizens, as individuals and groups, influence policy decision making?</p>	
<p>What will be the probable consequences, both in the short run and long run (the seen effects and the unseen), for the economic goals stated above?</p>	<p>Who is proposing what and why? How does private interest relate to public interest? What are the probable consequences for the political goals identified above?</p>
<p>Thus what policy alternatives will bring the greatest net realization of values?</p>	
<p>I.e., a more optimal allocation (use) of resources (so that their marginal value products in all alternative uses are equal)</p>	<p>I.e., resolution of the problem with a minimum value loss to any participant and a maximum value gain to all</p>
<p>Which policy alternative is most compatible with one's economic philosophy (i.e., one's view of the proper role of government in relation to the economy?)</p>	
<p>Should government's role in the economy be expanded or contracted. If so, where?</p>	<p>Can government be effectively organized to serve the roles assigned to it? How?</p>
<p><b>d. Action</b>—How may one implement one's views?</p>	
<p>How does one act as consumer, producer, as a member of an interest group to bring about desired changes?</p>	<p>How may one as a citizen or leader participate in politics to be most effective in bringing about desired changes?</p>

FIGURE 2

\*Bibby, John F., et al., *Analyzing Government Regulation: A Resource Guide* (New York; Joint Council on Economic Education, 1978), p. 7.

order to limit and focus the tasks for the group. It includes four steps:<sup>21</sup> (1) listing individual ideas, (2) generating a group idea list, by asking each individual to suggest one idea, then a second, etc. until all ideas are presented, (3) clarifying ideas and (4) group ranking of the ideas. This is a very powerful and useful decision making technique for small groups. It can be used to rank order goals, priorities, elements of a problem definition, or social issues to be studied. Teachers and students find the technique useful and easy to do.

In addition to these specific ideas, there are many other methods for helping facilitating group problem solving. These creative techniques include such approaches as "images of potential,"<sup>22</sup> "problem solving by needs,"<sup>23</sup> and "creative problem solving groups," just to name three which we find exciting. Several school programs have a group-oriented focus emphasizing communication, interaction, and problem solving<sup>24</sup> that could be used by social educators.

### **Solving and Analyzing Social Problems**

Several proposals for social studies curriculum emphasize social problems and active student decision making. Some focus on developing student competencies for direct participation in problems that affect the student in class, in school and in her/his community.<sup>25</sup> For instance, in the school laboratory approach students learn and use such skills as observing, listen-

<sup>21</sup>Delbecq, Andre *et al.* *Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide To Nominal Group and Delphi Processes* (Palo Alto: Scott, Foresman, 1975), pp. 7-9.

<sup>22</sup>Fox, Robert, Ronald Lippitt and Eva Schindler-Rainman. *Towards a Humane Society: Images of Potentiality* (Fairfax, VA: NTL Learning Resources Corporation, 1973).

<sup>23</sup>Cowing, Della, a technique used during training session run by Human Resources Development Associates, Ann Arbor, MI; see also McDaniel, Michael and Jay S. Mendell, "What Futurists Can Learn From Creative Problem Solvers," *AAUW Journal* (November, 1975), pp. 38-40.

<sup>24</sup>See such programs and resources as: Quest, 2707 N. Main St., Findlay, Ohio 45840 (high school); Learning Development Systems, Affective Learning System For Group Facilitators, 157 Blackstone Drive, Centerville, Ohio 45459; Johnson, David W. and Frank P. Johnson, *Joining Together* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975); Brown, G. I., *Human Teaching*; Gorman, Alfred H., *Teachers and Learners*; Dupont, H. S. *et al.*, *Toward Affective Development* (1975: grades 3-6) and Dinkmeyer, Don *et al.*, *Systematic Training For Effective Parenting* (1976-adults) and H. Dupont and C. Dupont, *Transition* (1979: grades 6-7) all from American Guidance Service, Circle Pines, Minnesota; Wells, H. C. and J. T. Canfield, *About Me* (4-6) Encyclopedia Britannica Ed. Corp., Chicago, Ill.; W. Work *et al.*, the *Communication Workshop* (Jr. High and High School); J. Mof-fett, *Interaction* (k-12) Boston: Houghton Mifflin; Paskewitz, Daniel E., *Student Effectiveness: A Group Approach to Self-Managed Learning* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977) Morrison, Donald W., *Personal Problem Solving in The Classroom* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977). And *Magic Circle Program and Interchange: A Journey Into Self Learning Through Group Interaction* (La Mesa, Cal.: Human Development Training Institute).

ing, supporting, mobilizing, organizing, cost-benefit analyzing, rule making, negotiating, bargaining and voting along with higher level cognitive, normative and evaluative competencies. The main goal of the lab approach is to identify and use natural settings in the school and community where decisions are made so that students can observe decision making processes, develop decision skills, and participate in those decisions that affect them.<sup>26</sup>

The Economics-Political Science Series (EPS) from the Joint Council on Economic Education provides an interdisciplinary model for analyzing social problems and policy issues.<sup>27</sup> This approach to integrating economics and political science into “political economy” (see Figure 2) is aimed at “enabling students (1) to analyze and understand policy issues and (2) to participate effectively in the political process through which policy alternatives are examined, promoted and acted upon.”<sup>28</sup> Leamer and Smith point out that both disciplines employ a four-step problem solving approach, including (1) definition of the problem, (2) understanding the problem, (3) identifying and analyzing public policy alternatives, and (4) acting.<sup>29</sup>

This political economy approach provides a systematic framework where teachers can involve students in learning social science concepts and tools while analyzing and defining social problems themselves. Although integrating only two disciplines, this approach could be broadened to include sociology, anthropology, psychology, geography, the humanities and other disciplines relevant to any particular problem.

<sup>25</sup>Remy, *et al.*, Citizenship Development Project, Units 1-4; Berlack, A. and T. R. Tomlinson, “Washington University Elementary Materials,” New York: Random House, 1973-75; Unified Science and Mathematics For Elementary Schools (USMES), see student challenge books and teacher resource guides, Newton, Mass.: Education Development Center, 1975; Byron G. Massialas, *et al.*, “Skills for Democratic Participation,” Nims Middle School Project, Tallahassee, Fla.; Byron G. Massialas, *et al.*, “Decisions About You” and “Decisions About Language,” Tallahassee: Self Concept and Decision Making Middle School Curriculum Project, The Florida State University, 1979; Judith Gillespie and Stuart Lazarus, *Comparing Political Experiences: Political Issues Skill Kit* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, 1975); Gillespie, Judith A. and John J. Patrick, *Comparing Political Experiences* (Washington, D.C.: American Political Science Association, 1974); Gillespie, Judith and Stuart Lazarus, “Busing in Boston,” “Clean Air Now,” (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, sponsored by American Political Science Association, 1975); Newman, Fred M., *Education For Citizen Action* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Publications, 1977); Remy, Richard C., *et al.*, Citizen Development Project, 1977; and Massialas, Byron G. and Joe B. Hurst, *Social Studies In a New Era: The Elementary School as a Laboratory* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1978).

<sup>26</sup>Massialas, Byron G. and Joe B. Hurst, *Social Studies In a New Era* (New York: Longman, Inc., 1978) Ch. 3 and 4.

<sup>27</sup>Bibby, John F., Leon M. Schuss and George G. Watson, (eds.), *Analyzing Government Regulation: A Resource Guide* (New York: Joint Council on Economic Education, Economics-Political Science Series).



Another noteworthy approach to social problem analysis, the Jurisprudential model of Oliver and Shaver,<sup>30</sup> serves to teach students to analyze and take positions about controversial social issues and does integrate a number of social science disciplines. To ignore this approach to social problem analysis is a major oversight in our opinion, even though it does tend to define issues for students. Both of these analysis models could be used after the teacher helps students define problems for themselves.

## Conclusions

True problem solving is identifying real problems and acting in order to solve them. The models discussed above, although not inclusive, illustrate problem solving processes that can be used by students, teachers, curriculum designers, teacher educators, etc. to make important real-life decisions. While students are using one or more of the models to resolve the issue of “junk food” in the cafeteria, teachers can solve a problem about team teaching, and teacher trainers can decide how to teach pre-service teachers how to encourage true problem solving in their social studies classrooms. In fact, the authors used a similar decision making process to respond to Shermis and Barth. We think there is something exciting about this “consonance” of decision making models and the idea of “true problem solving.”

Rarely is there consonance<sup>31</sup> among what students, teachers, curriculum designers, etc. do (e.g., teachers and curriculum designers do not use the Jurisprudential Approach or EPS to solve their own personal or instructional problems). In the case of individual problem solving, the creative problem solving approach (Figure 1) could be used to decide about objectives, strategies, materials, teacher training, etc. relevant to implementing new problem solving curricula in social education. What we need to do is “accept” this challenging problem.

<sup>28</sup>Leamer, Lawrence E. and Paul A. Smith, “Integrating Economics and Political Science” in Bibby, *et al.*, *Analyzing Government Regulations*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup>Oliver, Donald N. and James P. Shaver, *Teaching Public Issues in The High School* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966) and see AEP series including “Taking a Stand,” “Negro Views of America,” “Rights of The Accused,” “Race and Education,” “Science and Public Policy,” “Religious Freedom,” and “Community Change,” Columbus, Ohio: American Education Publications.

<sup>31</sup>Systems design models used to design instruction about systems design is one example where the model is used to develop instruction and make decisions about the model itself; see Kinney, Mark B., *Staff Development In Geriatric Institutions* (Ann Arbor: Institute of Gerontology, University of Michigan, 1976), pp. 6-9; Popham, James W. and Eva Baker, *Systematic Instruction* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1970); and Dick, Walter and Lou Cary, *Systematic Design of Instruction* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman, 1978).

<sup>32</sup>Joyce, Bruce and Marsha Weil, *Models of Teaching* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972) and Joyce, Bruce R., *Selecting Learning Experiences: Linking Theory and Practice*. (Washington, D.C.: Assoc. For Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1978).

The authors' primary goal in this response is to initiate discussion, implementation, testing, and evaluation of a number of decision making/problem solving processes and models for teaching.<sup>32</sup> We hope that others will take us to task (we welcome and need feedback) and present other ideas, approaches and positions. To think we have the last word would conflict both with our own goals and the tenets of the rational decision making steps (especially evaluation and revise) above (see Figure 1). In fact, we are looking forward to someone responding to us and to Barth and Shermis, and are excited that by talking amongst ourselves and other colleagues already we have begun the search for verifiable measures of our goals, effective alternatives to stimulate true problem solving, relevant data, etc. on which to base future implementation and evaluation efforts.

In our own experience in teaching individual, small group and social problem solving to college students we find their elementary and secondary school education did not include problem solving and decision making techniques. Future theoretical and research efforts should be aimed at developing, testing, evaluating, revising, and disseminating problem solving processes and models for teaching. Only then can the field make important decisions about how to meet the goals of social studies education which Shermis and Barth claim are "ignored in theory and denied in practice."

## Response to Hurst, Weiss and Kinney

James L. Barth, S. Samuel Shermis  
Purdue University

We are grateful to Professors Hurst, Weiss and Kinney for their critique of "Defining Social Problems," (*Theory and Research in Social Education*, Spring 1979). We are most grateful that our work has stimulated others to think about, correct, refute, add to or amplify upon our own analysis of what we see as the essential issues. And, the well-documented, reasoned and clearly written response by the three is a welcome addition to the continuing dialogue.

Our response to their comment is, first, that the issues we attempted to identify seemed to us to be absolutely central to everyone's thinking on the social studies. We do not exaggerate. All social studies educators — whether embryonic theoreticians in the nineteenth century or contemporary writers — are concerned about problem-solving, social problems and the relationship of both to the social studies.

If we argue — as all others have — that the process of decision-making is at the heart of the social studies, the fuel that impels the process is social problems. All contributors to the field in the last seventy years have attempted to relate problem-solving, social problems and decision-making. All have struggled with the complexities involved in understanding and relating the three. Our own work in the last ten or so years is simply a continuation of what many others have done since the 1890s.

What we attempted in "Defining Social Problems" was to explore the sociologist's approach to "social problems," not because sociologists have a monopoly on the idea or because they are pre-eminent in any sense. Rather, we seemed to have learned that, despite the beguiling simplicity of the words "defining social problem," coming to an understanding of a definition is a formidable task.

Since the nineteenth century, all social sciences — and before then all intellectual disciplines — have developed and organized their inquiry structure around what we have elsewhere called "disciplinary problems." By this we mean issues which many in a given discipline take to be meaningful, puzzling or traditionally useful. We discovered also that many writers,

poets, essayists and others who wrote for liberal journals had an important hand in generating public awareness of suspected lapses from cherished values. We know now, thanks to the labors of our colleague, Michael Lybarger, that social scientists in general and some sociologists in particular had much to do with the theoretical formulations of the social studies movement in the second decade of the century. In short, we are quite convinced that anyone who wishes to think about social studies must also think about social problems. As Dewey and his followers insisted, “individual” puzzlement is born from the collective confusion that all “social problems” are eventually individual ones.

But having said this, it is no simple matter to relate the particularities. To say that a problem is not a problem unless it is so defined by an individual almost raises more questions than it answers. And for this reason, we have spent much of the last decade attempting to untangle the complex strands relating “problem-solving,” “social problems,” “problem internalization,” “decision-making,” “democracy” and “social studies.”

What we were *not* saying is that there are no problem-solving models in the social studies. From Plato through Pestalozzi to the “Trade Off” series, from Freud through Rogers, from the works of such contemporaries as Shaver, Berlak, Newmann, Joyce, Fraenkel, Hunt, Metcalf, Massialias *et al.*, we know there is a plethora of problem-solving models. There is truly an *embarasse de richesses* of ways of thinking about what Dewey called “the complete act of thought.”

What we did contend is that problem-solving is missing from the social studies. Despite the unanimous agreement that decision-making, another term for problem-solving, is at the heart of social studies, every piece of research on the actual conduct of social studies in the United States, even before Beale’s still-valid observations in the 1930s, reveals one thing: social studies is relentless indoctrination, coverage of atomized information and generally ephemeral attempts to make kids learn things that will be good for them later.

What we wished to understand, then, is why, after so many years of verbal affirmation of problem-solving, did we find Citizenship Transmission in all its forms — indoctrination, minute coverage of unrelated information, relentless inculcation of dominant belief structure, and pervasive and unremitting testing over memorized facts. They pointed to behavior they considered deviant, depraved, etc., and labeled what they saw “social problem.” We saw that there was an attempt to bring intellectual order and clarity to the defining process in the 1920s and 1930s. And then we saw that in the 1960s, the hard-won battles over an adequate definition had to be fought once again. All of this was edifying because, in our opinion, social studies teachers and social problems text writers are now — still — where sociologists were in the 1890s. They point in dismay to poverty, pornography, pot, petting or whatever else they find obnoxious and *label* what they see as “social problems.” Regrettably, the practice of *labeling* behavior as a problem does not necessarily generate problem solving thought. This

crucial insight has not yet struck home — or to be more precise, it has not yet struck home in the minds of most social studies teachers. Hunt, Metcalf, Hullfish, Smith and many others have pointed out over the years that teachers desperately need a defensible theory of problem-solving; otherwise they will merely cover disparate concepts and label them problems. This distinction between labeling and other kinds of behavior has struck home with sociologists in the last twenty years, for they have gone to great pains to explicate the assumptions and processes underlying the defining process.

We nevertheless conclude by expressing our appreciation to Professors Hurst, Weiss and Kinney. “A Step Beyond Social Problems” is indeed a step beyond the issues we raised. And members of the field ought to progress beyond. Our point is simply that before we debate whether Oliver and Shaver had a point, whether a jurisprudential model might work or whether Larry Senesh’s orchestration model, a Fenton model, or any other model, we really ought to ask the first question:

What do we in Social Studies mean by Social Problem?

## Book Reviews

Section Editor, Jack Nelson, Rutgers University

**Carew, Jean V. and Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot. *Beyond Bias: Perspectives on Classrooms*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979. Reviewed by Carole L. Hahn, Emory University.**

*Beyond Bias* is an important book for social studies educators who conduct research, teach pre-service teachers, teach graduate research courses or want to be aware of new developments in the social sciences. Carew and Lightfoot's book is more than a study of four first-grade classrooms; it is a book about educational research.

The authors attempted to overcome what they believe to be major inadequacies in recent research. Descriptions of teacher behavior, student-teacher interactions and life in classrooms have overlooked the meaning of events for the participants. Carew and Lightfoot supplemented data on classroom interaction with observations of individual children, and with interviews with teachers, children, and parents. They were interested in how individual children assimilate their moment to moment environment and in the influence of individual teachers' personal histories and belief systems on their perceptions of children and classroom events. The researchers were concerned also about whether, in recognizing and acting upon individual differences, teachers revealed sex or race prejudices.

This book addresses two problems which have been identified by social educators in recent years — lack of a theoretical basis and overemphasis on statistical studies. An important part of the book is the chapter on various sociological and psychological theories related to understanding life in classrooms. The authors state that researchers ought to recognize the theory that guides their methodology. It is unfortunate that the conclusion to the book does not include a discussion of the fit of the results of the study to existing theory. Another important feature of the book is the use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques to develop the rich case studies. Appendices contain the observation systems that were used and the statistical analyses of the results. However, no reliability data are reported. They could have been obtained through a pilot test using several observers, or by several coders responding to the taped observations. Similar analyses of the interviews are needed.

Carew and Lightfoot's reflections about their roles as researchers will be useful to beginning researchers. The authors discuss problems of access to

schools, ethical issues, and sensitive points that arose during the research process. Also, this book will be useful to graduate seminars in social studies because it shows how empirical research can relate to theory, how ethnographic, and quantitative techniques can be combined and how one can use historical, sociological and psychological perspectives to interpret observations. The book should serve as a springboard to discussion as to how those features could be improved upon in research on social studies.

Research like this is needed in social studies. The four classes observed in the Carew and Lightfoot study apparently had no systematic instruction in social studies. One wonders how social studies objectives related to decision making, understanding of self and others, and developing a global perspective are realized in primary classrooms with and without formal instruction in social studies. Studies which use methods and perspectives like those in *Beyond Bias* are also needed of middle and high school social studies classes. While the need for naturalistic studies of classrooms is generally acknowledged, very little of that type of research has been conducted in social studies. Almost nothing is known about what occurs regularly in social studies classes across the country.

*Beyond Bias* is useful to stimulate inquiry in our field and to socialize future researchers. It also offers important insights for teaching pre-service teachers. It is clear from these four cases that teachers do individualize instruction – informally. Social studies methods courses rarely deal with “individualization.” *Beyond Bias* also reminds us that information about the self-fulfilling prophecy, teacher effectiveness research and social studies methods is perceived by pre-service teachers in light of their own personal histories, values and belief systems. Carew and Lightfoot found that teachers recognize individual differences in their classes: one wonders if professors of social studies methods respond differently to their students and how the different students assimilate their teacher training environment.

*Beyond Bias* should be read by social studies researchers because it suggests ways in which we need to broaden our perspectives, our methods and our content in both research and teaching.

# Calls for Nominations

## **Exemplary Research Citation**

The Exemplary Research Citation of the National Council for the Social Studies is awarded to recognize meritorious research in the field of or with significance to social studies education. The citation is a plaque, to be awarded at the 60th Annual Meeting of NCSS in New Orleans, this November.

The award will be made for a particular research effort, or for a meritorious research career, including experimental, conceptual, historical, philosophical and other modes appropriate to the problems investigated. Research outside what normally might be considered the social studies shall not be overlooked if it has particular significance for social studies education. Research will be judged on its theoretical and methodological soundness and on its significance to current practice or policy and/or future research in the social studies.

Nominations should be in a narrative form, typed, double-spaced on 8½ x 11 sheets, giving information about the research, the researcher, and a rationale for considering the nominee. Three copies of the nomination should be sent, with a self-addressed, stamped envelope, by June 15, 1980 to:

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To be eligible for the 1980 award, a dissertation must have been completed between June 16, 1979 and June 15, 1980. Deadline for submissions is June 15, 1980. Guidelines and instructions for submitting nominations may be obtained from John D. Hoge, Chairperson, Dissertation Award Subcommittee, Social Science Education Consortium, Inc., 855 Broadway, Boulder, Colorado 80302 (303/492-8154).



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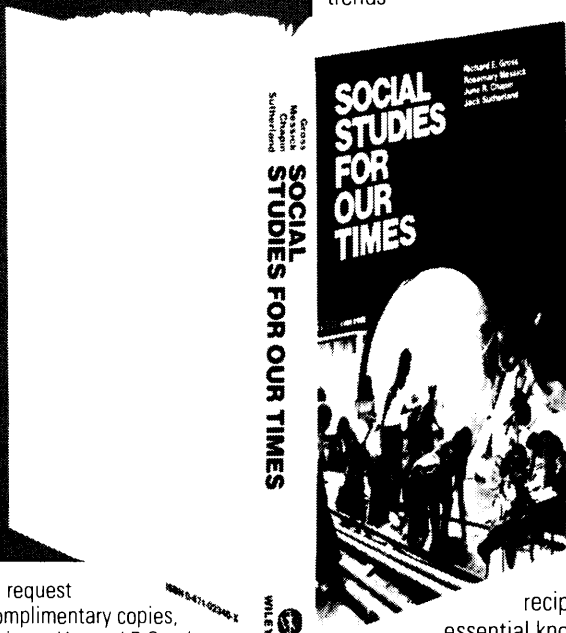
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