SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Diversity, Conformity, Complexity

Yusef J. Prögler

If the goal of human history is a uniform type of man, reproducing at a uniform rate, in a uniform environment, kept at a constant temperature, pressure, and humidity, living a uniformly lifeless existence, with his uniform physical needs satisfied by uniform goods, all inner waywardness brought into conformity by hypnotics and sedatives, or by surgical extirpations, a creature under constant mechanical pressure from incubator to incinerator, most of the problems of human development would disappear. Only one problem would remain: Why should anyone, even a machine, bother to keep this kind of creature alive?

Lewis Mumford,
The Transformations of Man

What exactly is a "student teacher"? As I understand it, a student teacher is a person of student age who is far enough along in his education to be doing some teaching. But a "student teacher" could also be someone who simply teaches students, a student *teacher. Which is what all teachers are. Or a student teacher might be a student studying to become a teacher. Not yet a teacher, still a "student teacher." Such a student, studying to be a teacher, could also be called a "teaching student," which is, after all, what our original "student teacher" was: a teaching student. Sometimes teachers, later in their careers, go back to school for further education, and once again they become students, while still remaining teachers. Well, if a younger student who is doing some teaching is a "student teacher," then wouldn't an older teacher who goes back to school logically be a "teacher student"? Or I guess you could call her a "student teacher," couldn't you? So far, that's three different kinds of student teachers. Now, these teachers who go back to school obviously have to be taught by "teacher teachers." And if one of these teacher teachers were also taking a few courses on the side, that would make her a "student teacher teacher." And if she were just beginning that process, just learning to be a "student teacher teacher" wouldn't that make her a "student teacher teacher student"? I think it would.*

George Carlin, ***Brain Droppings***

Standards of Diversity: Reflecting on Teacher Identities

As a counterpart to the numbing conformity of the bureaucratic and conservative culture of public education,

we can look at the incredible diversity of the students that the system is actually supposed to serve in a place like New York City. This is evident throughout most teacher education programs, especially in public institutions. In order to illustrate the possibilities for standards of diversity, let me describe briefly a typical semester of my social studies methods seminar, which I teach concurrently with the student teaching field experience. During our first two meetings, we introduce ourselves, speak about our backgrounds and identities, share some expectations for the course, and reflect upon and name the qualities we associate with the worst and best teachers. A few important issues and themes usually emerge from these shared experiences, and before getting to a more formal "course description," I usually like to take a little more class time and reflect upon the implications of these first two open meetings for the rest of the semester.

In terms of racial, ethnic, and ideological identity, we are quite a diverse group: Black, White, Hispanic, American, European, Italian, Anglo, Irish, Caribbean, Moroccan, Slavic, Israeli, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, atheist, anarchist, Socialist, Nationalist, Luddite, and Libertarian. In addition to English in all its varieties, we speak many languages: Spanish, Haitian Creole, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, French, German, Berber, Hebrew, and Arabic. Some of us have traveled the world and lived outside the U.S. in places like Africa, the Mideast, and Central America; others have never left the neighborhoods in which we were born. We are also quite varied in terms of gender, class, age, and life experiences: some are the sons and daughters of civil servants, while others are from professional or highly educated parents. We have people in their early twenties not yet out of college alongside grown women and men returning to college in the midst of a career change. Some of us have raised children, others are barely out of adolescence. Many of us hold jobs, and a few of us are already working full time as what the city now calls "pre-certified" teachers; others are full-time students and have had no teaching experiences. It's a dizzying array of identities, the surface of which I am sure I have only begun to scratch, and each semester always reveals new facets.

In speaking of our expectations for the course, we generate an equally diverse set of responses. Initially, our expectations most often seem to me to be of three general types: (1) getting a handle on content (e.g., the full sweep of global history), (2) learning some effective methods and materials (e.g., lesson plans and classroom management), (3) figuring out how to plot a course of professional development (e.g., navigating the mazes of certification, licensing, and standardized testing). Many seminar participants speak of wanting to find a balance between content and method, or of wanting to clarify issues of curriculum and standardized testing. Some have their eyes on a broad vision of the future, while others just want to get through tomorrow. More specific concerns range

from the mundane to the profound: concerns with getting a paycheck, controlling group behavior, and writing standard lesson plans reside right alongside calls for liberatory education and reformulating American citizenship. How to deal with fear, the clock, and the bureaucracy rank high on the list of some of our personal concerns. Some of us desire nothing more than anecdotal sharing and informal networking experiences, while others seem to need a highly structured how-to experience. Literacy is a hot topic, given the constant influx of new immigrants. In short, as with our identities, the diversity of expectations is astounding.

When we generate a list of qualities based on collective recollections of our worst teachers, the chalkboard quickly fills with terms and phrases like: boring; arrogant; talks too much; lies to students; is disrespectful, authoritarian, regimented, time bound; screams too much; has poor hygiene; acts stupid, lazy, racist, biased, sexist; doesn't listen; and appears detached from reality (to name just a few). After constructing this nightmarish composite of our own worst teachers (Franken-teacher?), we proceed to negate each quality, generating a list that includes terms like: empathy, sincerity, honesty, listens to students, respectful, balanced, objective, shows kindness, flexibility, self-criticism, and knows material (again, to name only a few). This list is usually met with murmurs, ranging from "you'll get eaten alive" to "where've you been all my life." While some of us appear to want the negated list to be a magical recipe for being a good teacher, most seem to realize that we are simply negating our own recollections. Interestingly, the best-teacher list seemed to need some elements from the worst-teacher list, depending on the context (i.e., institutional, personal, academic). From this reflective exercise, it seems quite clear that our perceptions of our own worst and best teachers are complex and intertwined.

Someone once said, "Complex problems have simple solutions and they are always wrong." Taken together, our teacher identities, course expectations, and recollections of past experiences constitute what appears to me to be a complex problem of how to proceed with the methods course. To approach this complexity with a simple cookbook of teaching techniques would do an injustice to many of our concerns. Likewise, treating the experience solely with a "touchy-feely" humanism would leave unattended other major issues. Purely practical or totally theoretical approaches will not solve many of the complex problems we raise. What seems necessary is a combination of technical, theoretical, humanistic, philosophical, and practical approaches, which is what we end up constructing along the way.

Standards of Dysfunction: Reforming Teacher Education

Before delving any deeper into revising secondary teacher education programs with a new emphasis on "the

field" and "excellence," it seems to me that colleges of education need to clarify a few fundamental points: (1) What will be the relationship between the various methods courses and the field experiences? (2) What exactly is a "capstone course"? (3) What do we mean by "action research"? (4) Beyond political expediency and accommodation, what meaningful role will the academic disciplines play in a revised secondary program? (5) Are the "foundations" courses, as presently conceived and implemented, still relevant in proposed restructured programs? (6) How will newly conceived programs rectify or avoid some of the major dysfunctions of the present programs? (7) Beyond expediting registration numbers, to what degree are generic education courses still relevant? Without taking time to articulate thoughtful responses to such fundamental concerns, colleges of education risk reproducing old programs in new guises, which begs the question, "why bother at all?" Assuming that we need to change an existing teacher education program, and that we wish to construct a more meaningful program in its place, it seems necessary to keep these basic issues in the forefront. With that in mind, let me briefly discuss some of the preceding questions.

For any restructuring to be meaningful, we will need to rectify some dysfunctions in present programs. A major dysfunction is in the Kafkaesque process by which graduate applications are evaluated. It is patently unfair for students to have to wait months for news, and for them to be unable to even know who has their application. It's also silly for applications to be evaluated by folks in the disciplines, for purely political reasons, when there are perfectly competent people in-house for most of the major academic areas. Adding to this is the absurd practice of overriding, preempting, or circumventing each other by finagling various backdoor or under-the-table arrangements. Why bother to construct another vast bureaucratic edifice of standards, prerequisites, and entrance requirements if what really matters is who you know? But these are almost beside the point, since under the present system of entrance criteria, the evaluation of applications should take only a few minutes for a machine to compute: minimum grade point average and prerequisite course numbers. Even though we may think otherwise, the relevance of prior work in the social sciences is of little importance (e.g., virtually anybody with clearance from the board of education on x number of broadly defined "social studies" credits can qualify under the present system). While it seems necessary that we support any program of providing opportunities for people to retool their lives, we also need to have some kind of minimal consistency or sense of fairness between the myriad agencies and bodies that read applications.

Another clear dysfunction, at least from the perspective of social studies, is the irrelevance of most graduate social science courses to teaching secondary social studies in a place like New York City. In many colleges of

education, there are perfectly competent people in-house who know both education and the social sciences, in method and content, even if we are not taking advantage of their expertise. If folks in the departments learned something about teaching social studies in a place like New York City, then we'd at least have common ground for cooperation and discussion. A variation on this is already being proposed by various professional historical organizations, and if colleges of education don't get with the program, they may find their entire secondary education programs hijacked by academic departments that hire a few "methods" professors. Many present programs are watered-down versions of a disciplinary MA anyway, with very little sense of how education and the social sciences interrelate. Let's face it: many students declare "social studies teacher" as their graduate major only because it's seen as easier than an MA in any of the disciplines. But this is a self-fulfilling prophecy, in that people who sign up for a dumbed-down program are often treated as if they really are dumb, and then we all wonder and complain about "no standards" and all the "dummies" teaching in public schools. There are other problems, but these are the worst. In short, what is the point of going through the prolix hassle of restructuring colleges of education and reforming teacher education programs if we do not address present dysfunctions?

In many colleges of education, students take a "methods" course concurrently with their "field experience." But prior to that final semester, they have had no experience with upper grade level social studies curriculum, teaching, and assessment. Despite wishes to the contrary, most "middle school" courses provide very little in the way of secondary methods for the social studies. This is not surprising, nor is it really anybody's fault, because such courses speak to middle school concerns, which by definition are interdisciplinary. But secondary standards pushed by the state agencies are requiring more focused and disciplined inquiry, even in elementary schools, and public school administrators are now asking for people with a strong background in history and who have taken methods courses prior to student teaching. It's clear that, at least from the perspective of social studies, we need a preservice course that surveys methods and curriculum for social studies, and which will begin to look at the ways the various social science disciplines inform teaching and research.

This course can have some field observation, and even some "action research," but it needs to address some fundamental points: (1) What are the various kinds of standards presently in place (e.g., content, process, performance, or outcomes-based) and how do they fit together? (2) What exactly is a "teaching method," and how does it differ from a technique? (3) How do the various social science disciplines inform teaching methods? (4) Why do the social studies still maintain a central position in many secondary graduation standards? (5) What is the current definition of social studies, and

does it still encompass the traditional array of five or six social science disciplines? (6) What are the various local, regional, and national debates and controversies around social studies? After some rigorous work on these issues, students can do the student teaching, which would run concurrently with a less rigorous, perhaps field-based, course that will address the myriad day-to-day methodological and technical concerns of new teachers. Putting the field and methods together in the same semester, in the absence of prior work, is counterproductive, since students either give in to the daily grind, disregarding the larger questions, or they focus on the larger questions and exit unprepared for the daily grind. A meaningful secondary social studies teacher education program can meet multiple sets of standards, but time and credit hours will have to be allocated for course work before, during, and after the field experience, and this course work needs some discipline specificity within social studies, along with more relevant articulation between education and the social sciences.

When we speak of a "capstone" course, this usually implies that it will top off a coherent and carefully constructed sequence of courses and experiences. Is this what we have in mind? Certainly many programs as they stand now are far from coherent, so putting any sort of stone on them may be more like sealing a grave, burying students under dumbed-down irrelevancies and our own political expediencies. It seems to me that before we think about capping off our programs, we ought to more clearly define them, and then decide whether or not they need a cap, and what form that cap might take, and how heavy it ought to be. Regarding "action research," this term has become faddish, and it means different things to different people. What do we mean by it? Do we take it to mean research into teaching and learning that derives questions from ongoing fieldwork? Is it a form of participant observation? Will methods courses talk about doing action research, or will the time be spent more or less in the field with minimal class meetings and lots of what might be called "thesis guidance." Is it going to proceed from the norms of a generic education course, or will there be discipline-specific or theme-oriented or age-graded versions of the research? If some sort of action research project is to be a significant part of the capstone course, then this seems to imply a thesis. Will we assume that students can read and write on a functionally graduate level, and that they'll know how to do relevant research, action or otherwise? Or do we need some prerequisites or basic academic competencies first? Can faculty be given adequate teaching time for thesis guidance and field supervision, as is the norm in most other academic programs, or will we eschew the thesis completely, devising some kind of standardized examination in its place? Many of these questions will likely begin to find answers during the

process of addressing the present dysfunctions in colleges of education.

At present, there are few connections between social science departments and schools of education, at least if we use the present graduate level programs as any guide. Students take a few very specific courses in the social sciences and a few generic education courses, but there is no place to articulate the relations between the two. This always struck me as odd, until I realized that people are more concerned with turf wars and full time equivalent enrollments (FTEs) than they are with quality and meaning. If we are going to maintain the tit for tat, you take the *x* credits and we'll get the *y*, those are "your" students but these are "mine," then we at least ought to be up-front and honest with each other and our students about this as a political compromise at the expense of meaning and relevance. But if we are really serious about revisions that involve such articulation, then we ought to rethink the courses on both sides. This can entail reviewing the offerings for relevance to teaching social studies, which should also involve considering course work grouped around the primary teaching needs, such as American history or world history. Anything less may only standardize present dysfunctions, leaving students adrift in a schizoid hodgepodge of random course work.

Maybe the time has come to rethink our notion of "foundations." Some professors of education have already noted that it may be more relevant to cover the usual foundational content after having done some fieldwork and teaching, while others of us are committed to a "foundations first" approach. In any case, very few of us teach with both in mind. Perhaps sending students out into schools, museums, neighborhoods, and other sites while learning the foundations would be more desirable. Such an approach could move foundations closer to "action research" and may link up with the inclinations to make things more field oriented, only with a broader definition of the field. And we'll also need to consider exactly who will be in these foundations courses, however they might be conceived, and to what extent the registration will reflect early childhood, elementary, middle level, and secondary concerns (beyond the present concerns of expediting staffing and enrollment) or be limited only to students in colleges of education. The idea of a "self, school, society" type course early on, cross-listed in the academic departments or even as a general education course, seems appealing. Similarly, a course on urban education seems necessary in places like New York City. However, there's less agreement about the traditionally generic child development or philosophy of education course offerings, at least those that reflect stagnant discourses or that have not considered a solid generation of new scholarship and critical commentary. Much of what we teach in such courses is irrelevant in light of emerging paradigm shifts in philosophy and the social sci-

ences, and especially in psychology. Our students deserve so much more.

Standards of Conformity: Entering School Culture

Conformity in a large bureaucracy is infectious. Each year, I begin my student teacher orientations by warning applicants that the student-teaching experience will be very demanding of their time. Beginning in early February and ending in June, they follow the board of education's academic calendar in their cooperating school. Some schools will require that they attend orientations during January and help out with standardized examinations in June. In any case, the minimum time spent on-site in the cooperating school is three or four hours a day, five days a week; most schools require longer hours. The State of New York has recently doubled its minimum number of field experience hours from 150 to 300 in order to certify teachers, but even before that mandate many students easily did 300 hours in a single semester at a school that made demands on their labor above and beyond the minimum requirements as a contingency for accepting student teachers in the first place. Because of such great demands on time, the single most challenging factor in student teaching—and the issue that has led to the most dismissals in the past—is unrealistic time management and planning. I warn them that they should realistically plan to spend many, many more hours in student teaching than what is implied by the number of credit hours they get for the course. It is in many cases like a full-time job, depending on the field site in which students are placed, and their prior preparation, and I find myself having to frequently remind them that they ought to plan their semester schedules accordingly, more as a matter of practical survival than as an ideological commitment.

The high schools in which we place our students, mostly in Brooklyn and Manhattan, are typical of New York City and tend to be fairly conservative places, despite the liberal veneers. In such a context, I try to impress upon students that they should think of themselves as professionals, which is also sometimes useful for making the broader point that in the field they need to think of themselves more as teachers and less as students. This means looking and acting the part, dressing like they would for a job interview, since they'll probably be looked over from day one as prospective employees. "No hats, sneakers, shorts, T-tops, or jeans," I intone, "Your hair should be neat and clean, and men should either shave daily or keep facial hair trimmed." The conservative school culture demands that they be polite and courteous in their dealings with principals, teachers, and parents, despite the teachers that we all recall who had frizzy hair and wore tennis shoes. I remind them, "Please don't slouch, don't use street slang, and look folks in the eye when speaking to them." Promptness is a key attribute of the conservative school culture, and I remind my students that if they are go-

ing to be late or absent it is their responsibility to call ahead, and to perhaps arrange for a substitute; the worst thing a student teacher could probably ever do is to not show up. This point often calls for an important adjustment in how many students relate to their education; in the business-driven world of standardization, college feels more and more like another job. I usually round out their orientations by emphasizing that they should never, ever "fraternize inappropriately" with their students, that they should not gossip in the teacher's lounge, or anywhere else, and, only half jokingly, that they "avoid screaming and too much coffee." This presentation occasionally orients a few students out of the program, but most of them show up next week for another round.

In secondary programs, college academic majors usually only nominally prepare student teachers for the kinds of things they will be called upon to teach in the public schools. Public school teachers have traditionally been generalists; academic departments are oriented toward training specialists. In most schools, despite the new discipline-based content standards, secondary social studies teachers can at any given time be called upon to teach the entire scope of American history, world history, government, or economics. On occasion, a few teachers may be asked to do a humanities, law, or sociology class. Due to a number of factors, student teachers rarely get a feel for what it would be like to teach a complete course. In some contexts, largely in cases where student teaching happens only during one semester, they may find themselves observing and teaching only the former or latter half of a full-year course. For those assigned to student teach in the spring, in New York this means that history courses may be focusing on the modern era; many will cut short their studies to begin preparing students for Regents exams, depending upon how heavy-handed the system is at any given moment, what the pass/fail numbers show in recent years, and who's accountable. So given all these overlapping expediencies, I tell my students that the best thing to do is get a jump on preparation and do some serious reading during intercession, especially in those areas for which they are least prepared; otherwise, they'll be overwhelmed come February. Although in colleges of education we try not to limit ourselves to things like teaching from the textbooks or to the standardized tests, I remind students that it is usually a good idea to borrow a few textbooks from a local high school, and buy the standardized examination preparation books, since those tests do reign supreme. I learned this from one smug assistant principal who answered my query into how he deals with state standards by simply stating, "The exams are my only standards."

A standard student teaching experience involves some teaching, some observing, some planning, and some clerical work. In addition, and depending on the school, many student teachers will be asked to participate in meetings, parent-teacher conferences,

class trips, and other extracurricular activities; some schools require more extracurricular participation than others. I ask them to be flexible and accept as many offers as they can, in the interest of collegiality. But most time for student teachers is spent in planning and preparation, something that many are unable to fathom until their experiences are under way. Student teaching involves many hours of planning and grading, most of which is done at night, on weekends, or during vacations; student teachers can usually expect at least two to three hours of such preparatory work each and every day of the year. Some cooperating teachers require them to write daily lesson plans. The best way to prevent headaches and grief is to begin preparing some advance lesson plans before the experience, and then to beg, borrow, or steal as many as possible once in the field. Unfortunately, in some departments one finds a lone cowboy attitude where there is not much true and honest sharing and so most student teachers get into the bad habit of writing plans the night before they plan to use them. This is especially difficult for those students who are trying to complete their degrees in the same semester as student teaching by taking their other courses concurrently, along with standardized exams, or for folks who are holding down jobs and raising their families.

Since the state requires a certain number of hours in the field to grant certification, student teachers must keep a time log of all the hours they spend in their cooperating school. The requirements used to be somewhat flexible, but the standards bureaus are increasingly stipulating specific kinds of hours and making distinctions between "observation" and "teaching" hours. In some cases, one can find a requirement for a certain number of days, not hours, but this usually just leads to redundancies like converting days into hours and back again. Once accumulated, the cooperating teacher, assistant principal, and professor must sign the time log, and most of these are configured in terms of hours. Where a form of portfolio assessment is in place, the time log is sometimes necessary for the certification portfolio; in any case, communication with teachers and supervisors is essential with respect to hours or days accumulated. I warn my students that it's not like college, where they can blow off a class when they're tired or too busy, and then weasel out of it at the end. Public school teaching is relentless. If they don't show up once in a while or if they disappear without warning, the conservative teacher culture will label them "unreliable" or "not a team player," and they may have difficulty getting a decent job referral or letters of recommendation. This applies as much to the required hours as it does to all those unrequired hours. The job market for social studies teachers is generally very tight, and officials will pick and choose among the best candidates. Student teaching is often the key to a job, and the impressions made will likely follow them, especially if they decide to stay in New York City.

Many student teachers don't know it, but when they sign up for the field experience and take those first steps toward employment they are preparing to enter into a Kafkaesque bureaucracy of standards, certification, and professional development that could last up to five years or more before they are really settled into a steady and relatively secure teaching position. Even this is tentative, since talks are currently underway in many places to trade off tenure for salary hikes. In New York City, which suffered a "fiscal crisis" (i.e., the city went bankrupt in the 1970s), salaries are stunted so there's a real incentive to make this trade. The principals' union recently made the trade, accepting a $10,000 pay hike in exchange for switching to three-year renewable contracts, which seem to be gaining ground where unions are weak, ossified, or complacent. But there will be jobs of one sort or another, especially in years of high retirement and contract buyouts, so running the gauntlet of certification and licensing seems necessary. "The best thing to do is to remain calm," I say, "and be systematic, and keep abreast of all the city and state requirements and deadlines." "If you have not gotten fingerprinted yet," I find myself telling them, "*Do it now.* If you can't do it today, do it tomorrow, if not tomorrow, the next day" (they get the point). Last time I checked, fingerprinting through the board of education costs eighty dollars (postal money order only, and only in the *exact* amount currently specified by the board of education) and takes at least ten weeks to process (often more). Students cannot get a teaching license without fingerprints, and the FBI runs them for felonies and selected other offenses.

In the best of worlds, most colleges of education will help students save some time and money by submitting their applications for certification to the state, and there are usually information sessions to help prepare applications. However, it is the student's responsibility to obtain and fill out the requisite paperwork, and submit it all on time. While there are currently several standardized exams required to become a teacher, initially they need to worry about the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST), and the Assessment of Teaching Skills-Writing (ATS-W). Students need to take the LAST first, but if they paid reasonable attention in liberal arts core courses, most should be able to pass it. Many will take the ATS-W after or near the end of student teaching, since they'll be able to draw on classroom experiences for most questions. However, if they qualify for "accelerated certification," they need to take the ATS-W as soon as possible. For students who are unsure whether they can pass such standardized tests, there are several review guides available, in a growing industry responding to the standardization movement, but most of these are alarmist and unreliable. The state maintains a list of "outcomes" on its Web site, but these are too general to be useful. It's ironic that on the one hand the state foists off standardized tests on students of all levels, but on the other hand frowns upon "teaching

to the test," which is still the proven method of getting through the bureaucracy. From past experience, the best strategy is talking to people who have already taken these tests, to get a sense for the kinds of questions that are asked.

Standards of Confusion: Teaching Anachronism and Hyperbole

In my daily travels around New York City visiting my secondary social studies student teachers, I have come to recognize certain generic tendencies in teaching that illustrate the epistemological confusion of social studies teaching. Let me illustrate by describing a lesson that I've seen taught a number of times by different people in different places. The topic is Japan in the nineteenth century, and the "aim" is usually something like "should Japan have opened trade relations with America?" The teacher begins by "motivating" students with a student produced drawing of Commodore Perry's infamous nineteenth-century landing in the Japanese harbor. Students briefly study the picture for clues as to what is going on. One remark that the people look "Oriental" because they have "yellow skin" brings howls of laughter. The teacher is clearly in control, overly so, perhaps. Eventually, the students deduce the context and provide the aim question, and the teacher has successfully "elicited the aim," which is related to whether or not the Japanese (who the students later become via role playing) should open trade with the U.S. according to the terms set out in two documents, a letter from President Fillmore and another letter from Perry. Students read the letters, and the teacher questions them on their content. He knows the answers in advance to all the questions he asks, and the students ask no questions. The class tosses around opinions on the proposal, and the teacher writes a "yes and no" chart on the board with reasons for each. He hands out a third document, from some sort of advisor to the emperor (at this point it is clear that the students are assuming the role of the emperor, though that is never really discussed or made explicit). Glancing at the clock, he then abruptly announces, "OK, it's time to make a decision." The class votes by a show of hands and the decision is predictably split. The teacher concludes the lesson by asking a few students about how they voted and why, the passing bell rings and everyone shuffles out.

On the surface, this seems like an "effective lesson." The teacher is at ease with his control of the class, moves smoothly from task to task, involves students in behavioral schemes, basically fulfilling all the current items on a standardized rubric used to evaluate teachers. Beyond the things we could say about the behavioral cooptation of constructivism, there are other serious contradictions with such a lesson, and I'd like to discuss briefly why I think this kind of lesson suggests a standard of confusion in the teaching and learning of secondary so-

cial studies. First of all, for the students to assume the role of the emperor is anachronistic, which is particularly clear once a vote is taken, since the emperor is a party of one, and even if he consulted others it is much more likely that no votes were taken in the Japanese imperial court. If we forgive that oversight, a crucial question to make a reasonable decision, since using hindsight is the norm, would be, "What was the U.S. track record in similar cases?" No such questions are asked. Students are simply well trained in the standard lesson format, waiting for the teacher to ask questions, redirect them when necessary, and construct the board outline.

What else are these students learning? Reading, perhaps, and being able to deduce clues from documents. This seems to fall under the rubric of "critical thinking" and analysis, and may help in preparing for the dreaded document-based questions (DBQs) on the latest round of state standardized tests. But I think they are also learning that decision making for an emperor is done democratically. (Similarly, one could also ask whether or not the decision "back home" to offer Japan a Faustian bargain were made democratically.) In other words, there seems to be a hidden civics lesson lurking in here somewhere, though anachronistically detached from the lesson content, and with nineteenth-century Japan as a proxy. With vague notions of these yellow Orientals pondering their future (which we already know), the ups and downs of "modernization" and "progress" juxtapose nicely with the implicit notion of Western supremacy and the inevitability of colonization and assimilation. This exchanges present student feelings of what is right and wrong with those of emperors and an admiral, about whom they know very little. The end result is variety of epistemological confusion. I use a video of this type of lesson in my methods courses, and we usually need to watch it again in order make some useful distinctions between form and content.

Sometimes, while reviewing parts of the video, I ask students to fill out a standard lesson plan template, including the "do now," the "motivation," and the instructional objectives. We fine-tune it a bit in class, and then complete it at home, adding two questions: What other possible ways might there be to wrap up such a lesson? What would you do differently? In the next session, we watch the entire video again. On the surface, it is really a picture perfect lesson, technically, no doubt getting high marks by evaluators, many of us note. Then we talk about ways to summarize and apply the lesson, and devise a homework or follow-up assignment. Some students suggest homework assignments that would involve reading the historical record somehow (in textbooks?) and then consider how student answers to the "aim question" might be right or wrong vis-à-vis the historical record. This was thought necessary, since the teacher asked the class to take a vote and justify their positions, with half the class coming down on either side of the yes or no divide. But other stu-

dents become concerned about the repercussions of telling students, after all those thoughtful deliberations on the documents, that their answer was "wrong."

A few more students begin trying to link the exercise of deliberating on primary documents with some kind of current events, where the outcome is not yet known, or where it has not been as thoroughly entered into the historical record as Perry's imperial moves. I sometimes interject at this point, writing "anachronism" on the board, and asking if anyone knows its meaning (all the while joking about my proclivity toward "big words," having used "ubiquitous" earlier, and taking a jab at standardized examination vocabulary reviews). Some students confuse it with "acronym," but eventually we get to the point where they seem able to grasp how the present can shade the ways in which we look at the past (I also introduce them to "hyperbole," briefly, as the second cardinal sin of historians). A few students pick up on anachronisms right away, citing their field observations and noting how a lesson that begins with present-day examples to motivate learning can become anachronistic. I relate a story of the classroom bookbag dispute and the decision to use the atom bomb, and all of us laugh and many remember a similar "motivation" from our own experiences.

So, we are then faced with the question, "What is this Japan lesson about?" Is it about process or content? Many of us see the benefits of learning to work with documents and deliberating over our decisions, especially in light of the new state standards that require students to master Japanese-type required student exams. But others are more concerned with what "really happened." Given the case of this lesson (which is admittedly a bit hyperbolic!) the answers seem difficult, but my point here is that these are the kinds of questions we ought to take into consideration when designing a teaching and learning activity for student teachers. What is the relationship between process and content? Why use a process lesson to deliberate a moral question ("Should Japan have . . . ") or practice our civic duties ("Let's take a vote . . . "), instead of using a current event, the logical culmination of which could be to then act in some way. Or, is it best, for training purposes, to use the past with its foregone conclusions to understand a method of inquiry? Sure, the past is subject to interpretation in the present, but this lesson doesn't draw any attention to those kinds of issues. The teacher never asked questions about the questions he was posing. And, by using the first person plural, saying, "What should we do?" (i.e., the Japanese shoguns or emperor, or whoever was in charge then—he never mentioned), the present "we" of those in the class at that time deliberating past imperial questions becomes lost, invisible, unimportant. In other words, the lesson is that "we" and "they" are none other than one and the same, across cultures and over time. At this point, I am usually stomping about, ranting and jumping back and forth about how

absurd it is to imagine that a sixteen-year-old high school student in 1990s Queens could begin to think and deliberate in the way a nineteenth-century Shogun may have, or even Commodore Perry, for that matter.

In light of this, students in secondary social studies classrooms learn a standardized lesson about civics: all problems are individual problems. This is evident in the pervasive metaphorical and analogical linkages between major world events and individual behavior. In a behaviorist teaching style still largely advocated by educational officialdom, teachers begin lessons with a short "motivation." Conventional wisdom holds that this activity ought to relate the topic of the day to students' direct daily experiences. Thus, one finds classes about Truman's decision to use the atomic bomb "motivated" by examples of one student retaliating against another for a personal indiscretion, or lessons on the causes of the Civil War motivated by a discussion of a street fight, or the Treaty of Versailles with three cousins disagreeing on how to divide up an eight-slice pizza with two toppings. While such motivational practices are problematic in many ways, an emerging culture of hyper-reality only exacerbates the inherent individualism in much of social studies education. Educational technocrats, in their discussions of cyber-utopias and hyper-info highways, often evoke the Internet and World Wide Web, but the image of gleeful students sitting in front of their computer screens solving world problems in electronic simulations or surfing the Web in pursuit of liberatory information, seems incompatible with the concept of civics as a collective and negotiated responsibility, based on social participation and political action. In order to reverse the damages already done by individualism, civics in an age of hyper-reality will have to find new ways to emphasize collectivities and social participation, and the past is not the best means to do this.

Current practice in high school social studies classrooms dictates a practice know as "the motivation." Enshrined in lesson plan formats, and reified from concept to object, "the motivation," at bottom, impairs thought. Drawing upon my work with student teachers in New York City public high schools, I have come to realize how this practice severely circumscribes thought. Though not legally binding on teachers, the behavioral lesson plan format has a remarkable number of adherents. "The motivation" (along with the "do now," to which I turn in a moment) is an essential component of the standard daily lesson plan, and it is usually a short activity designed to motivate students for the day's lesson. As a concept, motivating students makes sense; it's an activity, a suggestion for action; it's embedded in daily practice. But this is different from "the motivation," solidified into a noun, an object. Similar forms of reification are evident when a teacher begins a lesson by saying, "OK class, please *do the do now* that is written on the chalkboard" (I always laugh when I hear this, as if the "do

now" is some sort of new dance). These only indicate further that "master teacher" practices can impair thought and grossly simplify or distort complex events. Here are some tragic examples I've encountered: the slaves should have fought back (teen machismo); the Jews deserved the ovens, because they passively walked right in; Palestinians lost their land, and finders are keepers (schoolyard law). This is thought impairment, since it reduces complex and often horrific mega-events to simple instances of interpersonal relations. In such a world, the decision to drop the atomic bomb can be "motivated" by a simplistic "get even" example, like "How would you feel if someone crumpled up your homework?" And no one ever bats an eye. In a world driven by what we can call "content jamming," where student receptacles need to be filled with facts to spew forth on standardized tests, one wonders what is really being learned.

Standards of Complexity: Recovering Meaning in Education

Most peoples of the world have traditions and beliefs that emphasize the interconnectedness of all life and land and the meaningfulness of all thought and action within a complex interwoven ecology. Indigenous peoples, such as the Australian Aborigines, view every tree, insect, plant, animal, and stone as meaningful and interrelated. They believe that pulling apart this web of creation will have severe consequences, and cite the growing environmental crisis as evidence. In the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an emphasizes that all creation—past, present, and future—is meaningful and purposeful. Muslims know this as part of a belief in *tawhid*—the transcendent Oneness of Allah resulting in the ecological unity of everything other-than-Allah. Rejecting these sorts of broad ecological beliefs leads unavoidably to a rejection of most moral and ethical imperatives. Rejection can also lead to spiritual emptiness and a world devoid of meaning. Islamic scholar and translator of the Qur'an, Muhammad Asad (n. d.), suggests in his commentary on the Qur'anic verse, "We have not created heaven and earth and all that is between them without meaning and purpose" (Surah 38, Ayah 27); that "everything in the universe—whether existent or potential, concrete or abstract—is meaningful; and nothing is accidental." Or, as the Australian Aborigines prefer to describe it, "Nothing is nothing" (as cited in George, 1992, p. 20).

Western civilization has gone far astray of this timeless imperative. In its place is a belief that the world consists of infinitely separable and isolatable objects with little or no meaningful connections between them. The social corollary of this belief is rampant individualism, compartmentalization of thought, work, and knowledge, and the proverbial mind/body split. In education, this belief affects the way we teach. The growing numbers of what we might call "holistic educators" are convinced that educa-

tion in the United States has gone hopelessly astray from all natural and historical norms of meaning. They are not alone, as many mainstream educators in the West have begun to come to the same conclusions. Most agree that what is needed is to recover a worldview that emphasizes meaning, purpose, and interconnectedness of all life, land, and human experiences.

The holistic education movement in the United States envisions a radical paradigm shift in the fundamentals of education. Holistic educators seek to

> apply the holistic cultural analysis to problems of contemporary education. If this analysis is correct, then surely the educational reform movements of the past few years are woefully shortsighted and inadequate. Our nation is not "at risk" because the schools are failing; schools are failing because our nation, and our culture, have entered a period of serious decline. If the holistic analysis is correct, then educating our youth for the sake of national economic superiority is a profoundly self-destructive mistake! To put it bluntly, educating our youth with the assumptions and methods of the industrial age is, at this crucial point in history, dangerously obsolete. (Miller, 1992, p. 6)

Holistic and indigenous educators are also asking basic questions about education, centering around three foundational questions: (1) Who are we? (2) What is knowledge? (3) How do we learn? Ontology, epistemology, methodology: Western educational systems generally answer such questions by saying that human nature is essentially evil and needs to be controlled, that the purpose of knowledge is to provide for economic and military expediency, and that schools are places where these two beliefs are put into practice. But looking within various cultural and religious traditions around the planet, one could very easily come up with answers to these questions that offer alternatives to the outmoded Western answers. For example, in the Islamic tradition the question of epistemology can be answered in the following saying of the Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace:

> The messenger of Allah once entered a mosque where there was a group of people sitting around a man. "What is this?" inquired the Prophet. He was told, "He is a very learned man." "What is a very learned man?" asked the Prophet. They told him, "He is the most learned of people regarding Arab genealogies and their past episodes, the days of the pre-Islamic times, and Arabic poetry." The Prophet said, "That is the ignorance of which is no harm and the knowing of which is no benefit." Then the Prophet, may Allah's benedictions be upon him, declared, "Knowledge consists of these three: the firm sign, or the just duty, or the established praxis. All else is superfluous." (adapted from a citation in al-Khumayni, 1991, p. 37)

Muslim scholars have worked with teachings like this, and such ideas have

guided Islamic education for generations. Like many spiritual traditions, the Islamic teachings encourage deep reflection on fundamental issues, always in a quest for meaning.

With these points in mind, I want to conclude with some reflections on my own teaching experiences in New York City, which have grown out of a series of notes to myself, related to teaching social studies. I also generated a version of this list with a group of Muslim teachers I worked with in Palestine, who were preparing to teach in a new school for children of repatriate families, so some of the reflections are geared toward them as well. The way these comments are organized is loosely based on *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, in which Marshall McLuhan "develops a mosaic or field approach to its problems," a method he chooses over presenting a series of fixed relationships. This "galaxy or constellation of events . . . is itself a mosaic of perpetually interacting forms that have undergone kaleidoscopic transformation" (1962). I hope that these can inspire some further discussions on understanding and responding to the mechanistic encroachments of standardization.

Some parts of the following constellation suggest ways to think and act about education with an eye toward beginning to reintegrate holistic methodologies. Besides different forms of indigenous knowledge, as noted above, I have also drawn many ideas from Gatto (1992), Loewen (1995), Kozol (1991), Churchill (1982), and DeLoria (1982), by negating some of the pathologies they eloquently describe. While compiling and commenting upon these steps, as we might call them, I relate many to one or another of the standard problems in Western, and in particular, American education. So in addition to drawing upon my own teaching experiences, I have discussed these ideas in numerous cross-cultural and intercultural conversations with concerned colleagues. The parts of the mosaic are not in any particular order and should not be viewed as a linear progression toward some final goal or outcome. Rather, they can be seen in many ways and in various combinations. Nor is the mosaic complete. But I hope that teachers who read this will feel free to use any facets, add others, or modify them according to individual needs.

Meet with students in circles as often as possible. This facilitates open discussion and group involvement, especially when the teacher sits in the circle with the students, with everyone face to face with everyone else. Circles eliminate the problem of some students sitting in front ("smart kids" and/or "teacher's pets") and others in the back ("dumb kids" and/or "trouble makers"). With mature students, teachers can use the "rotating chair" system of class discussion, in which class discussions are conducted in a democratic manner and the last speaker calls on the next in turn, including the teacher. Many books on discipline now recommend forming circles to discuss disciplinary problems, but it is also quite effective as a

daily routine. Most of the high school students I work with say they rarely meet in circles, and for the ones that do, the teacher remains in the middle, thus missing the full benefit of circles.

Bring outside guests into the classroom and organize class trips. Guests and trips should be scheduled as often as possible, and should not be limited to academics or academic institutions. Students can be encouraged to meet and interact with people of various ages, social classes, and professions. Least effective are guests who are just like the teacher—university educated, middle class, and so on. Nor should this be colonized by business interests obsessed with acclimating students to an outmoded climate of corporate 8–5 time management. Bring in farmers and laborers, or weavers and other artisans; sponsor visits to farms, workshops, collectives, and cooperative societies. Diversity in these experiences will encourage students to respect people outside of the prevailing Western model of the successful technocrat. This may even help break down the rigid class structure of Western education, in which the only role models are people with money or who have been validated by official academic and business institutions.

Encourage older students to teach younger students. This is always empowering and helps older students feel confident of their abilities and also to enjoy the rewards of teaching. Younger students will grow up having consistent contact with older students, as things are in life. This helps break down the rigid age segregation of most Western schooling, now recognized by many concerned educators and parents the world over as a recent and destructive, mechanistic aberration in human history. Life is simply not as segregated and rationally stratified as such schooling implies. In most of the rest of the "real world," people of all ages mix in families, communities, towns, and villages. It makes no sense to force children to spend twelve or more years confined with other children of exactly the same age.

Insist on frequent faculty meetings. This helps teachers to communicate with each other about students and classes, while also encouraging shared experiences, and providing a regular opportunity to arrange joint activities and parallel lessons. Search together for every opportunity to relate one class to another, both within and across disciplines, and utilize those opportunities daily. This takes a bit more time than minding your own business, but the rewards are well worth it. Some schools, in conjunction with teacher unions where possible, are restructuring the school day to build in more time for collegial communication. Students will often see more coherence in their education if they can move from one subject to the next with even the smallest semblance of continuity and interconnection.

Implement a concept-based integrated curriculum. This type of curriculum works best with long-term planning.

In the early grades, students are introduced to concepts such as justice, technology, equality, power, language, politics; teachers can make their own list collectively with other teachers, as well as with administrators and parents, which can reflect the concepts that will be meaningful in particular cultural contexts. Early on, concepts can be introduced in isolation and with simple definitions and concrete examples. They can even be introduced as part of the regular "daily lesson," or draw on life experiences. As students progress, concepts are repeated and reintegrated in a spiraling structure, with ever more sophisticated applications. In more advanced classes, students will have the tools to understand how one concept relates to another, as in, for example, how justice relates to equality, or science to technology, or the individual to society, or how power informs language and politics. An integrated and spiraling curriculum has the benefit of introducing both individual concepts and also showing how nothing happens in isolation, that everything is potentially interconnected and meaningful.

Teach students that all studies are social studies. It is a fallacy of the modern world to consider "society" as somehow separable from science, art, language, and politics. It even sounds trite to say that practically everything takes place in a social context, continuously informing and being informed by that context. But most people still have a hard time understanding, for example, that something like science is not neutral and value free, or that scientists are products of their societies, and social norms determine what is acceptable as good science as well as the kinds of questions scientists ask and are able to answer. Likewise, science informs society in many ways, useful as well as damaging. This also reminds students again of how things relate, helping them to recognize the social benefit and harm of various individual and collective human endeavors.

Encourage continuity and frequent completions. The structure of a typical school day allows for little sense of continuity and completion. Students often find themselves in the middle of a math lesson when the bell rings, telling them to drop math and pick up English. This kind of schooling was developed by the British in the nineteenth century, and it served two purposes: to control the masses of ordinary people (thus protecting the elite from rebellion) and to incorporate the colonies into the British Empire. Originally known as the "Lancaster system," or industrial schooling, it often still prevails today in the West and especially in its former or indirect colonies. The result is that, day in and day out, week after week, and month after month, teachers drill one simple, though perhaps unrecognized or even unintended lesson: nothing is worth finishing. This breeds, as Gatto (1992) puts it, "indifference." In a standards-driven setting, teachers need to be careful to design lesson plans that construct each day as a small completion, each week a larger completion,

and so on. Students need more than an occasional completion offered by midterms or unit quizzes. This can provide continuity and a sense of purposefulness on a daily basis.

Foster self-evaluation. Too many young people come out of school totally dependent on others. This is another unintended lesson that they acquire from us when we constantly dictate to them when to do this, when not to do that, when they are doing well, and when they are not. No wonder so many young Americans are emotional basket cases. Self-evaluation is a basic principle of just about every spiritual and indigenous tradition of the world, and neglecting this is one of the great tragedies of modernity. We need to encourage this as much as possible, as self-evaluation is an important step toward becoming a self-teacher. This is one of the most valuable gifts you can ever give to a student. You can also foster self-evaluation by encouraging critical thinking and writing, and by giving students opportunities for orations and debate. Let them grade themselves once in a while, and implement mastery learning or portfolios instead of standardized exams. We all too often underestimate students, and this is one of the most severe restrictions we place on them and on ourselves. Loewen (1995) describes one possible reason for this:

> Many adults fear children and worry that respect for authority is all that keeps them from running amok. So they teach them to respect authorities who adults themselves do not respect. . . . Some adults simply do not trust children to think. For several decades sociologists have documented America's distrust of the next generation. Parents may feel undermined when children get tools of information and inquiry not available to adults and use them in ways that seem to threaten adult-held values. (p. 289)

Students are often much smarter than many teachers and business leaders are ever able to see, and they often just need to be given the right opportunity to show how smart they really are.

Help students create their own knowledge. In American-style schooling, students are spoon-fed standardized and ready-made knowledge for upwards of twelve years, but rarely have the opportunity to create their own. But all knowledge comes from somewhere, and students can create their own in several ways. This helps fight intellectual dependency. An easy method is to have students keep a clippings file from several major newspapers and magazines. Clippings can be contextualized in whatever ways are meaningful for a given class, and this can be done rather easily by using a class-constructed Web site. This works equally well for science as well as history courses. Another way to create knowledge is to undertake an oral history project. Textbooks usually dwell on great people and major discoveries, but ignore the lives of ordinary people. Since most of the world consists

of ordinary people doing ordinary things, this amounts to an extreme bias in social studies textbooks, and by extension, the standardized exams based upon them. Although one would never know by observing secondary schooling, it seems obvious that ordinary people make history just as much as presidents and generals, sometimes more. Oral history projects can illustrate this by utilizing family members as well as community members. Students learn how to talk to people, ask questions, draw conclusions, and listen to various opinions. They learn the technical aspects of recording and transcribing interviews, and evaluating and presenting data. Completed projects can be entered into the school library or kept on Web sites for use by others. After a while, a school can build its own oral history archive, and generations of students will take pride in having produced their own knowledge. Video and Web-based projects can be integrated in this program, too. For the sciences, holistic teaching implies observational rather than experimental methods, and there are numerous possibilities for students to make their own knowledge by observing nature and ecological patterns.

Respect student privacy. Schools are not very private places, increasingly so with the Benthamesque calls coming out of corporate boardrooms for more "transparency" (though the boardroom doors still remain tightly locked). Like prisoners in oddly kindred institutions, students in most schools are constantly watched, by teachers and administrators, and also by each other, and sometimes by machines. At home, surveillance continues by way of homework and grade reports to parents, and extends by way of monitoring technology use. Breaks between classes, often timed to the second, provide no privacy. Cafeterias are noisy and busy. Even libraries offer little privacy. Students deprived of this essential human need will take it in their own ways. A privacy-deprived student will steal a few moments in the bathroom, or sneak a smoke outside, or pass a note to a classmate, or become defiant and confrontational toward teachers and other students. Be sympathetic to privacy needs and you will greatly reduce many disciplinary problems.

Show students that education is about more than just getting a job. Gatto (1992) sums this up nicely:

> For one hundred and fifty years institutional education has seen fit to offer as its main purpose the preparation for economic success. Good education = good job, good money, good things. This has become the universal educational banner, hoisted by the Harvards as well as the high schools. This prescription makes both parent and student easier to regulate and intimidate as long as the connection goes unchallenged either for its veracity or in its philosophical truth. . . . The absurdity of defining education as an economic good becomes clear if we ask ourselves what is gained by perceiving education

> as a way to enhance even further the runaway consumption that threatens the earth, the air, and the water of our planet? Should we continue to teach people that they can buy happiness in the face of a tidal wave of evidence that we cannot? Shall we ignore the evidence that drug addiction, alcoholism, teenage suicide, divorce, and other despairs are pathologies of the prosperous much more than they are of the poor? (p. 23)

In this regard, it is useful to keep in mind some oft-cited statistics. While the United States is one of the leaders of all industrialized states in terms of gross national product, the United Nations consistently reports it as a leader in murder, rape, violent crime, military expenditures, and incarceration (1 out of every 250 Americans is a convict, and Texas has a higher rate of incarceration than garrison states like Israel and South Africa during apartheid). Americans make up only 5 percent of the world population but consume one-third of all resources and produce half of all nonorganic garbage. Three percent of Americans control 90 percent of gross wealth; the top 20 percent of Americans earn 50 percent of all income, while the bottom 20 percent earn barely 5 percent. The leading causes of death for teenage American males are gunshot wounds and alcohol-related car accidents. Clearly something is amiss in the land of the free and the home of the brave. The blame for all this cannot be laid at the doorstep of schools or entertainment, as some high-profile corporate or conservative campaigns like people to believe. Indeed, education can play an important role in helping us to understand our predicaments and find ways out of this mess we're in, not help us to get deeper into it. Certainly education should not replicate these problems in emerging cultural contexts. Treating school as only a path to economic mobility misses the opportunity to make a real and lasting difference in the world.

Cover fewer topics in more depth. Much of what makes its way into standardized evaluation instruments is there for a political, patriotic, or economic reason. Corporations and politicians lobby hard for certain names and events to be included in textbooks, and editors routinely make decisions based on market concerns. Since the textbook industry is concerned with profit before education, books often end up catering to the needs of the wealthy and powerful, or they simply end up being bland and dull, catering to the whims of a reified imperial middle. One result of this is that textbooks and standards proclamations often include too much material. Students are subjected to a roller coaster ride, spanning centuries in history courses, with much content reduced to names and dates, and with jamming more content into students being the main task of teachers in standardized regimes. Likewise, science courses span the entire course of a field in a matter of weeks. It's simply too much. Students will benefit as human beings

more from some in-depth learning, though a holistic perspective suggests that the social science academic disciplines as presently configured may no longer be the best way to do this (Wallerstein, 1999). In any case, depth may help students to become better people, more than walking collections of facts and figures, or exemplars of ossified or irrelevant discourses. Teachers concerned about standardized tests generally solve that problem by getting old tests and using rote learning to jam the material into students throughout the year before the exams are to be taken. To most concerned educators, standardized tests are part of the problem. Even the "aptitude tests" and similar entrance exams are losing some ground, with more universities now preferring complete human beings with well-rounded educations, not just teenagers who can cough up facts on demand.

Explore controversies. Standardized learning largely ignores controversies. But human history is full of controversies, and students need to explore them. This prepares them to deal with future controversies, and encourages holistic thinking. Some important recent controversies center around the relationship between state power and science. Science in the twentieth century has been all but reduced to a function of the power system it serves. Scientists are wholly dependent on multimillion-dollar technologies, and these are paid for by private corporations and military governments with deeply vested interests, who increasingly determine the questions asked by scientists. Likewise, history is full of controversies. Social studies students need to explore issues such as the "discovery" of America by Columbus; the role of the United States as an aggressive, imperial power; and the fact that capitalism and communism are an ecologically destructive dyad. Ignoring such controversies can lead to passivity, rigidity, and dependency.

Incorporate community history into social studies. Most social studies curricula do this, when the books are used in the school they were intended for. Teachers who live in communities not covered by texts need to find ways to bring local history into the classroom. This is primarily for student enrichment, since standardized tests will ignore most communities and local histories, in favor of the triumphalist state mythologies. Nevertheless, community history is more important now than ever, especially since a single, global, spurious culture of mass entertainment, consumerism, and advertising is quickly replacing a myriad of vibrant, living, and more genuine local cultures.

Teach textbooks backwards. This works best for books that are not graded in difficulty, and in situations where they are mandated. It helps students to better see how the present is informed by the past (in the case of history) or how modern theories and techniques build on previous ones (as in the sciences). Both are necessary for meaningful holistic education.

Locate textbooks and standards as processes in context. All standards documents are written by someone, and people have different reasons for writing them. While this may seem trivial to an adult, things like standards and textbooks remain a mystery to students. They can benefit from considering where and why textbooks come into being. Loewen's (1995) suggestions are worth repeating here. He recommends, with your students, to apply and discuss a simple test to all textbooks: (1) Why was the book written? (2) Whose viewpoint does it represent? (3) Are the stories it tells believable? (4) Are the author's arguments backed up by other sources? (5) What feelings does the book evoke? We are cheating our students if we deprive them of basic epistemological and hermeneutic tools such as these. Nor should we fear putting such tools into the hands of our students, since doing so will probably do teachers as much good as it does students.

Allow multiple subjects as well as multiple objects into classrooms. Most American schooling applies the Western linear, compartmentalized worldview as if it were a human universal. But other peoples, cultures, traditions have their own ways of viewing the world, some cyclical and others circular. Since the Western worldview was imposed on most of the world through colonization and imperialism, it is sometimes hard to remember that it is only one in many possible ways to live. In science, we can introduce, for example, the complex understanding of Andean culture toward the environment (Apfel-Marglin, 1998), an understanding that does not depend on high-tech instruments and laboratories, but that is nevertheless reliable and accurate and completely valid in its cultural and ecological context. Similarly, Muslims have developed intimate sciences of the soul that are virtually unintelligible to both Judeo-Christian dogmatists and the materialist psychological disciplines of the West. Although one could cite many similar examples the world over, most of this is absent in modern education, for two main reasons. First, there is a general aversion to religious and spiritual traditions in American public institutions. Second, as Ward Churchill puts it, in the present colonial-derived educational system, the "facts of Native American and other non-European cultures must be warped or disregarded by virtue of the European tradition lacking the analytical tools through which to comprehend how such realities might exist at all" (1982, p. 54). The pathologies and inadequacies of Western civilization should not limit what we teach and what we learn with our students.

Encourage different kinds of experts as role models. A Muslim farmer who spends an entire lifetime growing, tending, and harvesting olives in Palestine, and who learned it from generations of his ancestors of olive farmers working their ancient and delicately balanced lands, is an example of an expert. But he has no degree, there is no academic discipline called "olivology," there are no how-to man-

uals in multiple and updated editions. Yet, the Palestinian Muslim olive farmer has an expertise in this area. Students need to know that expertise can be acquired and learned in places besides institutions and schools. A child who grows up surrounded only by academics with institutional and standardized values will learn only contempt or, at best, disregard for the farmer, artisan, and craftsperson. This is part of the destructive nature of Western civilization, and is the cause of much conflict. If one really looks at the situation in the world carefully, it is the Western trained "experts" that have gotten us into the present ecological mess. We can't blame the Muslim olive farmer; indeed, we can more than likely learn many things from such people.

Encourage honest interdisciplinary study. Interdisciplinarity means that there are many different ways to look at a phenomenon, problem, or event. The scientist will have one view, the poet another. All are equally valid human expressions, yet the scientific worldview prevails almost unquestioned today. Even though it was introduced as part of the Western colonial apparatus, most non-Westerners still place great value on Western science. But this science has been largely unable to solve most of the real problems of the world, or even explain them fully. In fact, in the so-called "age of science and hi-tech" we have more war, more poverty, more disease, more starvation, more disparity of wealth than ever before in human history. And all of this cannot be simply blamed on overpopulation. Native American activist and scholar Vine DeLoria (as cited in Churchill, 1982, p. 54) offers one possible reason for the awful state of the modern world: "Searching for the ultimate physical substance that constituted the world, Western peoples produced an incredibly complex technology that could manipulate the physical universe in a variety of ways. But the result of this meant . . . the West created a spiritual vacuum, coming eventually to believe that only the physical was real." Giving prime position to Western "how-to" science in our schools is part of this problem. We do not need to necessarily discredit science, only to locate its role in figuring out how the world works. Science (which asks mostly "how" questions) should be given no more than equal time and respect, alongside religion and human endeavors such as poetry, art, and literature (which tend to ask "why" questions). It is also important to broaden the definition of interdisciplinary study beyond the current sense of it as only a collaboration among rigidly defined academic disciplines. True interdisciplinary study will likely end up reconfiguring academic disciplines into new and evolving ways of knowing.

Make use of mavericks in the Western tradition. A maverick is someone who is trained in a particular discipline or school of thought but who comes to valid conclusions that differ significantly from the prevailing paradigms. Sometimes, mavericks end up discov-

ering something that, although no one believed it at the time, turns out to be valid later. In the field of American history, for example, Howard Zinn is an important maverick. In his classic *A People's History of the United States* (1995), he chose to view history from the perspective of ordinary folks, women, workers, and others whose lives run counter to the prevailing model of history as seen from the perspective of rulers, presidents, and generals. Other Western mavericks include the biblical scholar and geologist Immanuel Velikovsky, the linguist Noam Chomsky, the mathematician Joseph Weizenbaum, the biochemist Linus Pauling, the mythologist Joseph Campbell, and the physicians Hulda Clark and Nancy Olivieri. Sometimes, mavericks dissent from their fields of expertise and use their knowledge to warn others of its dangers. Advertising executive Jerry Mander left that industry and wrote very important works informing the public about the insidious hidden dangers of advertising and television. Outside the Western tradition, one also finds numerous important mavericks. For example, in the Islamic tradition, contemporary scholars and activists like Sayyid Qutb and Imam Khumayni both fought against the ossified religious customs of their societies; both stood up against scholars from their respective schools of thought who sat in the courts of kings and dictators, writing decrees to protect their interests; and both rose to meet the challenges of the modern world while remaining true to their Islamic traditions. Religion, history, and science are full of mavericks, but standardized curricula and examinations usually ignore them and often demonize them. Our students can learn so much from these kinds of individuals and every opportunity should be made to incorporate their lives and work.

Practice critical thinking. This has been touched upon in the above steps, but needs repetition here. Many young people come out of schools completely passive and uncritical, or, conversely, critical of everything to the point of being cynical. Concerned observers note that this is especially prevalent in the West, where school is largely seen as a way to keep people passive and dependent on officially sanctioned "experts," or where facile lesson plans capitalize on faddish and mindless bantering in the guise of critical thinking. One result is that democracy has been reduced to little more than a sound-bitten popularity contest. Ironically, people who live in places that do not profess democracy are often more meaningfully critical than those living in the democracies. This situation has great potential for cross-cultural education, and can deepen the recent calls to implement ever more critical thinking.

Learn from stupidity and mistakes. State standards rarely emphasize stupidity and mistakes as heuristic devices. They never tell us, for example, that science is riddled with mistakes, and that the scientific method actually depends in part on acknowledging and

correcting its own errors and mistakes. Why do we not emphasize this to our students? Likewise, history is full of political and economic blunders, great and small. Consumer culture is stupid and ecologically destructive, but because we don't like to call people stupid, we ignore it as a learning tool. There are all-important lessons for us and for our students if we admit stupidity and mistakes.

Reflect often on the purpose of education. Most people never think about why we confine children to twelve or more years of schooling. What purpose does it serve? Different cultures may have different uses for education, but if this is not reflected upon, then certain hidden purposes for education will likely prevail. Thomas Jefferson, for example, saw three clear purposes for education: (1) Separate the "geniuses" from the "rubbish" of the children of white families; (2) "civilize" Native Americans and incorporate them into white society; and (3) equip "Negroes" with basic manual skills before deporting them as far as possible from white society. In short, Jefferson and the other founding fathers of America intended to use education to bolster the privilege of the white ruling class he belonged to, subordinate or control other classes, and destroy or deport people whose culture differed from white norms. To concerned observers like Kozol, who toured American schools in the late 1980s and early 1990s and was horrified with what he saw, this system of education still generally prevails more than 200 years after Jefferson suggested it. In short, the schemes of others become the purposes of education if we do not make these decisions for ourselves.

Make schools safe and happy places. Many children despise school. No doubt this is due in part to the problems outlined in the above paragraphs. But another contributing factor is the dismal facilities that we often pass off as schools. When Kozol quizzed children in poor schools in American inner-city districts, one of the most important things they longed for was a clean, bright school. Many children felt embarrassed inviting him into their schools, and some were even made ill by the near-toxic conditions. The environment in which we teach and learn can have a very great effect on the overall education of children. A healthy environment includes clean facilities, especially fresh air and water, plants and trees, places for privacy, and other factors. Use your imagination and trust your children to determine what makes a happy place. At the same time, try always to encourage an atmosphere that reflects genuine culture, not the spurious culture of advertising and consumption. The latter has no place in schools, despite the various bargains corporations use to entice local school boards.

Cultivate optimism. When considering some of the awful things outlined in this essay, all the problems with

schools, the conspiracies, the injustices, the failures, the pathologies, one can become cynical. Sadly, this is the reality. But we need not despair. In fact, despair is a sure way to perpetuate the system that causes most of the problems. If cynicism is passive skepticism, then we need to cultivate active skeptics through critical study and cultivate optimism through holistic study. Many observers believe that, if left to continue on its present course, Western civilization will collapse. It cannot sustain itself much longer, since it is based at bottom on injustice, greed, and ecological insanity. The eventual disappearance of this oppressive system should be a cause of great optimism for most people worldwide. Looking at things in this way leads us to ask very important questions, such as: What do we do when the system is gone? What kind of society do we want to live in? Why do civilizations collapse? The Qur'an, for example, asks people to derive lessons from the disappearance of previous oppressive civilizations, from the Pharaohs to the Romans. More recently, the Soviet Union melted away into obscurity before our very eyes. There is no reason to believe that the American-led Western civilization is any more permanent. With this as an optimistic view, education can help us to get a jump on the necessary work of building just, peaceful, and ecologically sustainable societies. In light of such a wondrous prospectus, the standardization movement becomes an insignificant artifact.

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An Encyclopedia

VOLUME THREE

Edited by

Joe L. Kincheloe and Danny Weil

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