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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the issue of national curriculum standards within the context of social studies education. The paper explores both the recent "conservative-liberal" consensus in favor of (at least) the idea(l) of national curriculum standards and the nascent opposition movements to national curriculum standards growing within both the pedagogical/political Left and the pedagogical/political Right. Focusing on the perspective of the radical Left, the position of the author as well as an increasingly legitimate one among social educators generally, the paper appropriates the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Michel Foucault as: (1) significant and meaningful with respect to reconstructing and interpreting the origins, development, and evolution of a/the radical Left critique; and (2) a dynamic source of guidance and direction for critical social educators now working to advance, strengthen, and expand it. The paper provides a "reading" of the recent work of E. Wayne Ross as a "case study" of the relationships between Dewey, Freire, and Foucault and contemporary critical social studies scholarship. The paper suggests and considers implications of its analysis for today's social educators, specifically those implications relevant to current understandings of pedagogical theory, research, and practice. Contains 59 references and 11 notes. (Author/BT)

Running head: NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS AND SOCIAL STUDIES

National Curriculum Standards and Social Studies Education: Dewey, Freire, Foucault, and the Construction of a Radical Critique

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Abstract

In this paper the author examines the issue of national curriculum standards within the context of social studies education. First, he explores both the recent "conservative"-"liberal" consensus in favor of (at least) the idea(l) of national curriculum standards and the nascent opposition movements to national curriculum standards growing within both the pedagogical/political Left and the pedagogical/political Right. Second, focusing on the perspective of the radical Left--the author's own position as well as an increasingly legitimate one among social educators generally--he appropriates the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Michel Foucault as (1) significant and meaningful with respect to reconstructing and interpreting the origins, development, and evolution of a/the radical Left critique; and (2) a dynamic source of guidance and direction for critical social educators now working to advance, strengthen, and expand it. Here, the author provides a "reading" of the recent work of E. Wayne Ross as a "case study" of this relationship between Dewey, Freire, and Foucault and contemporary critical social studies scholarship. Lastly, the author suggests and considers implications of his analysis for today's social educators, specifically those implications relevant to current understandings of pedagogical theory, research, and practice.

National Curriculum Standards and Social Studies Education: Dewey, Freire, Foucault, and the Construction of a Radical Critique[1]

> What chiefly makes our schools unfair...is that some students are learning less than others...because of inherent shortcomings in curricular organization. A systematic failure to teach all children the knowledge they need in order to understand what the next grade has to offer is the major source of avoidable injustice in our schools. (Hirsch, 1996, p. 25)

> I would say there is...false consciousness still exhibited today....Educational goals...are goals set for students. It is in this "for" that the machinations of power can be discerned. Whether the "for" is an "on behalf of," a "for the benefit of," or even an "instead of," the "for" always reveals an imbalance. Some people are in a position to set goals. Some are not....I propose that Freire's existential critique of the "banking approach"...is, in essence, a Nietzschean critique of the power relations hidden behind educational goal setting. (Bingham, 1998, p. 239)

For US educators, as well as other individuals and groups with an interest in contemporary schooling, the issue of creating and implementing national curriculum standards represents one of today's most heated, complex, political, and pedagogically-defining debates. Of course, positions vary enormously and indicate a fluid and dynamic multiplicity rather than simply or simplistically a bipolar "for" or "against." Indeed, specific perspectives are quite intricate, with each produced and reproduced according to an array of hierarchical and asymmetrical relations of power, created locally as well as structurally, that exist grounded in a series of contingent and complicated interactions, for example those situated among understandings of identity, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and culture. Ultimately, national curriculum standards--as both an issue and a collection of diverse, hybridized viewpoints--pose a significant, perplexing challenge to the very meaning of American public schools.

One problem is that the label "curriculum standards" refers to many things. Banks (1998), for example, prefers the name "content standards" which she defines as "provid[ing] a structure to guide curriculum and instruction by framing core academic content areas in terms of what and how teachers

should teach and what students should know and be able to do" (p. 87). Tucker and Codding (1998) use content standards to mean "performance descriptions" and refer readers to their definition of "performance standards," (p. 315) identified as "Written standards consisting of performance descriptions....[or] succinct narrative statement[s] of what students are expected to know and be able to do that describe[] what is most essential to learn in each discipline and is confined to things that can actually be assessed..." (p. 318). The National Council for the Social Studies (Curriculum Standards Task Force, 1994), however, does accept the designation "curriculum standards," and defines "**curriculum standard** [bold in the original]" as "a statement of what should occur programmatically in the formal schooling process; [further,] it provides a guiding vision of content and purpose" (p. 14). Such standards suggest "curriculum experiences" that "should enable students to exhibit the knowledge, skills, scholarly perspectives, and commitments to American democratic ideals identified in the [Task Force's] **performance expectations** [bold in the original]" (p. 14).

For the purposes of this paper, I shall use the terms curriculum standards and content standards synonymously, and assume them to represent any effort on the part of some formally sanctioned body to establish in an academic or disciplinary area subject matter, content, or content guidelines against which the performance of teachers and students will be measured and/or evaluated. In short, national curriculum standards are defined here as authoritative policies seeking to prescribe curriculum or content, that is to determine and limit what teachers can and should teach and what students can and should learn, for the entire country. In addition, generally, national curriculum standards imply some means of assessment by which teacher and student achievement or performance can be gauged.

To perceive the present interest in national curriculum standards one need only consult the popular press or the general educational literature (e.g., Banks, 1998; Donmoyer, 1998; Harris & Baker, 1997; Kozol, Wells, Delpit, Rose, Fruchter, Kohl, Meier, & Cole, 1997; Levin, 1998; Noll, 1997; Schultz, 1997; Thomas, 1998; Tucker & Codding, 1998; Willis, 1997; Wolf, 1998). Both are rife with examples. What recent accounts reveal, however, is at least some ambiguity (if not confusion) surrounding the essential concerns of need, establishment, import, and impact. For while certain attempts toward national curriculum standards appear successful, others seem much more problematic.

The work of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1989, 1991), for example, earned generally widespread praise, while the similar work of the National Center for History in the Schools (1994a, 1994b) met extensive criticism. That these examples represent qualitatively different yet related undertakings is clear. Still, they do provide an interesting contrast as well as significant insights into the "nature" and complexity of mathematics and social studies. On the other hand, they indicate the degree of uncertainty--even chaos--inherent in the national curriculum standards debate.

At least some of this chaos reflects the inability or unwillingness of effectiveness/efficiency-minded policymakers (in education as well as business and government) to ask and take seriously the "difficult questions," particular those connected to concerns of (underlying) purpose (e.g., What is/ should be the purpose of education? Why should we or should we not have national curriculum standards?) and to the complex issues of social justice, equality, freedom, identity, and democracy (e.g., Whose standards? To what ends? To what extent do or would national curriculum standards promote a public schooling that is conforming, normative, and disciplinary as opposed to one that is freeing, critical, and emancipatory? In what ways might national curriculum standards work to privilege a single, dominant perspective when in fact authentic curriculum and instruction and teaching and learning comprise a multitude of experiences and knowledges?). As I understand the debate, these concerns are especially crucial to contemporary social studies educators to the extent that, historically, they have assumed the primary responsibility for "citizenship" and "democratic" education. Although still uncertain and chaotic, ultimately the debate over national curriculum standards is unavoidable; it challenges all caring educators--all of <u>us</u>--to become meaningfully and critically engaged.

The purposes of this paper are to: (1) examine the "contemporary scene" with respect to the national curriculum standards debate and the growing pro-standards "conservative"-"liberal" consensus; (2) explore the evolving radical Left critique against national curriculum standards and to draw from the works of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault insights into how such a critique developed and how it might be expanded and strengthened; (3) analyze Ross's (1996) recent article "Diverting Democracy" as a case study of the radical critique and its origins and evolution (i.e., in the works of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault); and (4) suggest implications of this critique for contemporary social

studies education in terms of theory, research, and classroom practice. In effect, I argue that the imposition of national curriculum standards for the social studies should be opposed, that the radical Left critique should be acknowledged as legitimate in that it offers the social studies an important and unique (though often ignored) perspective, and that efforts toward national curriculum standards pose significant dangers with respect to social justice, freedom, equality, identity, diversity, and democracy--dangers that threaten the very raison d'être of contemporary social studies education.

The Contemporary Scene: Consensus and Opposition

Although political/pedagogical liberals and political/pedagogical conservatives maintain, obviously, diverse positions, recently an alliance or consensus has formed in which both liberals and conservatives agree on (at least) the relative utility and goodness of national curriculum standards as an idea(l). While they differ in beliefs, rationales, and details, contemporary liberals and conservatives both support national curriculum standards as one component of meaningful education reform.[2]

The conservative view, at least in its post-Reagan, post-A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) form, can be characterized by the attempt to merge two competing and fundamentally important mindsets or goals, consolidating them into a singularly unstable and uniquely discordant (in some ways illogical) mixture. The first is Reagan's "new federalism," a policy designed to "restore" to the individual states their "original," "intended," and "rightful" prominence in the always shifting balance of governmental power. From this view, representing a legacy passed down from Barry Goldwater and even earlier conservatives, the national government has (over time) acquired or robbed from the states their particular prerogatives and responsibilities, a situation resulting in government by "tax and spend" liberalism, waste and inefficiency, and unwarranted presidential and Congressional "intrusions" into matters that are "properly" left up to individuals, local communities, and states. With respect to education, the implications of this "new" federalism include reducing Washington's involvement with public schooling (a state power), and "returning" control over it to the jurisdiction and authority of the states, especially in terms of "regulation" and "financial support." (Recall here that one component of this policy was Reagan's [e.g., 1984] expressed objective of eliminating the national Department of Education.)[3]

The second element of the conservative position, a direct effect of A Nation at Risk although traceable to earlier "back-to-basics" initiatives, rests on the belief that US economic (and therefore political) competitiveness depends on the "academic effectiveness" of American public schools, specifically with respect to the "basics" of shared factual disciplinary knowledge and the "functional skills" of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Given the concurrent belief that today's public schools are not achieving success--measured against other industrialized nations--and that they are thus ineffective and pose a clear threat to the economic health of the US, the conservative argument favors a national back-to-basics curriculum supported by national and international achievement/assessment exams. Theoretically, this system would increase achievement levels and thereby enhance the ability of American corporations to compete successfully within the global marketplace.[4]

The conservative viewpoint, maintaining as it does both essential elements, presents a delicate and fragile balancing act between two seemingly incommensurable goals. On the one hand it seeks a reduction of federal involvement in public education (and with the "Republican Revolution" of 1994 arguably pursues policies detrimental to its well-being), while on the other it aspires to create and impose a back-to-basics system of national curriculum and national testing. As President Reagan (1984) stated in response to a reporter's question about A Nation at Risk:

> We've talked about [increased spending on education]...providing there would not be any increase in Federal administration of those funds. We think there is a parallel between the Federal involvement in education and the decline in quality over recent years. What is more needed than just throwing money at education--we're right now spending more money than any other country in the world; we're spending $215 billion on education in this country. We think what has happened is--well, the report speaks for itself, that we have let up, we are not actually taking the students to the limits of their ability. We think we need more required courses. This is what the [National Commission on Educational Excellence] has come up with. (p. 588)

Essentially, Reagan called for both decreased federal involvement and increased federal requirements.

Contemporary conservative support for national curriculum standards is best represented by the work of E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (1996, 1998) and Diane Ravitch (1995; Ravitch & Finn, 1987). Their approach emphasizes the importance of shared content--basic skills, facts, Western culture--as necessary for improving US school performance and achievement, especially as indicated via national and international assessments. They handle the apparent contradiction between federal divestment and federal direction by downplaying the notion of federal as secondary to that of national. By that they mean consensus (even voluntary), broad, and "nonpartisan" as opposed to "political," "ideological," and impositional; they seek local and state control as well as federal leadership and guidance. They deemphasize such hallmark conservative initiatives as vouchers as ultimately unproductive in the absence of a system of common content and assessment standards. While they do recognize the importance and necessity of educational spending, they do so only insofar as increased spending might complement locally mandated, internationally measured standards; otherwise, it is wasteful.[5] For both Hirsch and Ravitch, national curriculum standards imply some "core" of common, traditionally Western, factual content and skills coupled with standardized (multiple choice and/or performance-based) assessments as essential indicators of achievement, effectiveness, and proficiency. As Hirsch (1998) argues, "Our aim...is not to claim that the content we recommend is better than some other well-thought-out core....Nor is it our aim to specify everything that American schoolchildren should learn....Rather our point is that a core of shared knowledge, grade by grade, is needed to achieve excellence and fairness in elementary education" (p. 138). Further, as he suggests in The Schools We Need (Hirsch, 1996), he views this core as essential to the promotion of economic justice and equality of individual opportunity. Similarly, Ravitch (1995) summarizes her case by stating that:

1. Standards can improve achievement by clearly defining what is to be taught and what kind of performance is expected;
2. Standards (national, state, and local) are necessary for equality of opportunity;
3. National standards provide a valuable coordinating function [by providing coherence with respect to the various aspects of education];

4. There is no reason to have different standards in different states, especially in mathematics and science, when well-developed international standards have already been developed;

5. Standards and assessments provide consumer protection by supplying accurate information to students and parents; [and]

6. Standards and assessments serve as an important signaling device to students, parents, teachers, employers, and colleges. (pp. 25-27)

Whereas the conservative view draws from Reagan's new federalism and the economic imperatives of effectiveness and achievement delineated in A Nation at Risk, the contemporary liberal perspective claims roots in both Deweyan educational philosophy and recent constructions of multiculturalism/multicultural education (as well as, to a lesser extent, in left-liberal Democratic positions on issues such as civil rights, equality, economics, civil liberties, and social welfare--in today's language, "economic and social liberalism"). It is perhaps best represented (at least in the social studies) by the work of national professional organizations and commissions such as the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)[6] and the National Commission on History in the Schools (NCHS). As a response to the America 2000 (Department of Education, 1991) initiative, liberal efforts attempt to prevent the establishment of national curriculum standards by nonprofessionals (especially those from government and business); that is, they seek to reduce or eliminate the potential power of noneducators. Essentially reactive, the view is that if curriculum standards are inevitable, then it is better to be involved than not involved. As Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn (1997) recount in their history of the work of the National History Standards Project:

> ...the simple fact [was] that the train was leaving the station. History standards were clearly on the country's agenda....The matter boiled down to who would write them. Those who were at first reluctant about the wisdom of this enterprise soon decided that they might compromise their own best interests if they failed to join in. If the cards were being dealt, why would historians or social studies educators not want seats around the big table? (p. 158)[7]

Liberal initiatives (e.g., NCHS, 1994a, 1994b; NCSS Curriculum Standards Task Force, 1994) often strive to create a general curriculum "framework," guidelines as opposed to a body of prespecified content, constructed around some set of broad-based educational goals or subject matter themes. In many instances, these aim to promote diversity, multiculturalism, inclusiveness over exclusiveness, nontraditional/"authentic" pedagogies (e.g., hands-on learning, performance assessment, problem solving, cooperative/collaborative learning), and a concern for equality, cultural pluralism, and social justice. These motives clearly undergird such examples as those developed by the NCHS (1994a, 1994b) and the NCSS Curriculum Standards Task Force (1994).

In History on Trial, Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn (1997) describe the efforts of the NCHS and others to develop US and world history curriculum standards (see also Banks, 1998, for supportive commentary on the "content standards" work of the NCHS). As liberals, they relate their own experiences with the National History Standards Project working in support of a history that is inclusive, diverse, multicultural, global, and analytic/interpretive as well as ("merely") factual. Frequently, according to their account, supporters of these positions worked in opposition to conservatives (e.g., Chester Finn) who advocated a "unified" version of US history, a US and "world" history grounded in "Western Civ," and an emphasis on historical "facts" over their interpretation and analysis. Yet here, according to Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, the work of the Commission simply reflected a majority of its members' vision of good history teaching, instruction that "should give students opportunities to examine the historical record for themselves, raise questions about it, and marshal evidence in support of their answers" (p. 175). In addition, it:

> should encourage pupils to reflect on the interpretive nature of history, analyze and compare historians' competing views, and thereby hone skills of critical judgment. It should equip students with a solid knowledge base of information, but also demonstrate that facts are only the raw material of historical understanding. (p. 176)

In Expectations of Excellence, a second example of the liberal approach, the NCSS Curriculum Standards Task Force (1994) begins with a definition of the social studies designed to challenge the traditional conservative notions of a Western Eurocentric, history-oriented, and fact-based curriculum.[8] According to the Task Force:

> Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon [many] disciplines....The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (p. 3)

Curriculum standards, then, should (and in the Task Force's view Expectations of Excellence does):

> provide criteria for making decisions as curriculum planners and teachers address such issues as why teach social studies, what to include in the curriculum, how to teach it well to all students, and how to assess whether or not students are able to apply what they have learned. (p. 13)

"To achieve the vision of social studies," the Task Force continues, "we must ensure that students become intimately acquainted with scholarship, artisanship, leadership, and citizenship" (p. 5). This demands a social education aimed toward: (1) "supporting the common good"; (2) "adopting common and multiple perspectives"; and (3) "applying knowledge, skills, and values to civic action" (pp. 5-7). These, in turn, involve a commitment to certain "principles of powerful teaching and learning" (p. 11) such as instruction that is "meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active" (pp. 11-12).

What these two examples illustrate with respect to the national curriculum standards debate is the overarching liberal emphasis on issues such as inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism, and "nontraditional" modes of pedagogy, namely those involving more than simply the acquisition of information but also the active analysis, interpretation, and application of information to the specific

demands of effective citizenship and of democratic and individual/social problem solving. More importantly, though, these examples suggest the extent to which, and conditions around which, a conservative-liberal consensus has formed.

Both liberals and conservatives see national curriculum standards (in general as well as specifically for the social studies) as necessary for productive public school reform. They agree that today's students do not "know enough," that they possess too little knowledge (whether defined as facts, skills, understandings, or something else), and that curriculum standards can promote wider and deeper levels of achievement and performance. Further, they concur that without such a system of standards American students and their schools will continue to "lag behind" those of other industrialized countries. Liberals and conservatives each envision a (potentially voluntary) structure built upon proactive federal leadership and guidance (and perhaps funding) but under the ultimate control of states and communities. Lastly, both champion national curriculum standards as conducive to and consistent with the advancement of equal educational opportunity.

Recently, however, in light of this consensus, opposition has grown within both the Left and the Right, especially "As the possibility of creating national standards and assessments came closer to reality in the early 1990s" (Ravitch, 1995, p. 19). Conservative standards supporter Diane Ravitch (1995) suggests that "The critics range from conservatives, who have always opposed expansion of the federal role in education, to liberals, who fear that meaningful standards will cause poor children to fail or drop out..." (pp. 18-19). Gittell (1998), a cautious liberal supporter of national standards, writes that "strong opposition to... standards persists and continues to come from both the right and the left" (p. 143). From her perspective, such opposition points to the weakness of a federal strategy for educational reform that deviates from our national commitment to educational equity" (p. 143).

According to Ravitch (1995), the criticisms are and have been:

1. National standards will be minimal, reduced to the lowest common denominator, especially if they are controlled by a federal agency;
2. The government might impose controversial values and opinions;

3. National standards based on traditional subject matter disciplines such as mathematics, science, and history will narrow the curriculum;

4. National testing will harm children and will distort priorities in the classroom;

5. National standards and national tests will do nothing to help poor inner-city schools;

6. National standards and assessments will not expand equality of opportunity;

7. National standards and assessments will not improve achievement because most teachers will ignore them and do what they have always done;

8. The failure of national standards and testing will undermine faith in public education and pave the way for privatization of education; [and]

9. National standards and assessments will accomplish little by themselves.... (pp. 18-25)

For Gittell (1998), "Opposition to national standards comes from people with a variety of points of view" (p. 143). She identifies people who:

1. honor and cherish the tradition of local control of education, particularly at the school district level;

2. give priority to equity and equitable financing of education;

3. focus on the role of the states;

4. see American federalism as the most effective means of retaining a decentralized and democratic political system;

5. value and encourage diversity in all aspects of American society;

6. question the value of the extensive testing in American schools;

7. lead [local] school reform efforts

8. do not think that foreign school systems are exemplary models of education; and/or

9. worked on the national history curriculum or the New York social studies proposal, and have faced the wrath of colleagues who disagree with their suggested standards. (pp. 143-144)

What these viewpoints share are the understandings that opposition positions (1) represent the entire range of political and pedagogical perspectives (i.e., from the far Left to the far Right), (2) are at least somewhat legitimate and thus deserve to be taken seriously, and (3) can be addressed to their proponents' satisfaction. Both Ravitch and Gittell believe that these questions, doubts, and challenges can be worked out within the consensus framework. Neither indicates a real willingness to reconsider the essential position of national curriculum standards themselves.

It is to one such reconsideration that I now turn, namely the antistandards position of the radical Left. Although I recognize the parallel existence of antistandards Right-wing criticism, its concerns are beyond the scope of this study. This is for four principal reasons. First, the far Right has offered little opposition to national curriculum standards in either the general educational or the social studies literature. Second, its supporters apparently have (with few exceptions) coalesced around the broader conservative-liberal consensus. Third, the radical Left has in a sense "split off" from educational liberalism to such an extent as to become a legitimate force of its own--something the far Right has not done with respect to educational conservatism (at least on the issue of standards). Fourth, there is some tentative evidence that social studies teachers are more radical and Left-leaning than previously thought (Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, & Sullivan, 1997; Vinson, 1998). As I read the debate, the future of national curriculum standards lay in the arguments among conservative supporters (e.g., Hirsch), liberal supporters (e.g., the NCHS and the NCSS), and radical dissenters (e.g., Apple, 1993, 1996), and in their eventual yet unpredictable resolutions.

Building a Radical Critique: Dewey, Freire, Foucault

The radical Left critique of national curriculum standards is perhaps best represented today in the work of "critical pedagogues" such as Michael Apple (1993, 1996; Vinson & Dunbar, 1998) and others whose views build from a deep concern with power, representation, voice, social justice, diversity, democracy, and equality. For Apple (1996), a national curriculum necessitates "[a] decision to define some groups' knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge [so powerful that] other groups' knowledge hardly sees the light of day" (p. 22). His view is that national curriculum standards will benefit most those who are already society's most powerful, and that their effects will be

truly damaging to those who already have the most to lose..." (p. 24). As externally imposed conditions, they would attempt to "invent" a "uniform culture [that] never truly existed in the United States" (p. 34), an unjust status quo toward which all students would be expected--even overtly or covertly forced--to conform. In sum, Apple maintains that national curriculum standards promote: (1) a schooling that is separated from the lives of students; (2) an antidemocratic imposition of content; (3) oppression; and (4) the reproduction of unequal, hegemonic, and hierarchical relations of power.

As I argue, such a radical Left critique evolved out of the earlier work of thinkers such as Dewey, Freire, and Foucault, theorists who, in effect, made positions such as Apple's possible. My purpose here is to examine their works for insights into the construction and expansion of a radical critique of national curriculum standards and to connect certain aspects of their writings to today's Leftist views. In appropriating elements of their works I seek to develop the theoretical foundations upon which a more sophisticated critical position might be developed, strengthened, and applied.

Dewey: Experience & Democracy

In my opinion, Dewey would oppose adamantly the imposition of national curriculum standards. He would do so for several reasons, most directly those rooted in his conceptualizations of "traditional education," "experience," "psychologization," and "democracy."

In Experience and Education, Dewey (1938/1963) identified the characteristics of "traditional education" and the "criteria of experience," both of which (can) play a role in the construction of a radical national curriculum standards critique. In traditional education:

> The main purpose or objective is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill [italics added]....Since the subject-matter as well as standards of proper conduct are handed down from the past, the attitude of pupils must, upon the whole, be one of docility, receptivity, and obedience. Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils are brought

> into effective connection with the material. Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated and rules of conduct enforced. (p. 18)

For Dewey, national curriculum standards would run the risk of disintegrating into or sustaining a system of traditional education by defining achievement in terms of acquiring external knowledge (whether defined as facts or skills or by liberals or conservatives), that which via assessment would necessitate students becoming "docile," "receptive," and "obedient."[9]

Further, building upon a related set of arguments, national curriculum standards would contradict Dewey's (1938/1963) "theory of experience." They would "violate[] the principle of interaction from one side" (p. 42), privilege "objective conditions" over "internal ones," and "subordinate...what goes on within...individuals..." (p. 42). For Dewey, "all genuine education comes about through experience..." (p. 25), that is as an "interaction" between "objective and internal conditions," or what Dewey called a "situation" (p. 42). Education must consider both the objective and internal and resist the temptation to overemphasize either in the extreme. Since all students come to school with individual and unique experiences, they must encounter unique and individual educations. Therefore, "[a] single course of studies for all progressive schools is out of the question; it would mean abandoning the fundamental principle of connection with life-experiences" (p. 78). The "material for learning...must be derived from materials which at the outset fall within the scope of ordinary life-experience" (p. 73). Only then comes "the progressive development of what is already experienced into a fuller and richer and also more organized form, a form that gradually approximates that in which subject-matter is presented to the skilled, mature person" (pp. 73-74). Dewey would reject national curriculum standards as subordinating internal to objective conditions, and for taking as their starting point organized subject matter as opposed to the real life experiences of the learners. For ultimately, it is "incumbent" on educators to "be aware of the potentialities for leading students into new fields which belong to experiences already had [italics added], and [to] use this knowledge as [their] criterion for selection and arrangement of the conditions that influence their [students'] present experience" (p. 76). As such, this process cannot be imposed externally or pre-standardized.

Dewey (1902/1956) recognized "the need of reinstating into experience the subject-matter of the studies, or branches of learning," that this subject matter "must be restored to the experience from which it has been abstracted," and that "[i]t needs to be psychologized; turned over, translated into immediate and individual experience within which it has its origin and significance" (p. 22). Otherwise, content becomes denatured, "dead and barren" (p. 24), unmotivating, and insignificant. Dewey's objection here to national curriculum standards would rest on their disconnection to individual life experiences. National curriculum standards cannot develop out of the experiences of learners; they cannot be so "abstracted." Instructional "tricks" to make standardized subject matter "interesting" or "motivating" or "experiential," necessary gimmicks in traditional education yet nonsensical with respect to the psychologized, demonstrate its futility and risk transforming it into something it isn't, something antithetical to standardization, something by definition "unstandard" thus out of curricular bounds.

Lastly, in my view, Dewey's (1916/1966) conception of "democracy and education"--the "democratic ideal"--challenges even the very possibility of national curriculum standards. Put more bluntly, Dewey's position necessitates and demands their condemnation, whether conservative or liberal, as inherently and fundamentally undemocratic (if not antidemocratic). This becomes clearer as one examines Dewey's meaning in defining democracy and in characterizing its mode of education.

In Dewey's (1916/1966) own famous words:

> The two elements in our criterion both point to democracy. The first signifies not only more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest, but greater reliance upon the recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control. The second means not only freer interaction between social groups (once isolated so far as intention could keep up a separation) but change in social habit--its continuous readjustment through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse. And these two traits are precisely what characterize the democratically constituted society. (pp. 86-87).

Finally, as is well known, Dewey presented "democracy [as] more than [simply] a form of government ..." but as "primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (p. 87).

For Dewey, democracy and democratic education obligated "[t]he extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his [sic] own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his [sic] own..." (p. 87). "These more numerous and more varied points of contact denote a greater diversity of stimuli to which an individual has to respond; they consequently put a premium on variation in his [sic] action" (p. 87). So what, then, of national curriculum standards?

First, one must consider the extent to which they would promote "more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest." In fact, they would not. On the contrary, they would reduce the number of such points, insisting instead that teachers and students conform to the same, limited and defined set of interests, and that they force themselves into the tiny boxes of what some external source or sources defined as the (their) common interests. For variation and expansion are incompatible with standardization. The only pro-standards choices are to either include directly so many interests and knowledges that any standard curriculum becomes unwieldy and impossible to implement, or create national curriculum standards that are so vague as to become meaningless, useless, and unable to serve as serious instructional guidelines. Second, one must consider Dewey's point on the "freer interaction between social groups" and the "continuous readjustment [of social habit] through meeting the new situations produced by varied intercourse." National curriculum standards do not necessarily reduce the interaction between social groups, but they do diminish the freedom. Social interaction occurs within a narrowed context, one defined by the curriculum standards and those who determine them. It takes place only on the conditions and terms established by the standards and their setters. New situations are precluded--situations become the same for everyone (because of, in part, national and international assessments). Varied intercourse disappears as students and teachers all engage in a single, national, predetermined, and standardized pedagogical discourse. As concepts, "associated living" and "conjoint communicated experience" morph into statements such as "live like me on my terms; speak my language as I define your experience." For Dewey, this amounts to no less than the

attempt to maintain and strengthen a democracy via a less than democratic--an undemocratic or even antidemocratic--education. In all, it presents an unsustainable and illogical situation.

In sum, Dewey furnishes social educators an extensive critical foundation upon which to build, strengthen, and apply a radical Left critique of national curriculum standards. He paints an insightful picture, one foreshadowing myriad contemporary concerns. In appropriating his pedagogy one can scrutinize both conservative and liberal endeavors as potential instances of (1) a "will-to-traditionalize," that is as specific efforts toward a silencing and conformative subject matter-centeredness; (2) an "experience-less disconnectedness"; (3) an "antipsychologization," or a merely transmitted assemblage of externally established content; and (4) an "undemocratic"/"antidemocratic" struggle to narrow or hierarchically limit the meaning of "shared common interest" and "free interaction between social groups," and to lessen the effects of "varied intercourse."

Freire: "Banking" & "Oppression"

The late Paulo Freire's (1970) critique of "banking" education represents perhaps one of the best known denunciations of traditionalism in modern educational history. Although its potential with respect to the radical Left position opposing national curriculum standards remains to be fully explored, its foundational importance here cannot be overestimated. From a Freirean view, I argue that: (1) national curriculum standards represent an actual rather than potential instance of banking education (i.e., that national curriculum standards are banking education and not that they might become banking education); and (2) national curriculum standards are "oppressive."

For Freire (1970), banking education exists to the extent that schooling "turns [students] into 'containers,' into 'receptacles' to be 'filled' by the teacher" (p. 53). Further, "[t]he more completely [the teacher] fills the receptacles, the better a teacher she [or he] is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are" (p. 53). "Education [thus] becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor....the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits" (p. 53).

In treating Freire's critique, educators perhaps too frequently focus on method as opposed to purpose, content (i.e., "curriculum), and/or assessment. Yet, conceptually, banking education suggests

the importance of each. The content that is deposited is crucial. Created by those in power, it supports and maintains the status quo, a situation most beneficial to society's elites. Whether selected by conservatives or liberals, and however defined, it represents a knowledge designed to induce passivity and standardization. But while Freire characterizes banking education according to the thoughts and actions of teachers, I would argue that they, like their students, also are at the mercy of standards.

Whether predetermined facts, skills, values, or guidelines; Eurocentric or "multicultural"; or presented and tested via lecture and multiple choice or cooperative learning and performance examinations; national curriculum standards signify a banking approach. The point of curriculum standards is to assure that somehow students leave schools and classrooms having acquired a preestablished body of knowledge, one selected and sanctioned by a relatively small and powerful group of individuals. Knowledge is deposited, whether "traditionally" or "authentically," and students (and teachers) are held "accountable," that is they are evaluated based on the extent to which students can demonstrate their success in "receiving, filing, and storing" certain "official" deposits. This demonstration might involve paper and pencil tasks or it might take the form of alternative/authentic/ performance-based testing. Still, in the end, the results and effects are the same.

Consequently, from the Freirean perspective, national curriculum standards constitute a fundamental form of "oppression." As Freire (1970) wrote:

> One of the basic elements of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed is prescription. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness. Thus, the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor. (pp. 28-29)

If nothing else, national curriculum standards represent "prescriptions." Some powerful group determines and regulates content for everyone (i.e., teachers and students). To the extent that students and teachers conform, adapt their behavior--teaching and learning--to the standards, they are

successful. Standards provide a mechanism by which an individual or small group can impose decisions upon others, decisions made based upon their own understandings, interests, and needs.

Radical Left critics must consider and build upon the possibility that national curriculum standards in and/or for the social studies actualize a banking orientation and an oppressive approach to education, that they legitimize the control of knowledge and prescribe a conformity to perspectives maintained by a powerful minority. Critical social educators need to pursue the consequences of such conditions for democracy and democratic citizenship, justice, equality, opportunity, and identity (especially with respect to ethnicity, race, gender, class, sexuality, age, and culture).

Foucault: Regimes of Truth

> Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse [it] accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those...charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980, p. 131)

> Truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime of truth.' (Foucault, 1980, p. 133)

The work of philosopher Michel Foucault provides a more recent and increasingly significant set of critical insights relevant to the construction of a radical critique of national curriculum standards. Specifically, his conceptualizations of "régime of truth," "power/knowledge," and "disciplinary power" offer important and unique contributions to the radical Left view, contributions that complement the critical efforts of both Dewey and Freire.

From this perspective, national curriculum standards function as a regime of truth, one in which "truth" is "produced and sustained" by a "system of power" and, in turn, where truth "induces" certain "effects of power." A regime of truth, as such, comprises both "political" and "ethical" dimensions or aspects (e.g., Gore, 1993), coercive controls that operate on and through the body.[10] In the national curriculum standards debate, truth (or "knowledge") is that which is consistent with the standards themselves; it is produced out of and privileges specific relations of power. National curriculum standards work to legitimize certain knowledges as true, certain methods as appropriate to the establishment of truth (e.g., the "scientific method," or the "top-down" method), certain acts as consistent with truth, and the power of certain individuals to determine truth and what constitutes it (and thus the power to create national [universal] curriculum [and performance] standards).

Such a regime of truth builds upon a precise and localized set of linking relationships between power and knowledge, linking relationships that, for Foucault, signified the effects and existence of contemporary "disciplinary power" or "disciplinary practices" (Foucault, 1975/1979; Simola, Keikkinene, & Silvonen, 1998, p. 68). Disciplinary power and/or practices refer to "a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour" (Foucault, 1975/1979, p. 138). Disciplinarity seeks in individuals "docility" and utility," a simultaneous reduction and expansion of subjective forces (Foucault, 1975/1979). For Foucault, such disciplinary--and disciplining--effects are maintained by "historical observation" or "surveillance," "normalizing judgments," and "the examination" as techniques or technologies of power.

For radical critics of national curriculum standards, generally as well as for the social studies in particular, Foucault's work offers several constructive insights. First, it encourages an interrogation of the degree to which knowledge (i.e., curriculum standards) is produced as a result of power--more specifically, unequal, hierarchical, and asymmetrical relations of power. Is, for example, what counts as legitimate truth in schools necessarily "truth" (or even significant and appropriate knowledge), or is it simply an indicator of who gets to decide and who doesn't? Second, radical Left critics must consider how power is produced as a result of knowledge. To what extent are existing (and dominant/ dominating) power relationships maintained and boosted by inclusionary/exclusionary content choices?

How is one's power enhanced or impeded via unequal access to this so-called truth? Third, critical educators must question the inherent disciplinary nature of national curriculum standards. They must ask: How do national curriculum standards coerce certain behaviors? How do they establish conformity? How are links between curriculum and performance standards actualized as regimes of truth, replete with their constituent political (interpersonal) and ethical (intrapersonal) aspects, and how do they contribute to the production of politically docile and economically useful individuals? Why? And to what ends? Perhaps uniquely pertinent to the social studies, these and related questions must be addressed by the radical Left within the specific yet fluid contexts of national curriculum standards and their ultimate meaning for US democracy, citizenship education, community, and globalization.

Toward a Radical Critique

A radical Left critique, then, must consider at least the following foundational questions: (1) To what extent do national curriculum standards encourage a "traditional education," one built upon the transmission of external "knowledge," a "subject matter-centered" approach aimed at producing students who are "docile," "receptive," and "obedient?" In what ways do they deny students the possibility of internalizing or "psychologizing" content? (2) How do national curriculum standards work to dissociate schooling from the lived experiences of students? (3) What are the consequences of national curriculum standards with respect to democracy? Do they recognize and promote "more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest" and "freer interaction between social groups" or do they inhibit it? How? (4) What are the parallels between "banking education" and national curriculum standards? Do and how might these parallels contribute to "oppression," especially with respect to issues of race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, age, identity, and culture? (5) How do national curriculum standards function as "regimes of truth?" What are their "political" and "ethical" dimensions? To what extent do they promote a power/knowledge-based conformity, a restriction of inter- and intrapersonal behavior in the direction of political "docility" and economic "utility?" How are these conditions established and maintained via the disciplinary practices or technologies of "surveillance," "normalizing judgment," and "examination?" and (6) In whose interests do national curriculum standards operate? Who benefits by them? Who does not? How do they affect the status

and evolution of social justice, equality, freedom, fairness, and opportunity? In sum, radical Left critics must contend with the dangerous yet unavoidable conditions of national curriculum standards.

Overall, the radical Left position perceives national curriculum standards as: promoting an education that is divorced from the experiences of teachers and students; constructed upon externally imposed subject matter content; undemocratic and antidemocratic; an instance of banking education; consistent with and supportive of oppression; and actualized as a disciplinary regime of truth. Thus, radical Left educators must work toward more democratic alternatives, including those pedagogies developed out of a concern for justice, equality, freedom, fairness, and opportunity. They must build upon their radical origins and situate them within the context of contemporary schooling and its diverse and changing conditions--not only educational conditions, but conditions of economics, social structure, culture, politics, history, geography, ethics, and epistemology.

It is in this vein that I turn now to E. Wayne Ross, whose recent work provides an excellent contemporary example of the origins and applications of the radical Left critique and its fundamental grounding--directly as well as indirectly--in the pedagogies of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault.

Ross & "Diverting Democracy": A Case Study

In "Diverting Democracy: The Curriculum Standards Movement and Social Studies Education," Ross (1996) presents one example of the contemporary radical Left critique of national social studies curriculum standards. Essentially, I argue that Ross's work: (1) represents--overtly and covertly--an example of the founding influences of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault with respect to the radical Left position and (2) provides some indication of how critical social educators might "revise and extend" the earlier work of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault vis-à-vis maintaining and strengthening the radical anti-national curriculum standards point of view.

Ross (1996; see also Ross, 1997) contends "that curriculum standards as they are presently pursued promote standardized school knowledge, divert attention away from teachers' roles in curriculum development, and skew the discourse of curriculum reform away from issues of equity" (pp. 18-19). He suggests that social studies educators consider "democratic alternatives..." (p. 19). Most

importantly here, though, he draws from and builds upon Dewey's experience-based democracy as one "major resource for the resistance" (p. 23).

According to Ross (1996), "Dewey argued that [an] acquaintance with centralized knowledge must derive from situational concerns; that is, disciplinary knowledge must be attained by...inquiring students in ways that have meaning for them" (p. 23). The contemporary move toward standardization, however, rests upon the imposition of externally produced and compelled content, information divorced from inquiry and interpretation, and thus from the learners' experiences. Such content reflects the antidemocratic control of knowledge by a relatively small yet powerful, elite group of individuals--including federal and state bureaucrats, national professional education organizations (e.g., the NCSS and the NCHS), and textbook publishers and state adoption committees (especially those in California, Texas, and Florida)--whose interests converge around curriculum centralization.

This centralized content standardization promotes the antidemocratic notion that curriculum can legitimately be developed and implemented absent a concern for the role of teachers. Ross (1996) considers this not only undemocratic but also nonsensical. As he states: "The curriculum standards movement ignores the most striking aspect of the teacher's role in curriculum development, which is its inevitability" (p. 33). Influenced by Dewey's (1916/1966) democratic "criteria"--"more numerous and more varied points of shared common interest" and "freer interaction between social groups" (p. 86)--Ross argues that "Operationally, curriculum standards projects in social studies are antidemocratic because they severely restrict the legitimate role of teachers and other educational professionals as well as the public in participating in the conversation about the origin, nature, and ethics of knowledge taught in the social studies curriculum" (p. 33). Instead of broadening the "points of shared common interest," curriculum standards narrow them; instead of promoting "freer interaction between social groups," curriculum standards restrict or even eliminate it. Democratic decision making is replaced by "an effort of policy elites to standardize the content and much of the practice of education" (p. 33), generally in the direction of a "neo-nativist" (p. 26) ideological conservatism.[11]

Further, Ross's (1996) critique reflects and builds upon (albeit indirectly) the Freirean concerns with both banking education and oppression. His conviction is that the movement toward national

social studies curriculum standards "reduces the role of teachers to technicians," and that it "promotes a view of teachers as conduits [italics added] for the delivery of knowledge that is externally defined" (p. 33). In other words, national curriculum standards encourage teachers to transmit--deposit--someone else's knowledge into the minds of "receptacle" students. The "prescribed" content, ideally in the minds of pro-standards advocates, belongs to "the exclusive domain of disciplinary specialists, policy elites in private foundations, and public officials" (p. 34). In the specific case of textbook publishers, this content "promotes values...that maintain social and economic hierarchies and relationships supported by the dominant socioeconomic class" (p. 24). It thus parallels Freire's (1970) first principle of oppression, that is "the imposition of one individual's choice upon another" (p. 29). Again, as Freire argued, prescriptions--impositions--work by "transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness...[such that] the behavior of the oppressed is a prescribed behavior, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor" (p. 29). In Ross's framework, this is true for both teachers and students. For teachers, it results from the essential "will-to-'teacher-proof" inherent in most contemporary standardizing efforts. Here, teachers become merely knowledge transmitters. For students, the conforming behavior follows the establishment of examinations--"high stake," "curriculum-aligned," and mandated.

Lastly, Ross's (1996) article demonstrates a Foucauldian apprehension toward the relationships between power and knowledge sustained by the national curriculum standards movement, especially to the extent that those in power--that is, those with the power to determine legitimate truth/knowledge--work to restrict the behavior of teachers and students. They do so, in part, by "marginaliz[ing]... teachers' roles in formal curriculum (policy) development and creat[ing] unequal participation and power relations" (p. 35). Here, standards work to standardize, promoting a nationally consistent content as well as a nationally consistent rendering of teaching and learning. They do so via the disciplinary practices of surveillance, normalization, and examination. Of the three, Ross is most adamant with respect to examination. He does recognize, however, the significance of surveillance and normalization. Surveillance implies observation, and throughout "Diverting Democracy" Ross hints at a relationship between national curriculum standards and an awareness at least of what teachers and

students are doing. For example, he identifies the movement's aim to "test students and report the results to the public [italics added]" (p. 18). With respect to normalization, Ross writes that "The curriculum standards movement taps into the cultural norms [italics added] of schools as academic institutions that attempt to transmit what is already known, rather than promoting the development of intellectual institutions that prize inquiry and thought" (p. 31); it, in effect, reinforces such norms.

Examinations, in a Foucauldian sense, lead both to political docility and economic utility. For teachers, the "accountability" pressures of student achievement encourage docility and discourage creativity, professional decision making, and reflectivity. In that content and assessments are determined externally, teachers are disempowered and left simply to deliver curriculum in a limited, testable, "don't rock the boat" or exert professional autonomy, format. For students, the problem signifies a post-A Nation at Risk linking of "economic competitiveness...to high levels of achievement on standardized tests [italics added], [where] curriculum standards constitute an effort to improve test results" (p. 31) and thus the economy. Student performance--academic behavior--is unacceptable and irrelevant unless it produces measurable gains in exam scores theoretically indicative of one's potential to contribute to American economic ("corporate") prosperity. Here, success is identical for everyone.

In sum, Ross views the national curriculum standards movement as fundamentally conservative. His work draws from and advances the earlier thinking of scholars such as Dewey, Freire, and Foucault. He builds on their work by applying it to concerns specific to contemporary schooling, particularly social studies, and advances a set of alternatives to national curriculum standards grounded in a "grassroots" approach to curriculum development in which curriculum is understood to include "the experiences of the classroom" (p. 35), "shared decision making, responsive[ness] to local needs, support[] of teacher development[,] and reflective practice" (p. 36). As Ross concludes:

> Grassroots curriculum development requires teachers and others to see and act on the connections between classrooms and the society. Teachers' efforts in the classroom are tied to broader efforts to promote democracy. If teachers can find ways to link the two, both will be strengthened. (pp. 36-37)

Discussion

In this section, I reiterate the major points of my argument. In addition, building upon my understanding of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault, I present my own case against national curriculum standards in and for the social studies. Lastly, I consider the implications of the radical Left critique for contemporary social education, particularly in terms of theory, research, curriculum, and instruction.

Summary

To review, the recent debate over national curriculum standards is one of the most controversial and heated in contemporary US education. It extends across the pedagogical and political spectrum, and includes voices representing an array of diverse and divergent perspectives. And yet, in its present construction, its dominant characteristic is the extent to which a pro-national curriculum standards consensus has formed, one uniting historically opposed individuals and groups around the belief that improving (if not saving) public education depends upon and demands a general commitment to a nationwide (if not global) rendering of content and achievement standards.

Opposition, however, has grown, and currently emanates from both Right and Left leaning critics. From the Right, critics challenge the extent to which the federal government should be involved in matters of education at all--in terms of, for example, determining policy and increasing spending--especially given the historical US view that education is and should be principally a state and local concern. From the Left, more radical educators question the overall fairness and justice of curriculum standards, particularly with respect to issues of power, equality, opportunity, and identity. It is this radical Left position that has formed the foundation of this paper.

More precisely, the radical Left critique focuses on the conditions and features of national curriculum standards within the contexts of student and teacher experience, democracy, "banking education," oppression, and power/knowledge. Drawing upon the earlier work of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault, today's Leftist critics perceive the national curriculum standards movement as one that promotes--even necessitates--a decontextualized, disconnected from experience, traditional, antidemocratic, "banking," oppressive, and normalizing mode of education and schooling. It makes

possible and sustains a standardized and standardizing social education. Ross's (1996) "Diverting Democracy" provides one clear example of this critique, including its foundations and applications.

Given the historical roots of the social studies, as well as its present concerns, it seems plausible at least that social studies educators should oppose any effort to establish a national social studies curriculum. (Of course, the works of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault provide one reasonable first step toward understanding why.) For if the social studies is to remain a meaningful and significant curricular and instructional area, then its theorists and practitioners must consider several recent and historical, critical and problematic, epistemological and ethical, points. First, as a field, the social studies is by definition interdisciplinary--it draws from a multitude of subject matters and content areas. These "foundational" disciplines include more than simply the traditionally privileged and dominant history, geography, and civics; they include also a number of distinct knowledge domains, those centered not only in the human and social sciences but in the "harder" sciences and humanities as well. Needless to say, the foci and characteristics of these disciplines change constantly, creating new emphases, new methodologies, new assumptions, and new comprehensions--even new fields of study. These conditions cannot be standardized and are not identical for everyone. One need only review the current discussions around "postmodernism," "cultural studies," "chaos theory," and "evolutionary psychology" (to name but a few recent controversies) to see the contextual complexities in operation. As a field, social studies rests upon a structure whose very existence implies fluidity, an ever shifting groundwork that cannot be pre-established or standardized, that cannot be set in stone.

Second, social studies educators must consider the extent to which, echoing Shirley Engle, "decision making" remains at least on some level the defining "heart" of the social studies. For if one accepts and heeds the Deweyan origins of the field, then one is left with the social studies as decision making grounded in reflective problem solving, a situation centered on the importance of student-perceived and relevant social and personal problems. That individuals might perceive similar problems as meaningfully relevant is clear. But what should be clear also is that these same individuals might create or discover uniquely meaningful "solutions," namely those produced via uniquely meaningful

experiences. It seems a stretch, then, that some individual or group might create a national social studies curriculum of any real significance or profundity.

Third, social studies educators must (and, of course, most do) take seriously their historical roles in actualizing and advancing US democracy and democratic education. The question is whether national curriculum standards truly are democratic. Is it more democratic for a small group of powerful, generally unelected individuals to establish and mandate a singular, formal knowledge for everyone, or is it more democratic for all legitimate stakeholders to play a meaningful, respected part? It seems only logical that the principles of democracy--freedom, consent of the governed--preclude the first. It must be more democratic for power to be as decentralized as possible and for the curriculum process to include (at least) students, parents, and teachers. In the social studies, given social educators' responsibilities in terms of history, citizenship, and culture, this point is crucial. The nature of national curriculum standardization, regardless of specific content, runs counter to democracy and provides students only a negative lesson in democratic education.

Fourth, because social studies educators must seek to understand the very nature of US society, they must then consider the consequences of national curriculum standards for diversity and multiculturalism. Does US society imply cultural unity? Does it mean homogeneity? If not, that is if US society is diverse and multicultural, then what are the implications of national curriculum standards? Should they in any way reflect culture and/or, more specifically, the cultural dynamics of US (if not global) society? Can they? Does curriculum standardization imply anything in terms of cultural standardization? If so, then what? Social studies educators must examine their own beliefs and pedagogies in order to clarify and perhaps challenge (1) their individual interpretations of US culture and US society and (2) their unique and power-related understandings of the compatibility and desirability of standardization in light of the very real potentialities of cultural assimilation and cultural diversity. In effect, the question is whether or not diversity can be standardized.

Overall, my interpretation is that social educators should fight against national curriculum standards as generally antidemocratic, disconnected from authentic experience, oppressive, a form of "banking education," and disciplinary. Their present and future institutionalization threaten a number

of characteristics central to the modern social studies: interdisciplinarity; problem solving/decision making; democracy, democratic citizenship, and democratic education; and cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and multicultural education.

Implications

This work implies a number of possible directions for social studies theory, research, curriculum, and instruction. With respect to theory and research, several avenues remain open. Future scholarly efforts should consider, for example, other relationships between the works of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault and the creation and establishment of national social studies curriculum standards. For, as I indicate below, their writings present complicated, wide-ranging pedagogies--philosophies far too extensive to address adequately in a single study. As their projects dealt frequently with topics of specific importance to the social studies (e.g., democracy, equality, justice, power), pursuing and creating "new" connections is especially vital. Moreover, scholars should investigate other influences on present-day radical Left critics (sources besides Dewey, Freire, and Foucault, for example those I identify below). These might include "progressivism," "social reconstructionism," "multiculturalism," "critical theory," "postmodernism/poststructuralism," "feminist theory," and "critical pedagogy" (among others). Unfortunately, exploring such influences is well beyond this scope of this paper.

In addition, social studies researchers might provide analyses of specific national curriculum standards projects as well as individual radical Left critiques. Such work could offer insights into the extent to which: (1) standards projects actually exhibit those characteristics most offensive to the radical Left and (2) particular radical Left critics demonstrate some clear association with Dewey, Freire, Foucault, and other relevant critical philosophers and pedagogues. It could explore the relationships between national curriculum standards and localized classroom life by incorporating historical, theoretical, and/or empirical (quantitative/qualitative) methodologies.

With respect to social studies curricula, this paper supports efforts to localize as much as possible, ideally placing curricular work in the hands of classroom teachers and students. If nothing else, it at least advocates a curriculum development that maximizes inclusivity, one in which teachers, students, and parents all play significant and meaningful roles. Fundamentally, it views curriculum as

dynamic, as a fluid, evolving process that must be grounded in teacher and student experiences and understood as an effect of power. Here, the developing field of "cultural studies" (e.g., Giroux, 1996; Giroux [with] Shannon, 1997) provides a potentially useful orientation, especially to the extent that educators are beginning to take seriously the notions of "youth" and "popular" cultures.

Finally, in terms of instruction, the Deweyan and Freirean implications are well known. Dewey's (1910) "reflective thinking" and Freire's (1969/1973, 1970, 1997, 1998) "problem-posing" education and "education for critical consciousness" have long been mainstays of progressive and critical pedagogies. Even so, Schrag's (1995) recent work offers a contemporary application of Deweyan education, focusing on arguments, a concern for evidence, and the desire and ability to continuing learning after graduation. Regarding Foucault, Gore (1993) provides one feasible perspective, an instruction grounded in "reflective teaching" and "action research." Overall, this paper supposes a pedagogy consistent with experience, diversity, inclusion, localization, and democracy.

Conclusions

On at least two levels this paper remains necessarily incomplete. If anything, it provides no more than a heuristic starting point. For, obviously, the philosophies of Dewey, Freire, and Foucault are extensive and complex; they represent holistic yet varied and multiple perspectives, involving many critical ideas, perceptions, and awarenesses, from which I have been limited, unfortunately, to selecting and exploring but a few. I have, in fact, barely scratched the surface.

But second, it must be clear that a range of diverse and disparate scholars and schools of thought, those other than Dewey, Freire, and Foucault and their respective viewpoints, influenced the origins and evolution of the contemporary radical Left critique of social studies national curriculum standards. Today's critics draw from: (1) "progressivism" (e.g., Kilpatrick), (2) "social reconstructionism" (e.g., Counts, Brameld), (3) "feminist theory" and "feminist pedagogy" (e.g., Belenky, Gilligan), (4) "multicultural education" (e.g., Banks), (5) "neo-Marxist" and "correspondence theories" (e.g., Bowles & Gintis), and (6) recent advances in "structural" (e.g., Apple) and "poststructural" (e.g., Giroux, McLaren) critical pedagogy. Since the radical Left critique is so dynamic and so expansive, there are it seems as many influences as there are individual critics.

Finally, social studies educators must remember that while no one is against "high standards," clear problematics lay in issues of meaning and detail: Will students "know" more social studies, and know it "better?" No one favors "low standards," "just letting children do whatever they want," or "ignoring or dismissing content." One may indeed, however, oppose various aspects of the curriculum standards movement. The usual questions apply: Whose standards? Whose knowledge? Who should decide? And to what ends? Sizer (1996) is particularly relevant here:

> ...attempts to have national standards that are even loosely aligned with national assessments and curricula...are...dangerous and potentially undemocratic....Those who say that censorship and ideologically dominated curricula cannot happen here can find it everywhere today, albeit mostly at local levels....To try to create some sort of imposed national educational pattern is as imprudent politically as it is unwise as a matter of scholarship and democratic philosophy.... The task is to achieve [high standards] even when the[ir] definition...is always itself in motion, and to achieve [them] in a climate of diversity and academic freedom. (pp. 45-46)

I do not doubt the intentions of conservative and liberal educators involved in the curriculum standards movement. Certainly, they want good things. Still, the radical Left critique remains vital. It offers social studies professionals an important, too frequently ignored and misunderstood, perspective, one with the potential to provide a host of meaningful insights into the current and future state of social and social studies education. It insists that the field take seriously the notions of experience, democracy, social justice, and power, and not just present them as untextured, one-sided issues--points with which everyone claims (uncritical) agreement. For the arguments inherent in the radical Left critique matter; they demand attention. It may come down to questions such as whether teachers and students really count, whether we will recognize and legitimize difference, and whether we will cede to elite and powerful individuals and groups the "right" to impose their knowledge and their "American" culture on the rest of us--to define our identities for us and to reap the benefits. For the powerful, the answers are clear; for social studies educators, they should be.

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Footnotes

[1] I thank Jill Cohen and Paula Vinson for their kind, supportive, insightful, and critical readings of this manuscript. I also acknowledge the work of Perry Marker and the comments of the anonymous CUFA reviewers.

[2] One might also consult Apple's (1996) perspective on the recent "neo-conservative" (i.e., social and cultural conservatives)-"neo-liberal" (i.e., economic conservatives) alliance.

[3] Reagan (1984) insisted, however, that the federal government would continue to provide for approximately 8 percent of the costs of education--technically, not a decrease, but certainly a less than sizable portion of the huge federal budgets of the era as well as a weak effort in the face of inflation and important school expenditures (e.g., construction, classroom materials, salaries, reducing class sizes).

[4] This orientation, of course, has been criticized heavily in recent years. In brief, this criticism generally includes the notions that (a) schools should not be held responsible for the structural problems of US society (e.g., that unemployment, low wages, and noncompetitiveness are economic problems not school problems), (b) education should be about more than contributing to the profit margins of major corporations and the incomes of their shareholders, and (c) such an economic utilitarian viewpoint of public schooling benefits the wealthy at the expense of individuals in poverty. Further, even if one accepts this conservative viewpoint, there is at least some question as to whether any evidence supporting a relationship between standards and achievement and standards and economic productivity actually exists (see, e.g., Levin, 1998; Wolf, 1998). Lastly, I would note that there has been some influence on this orientation by "Great Books" and other "perennialist" approaches, see most notably Adler (1982).

[5] Clearly, many other conservative critics deemphasize national curriculum standards as secondary to school choice, vouchers, decreased federal support, US corporate economic "needs," and so forth. (Note that I discuss opposition to national curriculum standards below.) My point here is not that Hirsch and Ravitch disapprove of these elements of the conservative agenda, but simply that they believe they cannot be effective without a national system of content and performance standards. In fact, both Hirsch and Ravitch are sympathetic to other conservative initiatives given the implementation

of national standards. I do note, however, that Hirsch (1996) perceives himself to be an "educational conservative" but a "political liberal."

[6] The NCSS has a relatively long history of moving in the direction of national standards. See, for example, National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools (1989), NCSS (1981), NCSS Task Force on Curriculum Guidelines (1971), and NCSS Task Force on Scope and Sequence (1989).

[7] Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn were intimately involved as leaders in the National History Standards Project. See Nash, Crabtree, & Dunn (1997), especially chapter 7.

[8] The Task Force definition had been adopted by the NCSS Board of Directors in 1992.

[9] I am not here necessarily advocating Dewey's version of progressive education, but merely indicating his critique of traditionalism. I would remind readers that Dewey spoke against various "Either/Or" characterizations (e.g., traditional vs. progressive, child vs. curriculum, individual vs. social, etc.). In fact, Dewey was as apprehensive about "extreme progressivism"--that is, Kilpatrickian child-centeredness--as he was about extreme subject matter-centeredness. Clearly, though, he favored what he perceived to be properly progressive education over traditional education. I note lastly an assumption that I make with respect to curriculum standards and testing. That is, I surmise that curriculum standards are, in fact, inevitably meaningless and wasteful without some parallel mode of assessment (whether voluntary or mandated). Without measurement, standards are not and cannot be standards (although I do not support either curriculum standards or mandated exams).

[10] The work of Foucault and its relevance for contemporary education has been and continues to be a growing area of interest for critical educators. The American Educational Research Association has established recently a "Foucault and Education" Special Interest Group. In addition to Gore, I would refer readers interested in Foucault and education to general, if not entirely introductory, sources such as Ball (1990), Popkewitz (1991), Popkewitz and Brennan (1998; see several included selections), and Middleton (1998). The philosophical and social theoretical literature proper is, of course, extensive and representative citations are beyond the scope of this paper.

[11] Ross here is drawing on Cornbleth and Waugh's (1995) recent and remarkable work The Great Speckled Bird: Multicultural Politics and Education Policymaking.

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