NCSS and the Teaching of History

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Even in a democracy, history always involves power and exclusion, for any history is always someone's history, told by that someone from a partial point of view. (Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994, 11)

INTEREST IN HISTORY EDUCATION IS ROOTED IN FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS about what we can and should tell children and young adults about who they are, what place they have in the world, and how the world came to be the way it is. As Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob (1994) note, however, history is never either a neutral force or a complete worldview; history is always someone's history. It is little wonder, then, that educators have argued about whose history appears in the curriculum and how that history is presented. Although this debate did not originate with the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), it has certainly been at the center of a number of the ideological storms that have blown through the organization over the past seventy-five years.

The sometimes uneasy alliance between "history" and "social studies" in NCSS should not be surprising. One of the hallmarks of NCSS has been the amorphousness of its self-definition.[1] It has been, in many ways, an umbrella organization that shelters quite disparate points of view about the nature and purposes of history and the social sciences. Beyond that, however, some of the friction between history education and NCSS is a direct result of the circumstances surrounding the founding of the organization. NCSS was the product of two social phenomena. The first was the move toward professionalism among historians and a concomitant interest in how history was taught in the schools. The sec-

ond was a growing interest among social scientists and social welfare advocates in an integrated field—often called "social studies"—aimed at social improvement and civic responsibility (Saxe 1992).

Roots of Dissension

By the second half of the nineteenth century, history and the social sciences were only hazily defined either as disciplines or professions (Hertzberg 1981; Novick 1988). As historians finally began to define themselves as professionals, they sought to craft a "scientific" discipline supported by "historical method"—reliance on primary sources, testing and weighing evidence—and producing historical narratives that attempted to tell "what really happened." In 1884 they also established the first professional society of historians, the American Historical Association (AHA). Within four years of its founding, AHA issued the first of a series of reports focusing on the place of history in the schools and making specific suggestions for the inclusion of disciplinary history in the curriculum. In doing so, the history profession sought further to clarify its status as disciplinary "gatekeeper" maintaining the separation between professional historians and "educationists" who were necessarily historical amateurs (Lubove 1965; Novick 1988). At the turn of the century, educators seemed to accept both the curricular suggestions and the status separation. Thus, by the time NCSS was founded in 1921, a clear link between the history profession and precollegiate schooling had already been established.

At about the same time that historians were establishing themselves as a separate and scientific discipline, social welfare advocates began arguing for an integrated field whose aim was social betterment (Saxe 1992). The term "social studies" was sometimes linked to this movement, and generally described an integration of such areas as sociology, economics, vocational guidance, and civics. Its aim was to help citizens better understand and solve contemporary problems (Saxe 1992; Lybarger 1991). Social studies conceived in this form did not always exclude history, but it certainly called for history focused on the present—an understanding of the immediate concerns of individuals and communities—rather than disciplinary history for its own sake (Lybarger 1991).

These two social movements converged, to some extent, in the "new history" of the early twentieth century. In 1912, James Harvey Robinson argued for a history that would illumine the present, investigate the conditions of everyday life, and be committed to social progress, social science, and education. His efforts helped pave the way for the inclusion of history in a social studies organization with social welfare aims. By 1916, then, when the report of the Committee on Social Studies appeared, history was generally considered part of the social studies (Tryon 1934; Lybarger 1991).

Certainly there were those who did not see a place for history in social studies, as well as those who saw a place only for history. David Snedden (1924), an educator, argued for history as "a handmaid to the study of the social environment of the child...." In response to similar arguments, Henry Johnson, a historian, argued that a social studies curriculum based on student interests and needs violated the integrity of history as a discipline (Lybarger 1991). Johnson's stance reflected the fear that social studies represented an academic "shortcut" that would bypass disciplinary history. On the other hand, Snedden's emphasis on present needs reflected the social welfare concern with civic education, and to some extent, that of the "new history" as well.

In the midst of these tensions, AHA supported the establishment of NCSS. The two organizations met jointly for some time, sharing responsibility for *The Historical Outlook*, the periodical that became *The Social Studies* and was the principal NCSS membership journal for a brief period until *Social Education* was launched. AHA continued to subsidize *Social Education* in its early years. At the same time, NCSS drew significant strength from the social welfare commitment to civic responsibility. The statement of purpose of the new national council, "education for citizenship through social studies," forthrightly aligned NCSS with the social welfare perspective (Lybarger 1991, 6). As a result, history was generally seen as a component of citizenship education. The explanation of an AHA-sponsored committee on "history inquiry" chaired by Edgar Dawson (secretary of the new National Council for the Social Studies) was that history in the schools had to conform to the test of "civic values" (Hertzberg 1981). From the inception of NCSS, however, there have been disagreements within the social studies and historical professions over how history could best serve its citizenship education function. In the face of changes in historiography, social welfare issues, and educational reforms, the underlying arguments about the aims of history education have nevertheless been amazingly constant.

The Aims of History Education

As noted above, NCSS has been marked by a continuing tension between history as a feature of cross-disciplinary citizenship education and history as a separate discipline "for its own sake." This distinction has been a specious argument, however, as advocates of history for its own sake also make citizenship claims for it. In 1925, Henry Johnson argued that disciplinary history was "the road that really reaches the desired end ... what matters now" (Lybarger 1991, 7). In the 1950s, Arthur Bestor argued that disciplinary history was essential for citizens because it "promoted the perspectives on change which were essential to a changing society" and was a "corrective to the contemporaneity of the social sciences" (Hertzberg 1981, 90).

In general, the argument has not been over citizenship or disciplinary history, but over the aims of history instruction. "History for its own sake" advocates have tended to view history education as a form of cultural transmission, whereas cross-disciplinary advocates more often have advocated a cultural transformation view. In addition, there is an "ownership" conflict between professional historians and those who translate history into curriculum. Bestor, for instance, did not simply argue for disciplinary history; he also railed against "the arrogance of those secondary-school educators who believe that they own the schools and can mold them as they please without regard to the rest of the scientific, intellectual and professional life of the nation" (1953, 11). In the 1960s and 1970s, critics again expressed concern that history education was in disarray, this time lost in a sea of social studies electives and special history courses—often women's history and African American history—rather than in more traditional mainstream courses (e.g., Kirkendall 1975; Gross 1977; Kownslar 1976).

In its most recent incarnation, disciplinary study appears as part of a program of "cultural literacy." Lynn Cheney (1987), for instance, claimed that separate disciplinary history as a form of cultural transmission was necessary for cultural survival.

Other advocates of a separate discipline perspective have claimed that an integrated social studies field does not respect historical scholarship and dilutes both method and content. They hark back to a mythic golden age of education when students shared both a body of historical knowledge and a common historical vocabulary (e.g., Ravitch 1989; Evans 1989; Hertzberg 1981). Still others argue that social studies has failed in its citizenship role, leaving only "knowledge" as the purview of

the field. James Leming (1992), for instance, suggests that social studies concentrate on "[t]he development of an *accurate knowledge of our American history, our traditions* and the social world" (310) (italics mine). As Seixas (1993) notes, cultural transmission approaches such as these essentially are conservative, tending to maintain the status quo. They also tend to hark back to a vision of objective, scientific history that ignores almost a century of historical and social arguments about what constitutes science, objectivity, and history.

Advocates of a cross-disciplinary or integrated social studies model also claim that history should contribute to civic education, but their aim has more often been cultural transformation rather than transmission. Aligned with the social welfare roots of social studies, they tend to point forward to a (perhaps mythic) golden age marked by citizens able to use history both to understand and evaluate current events and to participate in solving social and economic problems. In 1932, "A Charter for the Social Studies" explicitly argued for "ethical" social studies rather than indoctrination. Later, in *The Future of the Social Studies* (1939), James Michener called for a history curriculum with an emphasis on social and economic problems. By the 1940s and early 1950s, there were calls for more local history as a way of interesting youth in the betterment of their local communities. Adherents of this view argued for "history as culture change" (Krug 1970). Particularly in the period since the 1960s, advocates of history as cultural transformation have reconceptualized history to make it more "relevant" to a society experiencing major upheavals. Staughton C. Lynd (1970) described this as "guerrilla history," arguing that history should lead to social action, particularly on behalf of oppressed peoples. Historians could not afford to be the impartial observers of scientific history; historians were obligated to be social activists. A sense of history, according to Lynd, developed when an individual sensed that his or her actions were important and would influence the future of humanity.

From these two positions—history as cultural transmission and history as cultural transformation—flow several other differences in emphasis within NCSS and between NCSS and other groups. To begin with, cultural transmission advocates tend to emphasize the development of narrative history, i.e., the story well told. They argue that history is crucial to a people's sense of identity. Without some common history, a culture as diverse as the United States, for instance, is in danger of fragmentation (cf. Ravitch and Schlesinger 1990). Hence, the national story well told represents both an attempt at historical synthesis and an important way in which culture can be transmitted and preserved.

Cultural transformation, on the other hand, emphasizes analysis—sources well scrutinized—in which the historian or student develops a scholarly skepticism in regard to sources.[2] From this perspective no single narrative, not even the best told story, can possibly be our story as no one model of history can serve all institutions or all students (Robinson and Kirman 1986). Instead, different narratives speak to and against each other. And, as they do so, they interpret the past in light of the present (cf. White 1982). Part of teaching and learning history, then, would be to subject all historical narratives—well told or not—to scrutiny and skepticism.

Furthermore, advocates of cultural transmission tend to emphasize chronological history, while those advocating cultural transformation often suggest organization around themes. The "core curriculum" was one attempt at thematic organization. Some of the Project Social Studies materials of the 1960s represent other efforts. The differences between these perspectives can be seen most recently in the History Standards project. The standards currently are organized chronologically with

a single periodization for U.S. history and another for world history (NCHS 1994). In an early critique of the U.S. standards, the NCSS Task Force on History Standards recommended an organization based on themes and questions rather than chronology. The Task Force argued that themes and questions were a more powerful organizing tool for history instruction, and were more likely to help students make connections between different aspects of history and their own lives.[3]

A final distinction between history for cultural transmission and history for cultural transformation occurs around the issue of teaching history. A cultural transmission model tends to describe history as something one learns (a chronological narrative or body of information) while a cultural transformation model tends to describe history as something one does (historical inquiry). On the one hand, the advocates of cultural transmission ask how students can be expected to conduct historical inquiries if they know little or no history. They also argue that U.S. students, at least, have provided ample evidence that they do not know much history (Ravitch and Finn 1988). On the other hand, cultural transformation advocates suggest that children do not retain much historical data because it has only been presented to them as information to be learned—a finished product—rather than as an ongoing interpretive activity that has relevance to their lives (Seixas 1993; Holt 1990b). In sum, the two positions define historical knowledge quite differently.

What Is Historical Knowledge?

If NCSS had embodied a coherent view of historical knowledge for its entire seventy-five-year history, it would have been completely out of step with the historiography of the same period. History in the twentieth century has been remarkable for its shifts and upheavals. A discipline that began the century searching for truth ends the century in the throes of post-modernist angst, questioning "truth" claims and wondering what constitutes historical knowledge. The dominant narrative of national history with which the century began fractures into multiple, and often contesting, narratives toward its close (Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994; Kessler-Harris 1990; Seixas 1993). Ironically, but probably predictably, the century also ends with the breakup of the historical canon in which NCSS was invited to participate and the creation of a hotly contested new canon—the history "standards."

Against this backdrop, it is particularly challenging to think about what counts as historical knowledge. American historians, over the course of the last seventy-five years, have assumed four major historiographic stances that parallel the debates about history and historical knowledge in NCSS. In the 1920s and 1930s, progressive historians generally subscribed to some version of scientific history: assuming a position of impartiality, identifying "facts" by the rigorous examination of archival and original sources, and developing interpretations that organized and explained the facts. Historical knowledge was derived mainly from the political life of nations but with a progressive emphasis on the struggle between special interests and ordinary people. Historians' interest in social progress did introduce new categories of historical knowledge (the conditions of everyday life, including household living and work practices of women and children), but social history remained on the margins of the mainstream historical narrative until the 1960s.

Political history also remained the dominant feature of the secondary social studies curriculum, although it sometimes appeared in "core" curriculums under the rubric of "culture" or "civilization" (Hertzberg 1981; Michener 1939). In "unit" instruction at the elementary level, features of social history were more

likely to appear. Young children re-created the daily living and work practices of earlier times, for example, in the study of wool from "sheep to shirt," and the reenactment of pioneer and Native American life. Unit instruction made the lives of at least some ordinary people a proper subject of investigation in the elementary classroom.

In the 1940s and 1950s, historians of the "consensus" school rejected the conflict model of the progressives. Instead, they focused on uncovering a broadly shared set of values that, they argued, overrode ethnic and class distinctions. Consensus historians were interested in intellectual history and often described the American intellectual landscape as stultifying rather than conflicted. Nonetheless, intellectual history functioned much as did social history; it elaborated on the mainstream political narrative. Political history also remained the backbone of school history, although some historians, led by Arthur Bestor, accused "educationists" and social studies advocates of ignoring historical knowledge in favor of courses in "life adjustment" and the like. In fact, the only change in what counted as historical knowledge in schools during this period appears to have been a move away from the study of individual European nations and toward world history (Downey 1985; Hertzberg 1981). Despite the fact that little had changed in the status of school history, a bitter conflict arose between some members of NCSS and some historians over a perceived decline in emphasis on history. Underlying the arguments over the amount of history in the schools, however, lay the old debate over the aims of history instruction and the type of history those aims required. The effects of this dispute, among both historians and social studies educators, have persisted. Echoes of the same charges and countercharges continue to be heard in current debates over the place of history in the social studies curriculum.

By the 1960s, social history moved from the margins to center stage of historical scholarship. This period is a fascinating time, both for the history profession and for NCSS. A conflation of factors—strands pulled forward from previous times, the social and political tensions of the 1960s, developments in other social sciences, and available funding—led to a period of intense activity. In a society torn by civil rights, women's rights, and antiwar protests, it was difficult to maintain the illusion that a unified history of progress and consensus was possible. In the face of resurgent populism, it was also hard to maintain that a study of political elites could adequately reflect broad national social and political processes. Instead, the new social historians assumed that society was divided by race, class, gender, and ethnicity, and that traditional historical sources were inadequate for their needs. They turned instead to the French Annales school. These historians concerned themselves with underlying structures that evolved over a long period of time—population shifts, trade patterns, and the like. They studied the lives and habits of ordinary people and searched for the frameworks that shaped the past. In so doing, they used quantitative methods to study local areas in depth. This effort was not unlike methods already in use in the behavioral sciences. In addition, quantitative studies gave the illusion of objectivity that seemed lacking in traditional descriptive history. Joining with their colleagues in the behavioral sciences, then, historians began a search for ordering principles, theories of systematic relations, and the structures of social institutions.

The turn to quantification and the search for structure paralleled developments in social studies education. The new social studies of the 1960s was founded on the search for the structure of the disciplines and the patterns of inquiry that supported the disciplines. In 1966, Edwin (Ted) Fenton, professor of history and co-director of the Social Studies Curriculum

Development Center at Carnegie Institute of Technology, explained how the "new history" and the "new social studies" were related. Fenton described the new history as "the development in the student of certain attitudes and values, the use of a mode of inquiry, and the attainment of knowledge about ... content" (Fenton 1966, 325). He went on to argue that learning "how to discover things for themselves" was crucial to students when "the new scholarly knowledge amassed in the last decade or so probably equals the total that mankind has discovered in the previous centuries of his existence" (326). This emphasis on the structure of history was not without its critics. Mark Krug (1967), for example, began his book *History and the Social Sciences* with a "premise and a hope that there are vast numbers of social studies professors and social studies teachers who have serious doubts about the 'new' social studies" (ix). While he was enthusiastic about students' doing historical inquiry, he was less sanguine about the emphasis on structure, concepts, and generalizations and worried that much that was distinctly historical would be lost in the "new" social studies.

The emphasis on inquiry learning and the structure of history as a discipline broadened the definition of historical knowledge to include the process of doing history. Given this perspective, the transmission of information without attention to process inaccurately represented historical thinking. Teachers were exhorted to help students learn history through the introduction of combinations of primary and secondary sources rather than textbooks, and through the use of such techniques as simulations rather than recitations (cf. Oliver and Shaver 1966).[4] In arguing for the reliance on doing history rather than reading about it, however, educators recognized that teachers also had to know more about both the content and processes of history. Fenton was particularly emphatic about the need for a solid foundation in history for teachers. He suggested that college teaching would have to use the inductive teaching practices designed for the new social studies projects in order to adequately prepare teachers for the new history.

Despite the funds channeled into these history projects and the best hopes of their proponents, the projects had little direct impact on classroom instruction. The textbound cultural transmission model prevailed in most classrooms (Stanley 1985). In another sense, however, the structure of the disciplines movement and the new social history did have an impact on conceptions of historical knowledge. First, the new history shifted individuals and groups who had been on the margins of mainstream history toward the center. In fits and starts, amidst acrimony and resistance, a more inclusive history emerged. Along with articles and presentations at meetings, an NCSS Bulletin, *Teaching American History: New Directions* (Downey 1982), traced some of these developments in the history profession and provided teachers with both bibliographic help and teaching activities to support inclusion of the new history in the classroom. Second, the idea that history had a structure distinct from other disciplines—that history existed "in the world"—was called into question by the ways in which the new social history and the curriculum projects blurred disciplinary boundaries, borrowing method and content from other social sciences. Historians began to reconsider the foundation of their work, including the nature of their discipline, the possibility of objectivity, and the validity of truth claims.

In the last decade and a half, post-modernism has further challenged the way in which many scholars view historical knowledge (e.g., Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994; Kessler-Harris 1990; Seixas 1993). From one post-modernist perspective, history does not exist as a discipline "in the world"; rather, it exists "in the head" as a cultural frame (Geertz

1983). Historical ideas are not objective facts so much as cultural artifacts that have meaning within particular discourse communities (e.g., Bakhtin 1986; Swales 1990; Todorov 1982). Thus, historical knowledge can never be fixed, nor described in terms of "truth." Instead, it is best understood as a constantly evolving creation of historians who operate within a cultural context. The "discipline" of history, then, is subject to an equally evolving set of rules that are tested in dialogue with others in communities of inquiry (Levstik and Pappas 1992). This means that the whole notion of "historical knowledge" becomes problematic. With no ground of truth to stand on, critics argue, only fragmentation and uncertainty can exist (Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 1994; Kessler-Harris 1990).

This view seriously challenges common practice in schools. There, history is still generally conceived of as a body of knowledge objectively determined. On a number of levels, seeing history as objective is a much less threatening idea than seeing it as inherently subjective. How are teachers to negotiate through the land mines of historical subjectivity? How can they know what to teach amid the competing claims of different advocacy groups? Critics worry about how new conceptions of history will play out in classroom settings. They claim that history will be weakened by a "presentism" that serves neither present needs nor historical accuracy. These critics argue against a move away from the goal of objectivity and advocate a curriculum in which history is taught "for its own sake"—whatever that might be. And that, of course, is the problem. It is hard to argue, given the current state of historical discourse, that there is any such thing as "history for its own sake," much less that such a history would not serve some present purpose.

On the other hand, modern social history with its emphasis on multiple and often competing perspectives potentially provides exciting possibilities for social studies curriculum development. As Alice Kessler-Harris (1990) notes, "[F]undamental to social history is a respect for the cultures of different groups and a recognition of the power of diversity... [I]t attempts to understand how a society mediates the competing claims of order and authority, of freedom and rebellion" (178).

From a classroom perspective, this position means that the history of racial and ethnic groups, labor and class history, and gender history fundamentally alter the traditional curriculum. The traditional historical narrative cannot be reformed simply by adding a few women or people of color to the historical portrayal. Instead, "it requires repainting the earlier pictures, because some of what was previously on the canvas was inaccurate and more of it misleading" (Gordon 1990, 186). History instruction, then, might involve studying the creation of a "public culture": how people in other times measured their own lives, how groups and individuals exercise power publicly and privately, how society mediates competing claims between order and protest, and how political and social meanings are transmitted through language (Kessler-Harris 1990). This notion certainly means that the history curriculum is more complex, but not that it disintegrates. Instead, the focus of history instruction shifts from the development of a mainstream narrative to attention to the relationships among groups of people, illuminating their differing conceptions of social reality and the actions that grow out of those conceptions. This perspective provides substantial common ground with social studies educators whose aims are cultural transformation.

As yet, no new consensus appears to be growing out of these differing perspectives. If anything, the rhetoric has heated up in the last decade and a half. In a conservative era, history has been the focus of a neonationalist movement that harks back to the 1950s rather than to the historiography of the last thirty years.[5] The predominant school reform proposals of the period have resurrected Arthur Bestor's rhetoric and limited historical vision, reemphasizing Eurocentric history in the face of an increasingly diverse population, arguing for separate disciplinary studies when the boundaries of the disciplines have long since been breached, and promoting history as a story well told when the whole concept of "story" has been fundamentally altered.

Negotiating the History Landscape

Clearly, NCSS has not been immune to the changes that have buffeted the history profession or from the arguments about the aims of history. Both cultural transmission and cultural transformation aims, for instance, have coexisted in NCSS since its inception. Various individuals hold both perspectives to some degree. In 1982, James Banks, then President of NCSS, wrote that "[e]ducators should strive to attain a delicate balance between educating students to be bearers of a continuous cultural tradition and educating them to be social critics interested in social change" (Banks 1982, x). More recently, James Barth (1994) defined social studies as "the heritage of a nation," but defined that heritage as one requiring citizens who were active decision-makers. To some extent, NCSS has striven to reflect just this balance among often contending perspectives.

Plagued by claims that social studies fails to respect disciplinary scholarship, NCSS has tried to provide social studies educators with regular updates on new scholarship. Beginning in 1934, the organization published a series of bulletins, yearbooks, and articles in which social studies educators and historians commented on current trends and issues in the field. Sometimes these articles were strictly historical, i.e., updates on some aspect of history. Sometimes historians and educators worked in tandem; historians provided an update on the discipline, and educators provided suggestions for teaching (cf. Downey 1982; Hertzberg 1989). In 1982, a group of historians and educators interested in promoting better history education organized the Special Interest Group for History Teachers (SIGHT) within NCSS. SIGHT continues to sponsor history-related sessions at NCSS Annual Meetings, publishes a newsletter for members, and serves as an advocacy group within NCSS.

NCSS has also been represented on several history-related projects, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress U.S. History Assessment in 1988 and 1994, the History Standards project in 1994, and the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools in 1989. In working with some of these groups, NCSS has had to weigh the desire to participate in the dialogue over the place of history in the schools and the impact of final reports that may not represent the thinking of individuals in significant factions within NCSS. This problem has been particularly difficult during the almost simultaneous development of national history standards and social studies standards. While NCSS hopes that its social studies standards will serve as an umbrella for standards developed for separate subject areas, conflict remains between the separate disciplinary aims of some groups and individuals and the cross-disciplinary and citizenship goals of social studies.

In its debates over the place of history in the schools, NCSS has generally supported history advocacy groups and cooperated with history organizations such as AHA and OAH (Organization of American Historians). Interestingly, however, NCSS has devoted little time and attention to one area in which it might have been expected to develop expertise: development of a research base on teaching and learning history. In a 1990 review of research, Downey and Levstik noted that the "research base for teaching and learning histo-

ry is thin and uneven" (400). Brophy (1990), in his analysis of the state of elementary school social studies, came to similar conclusions. Although much speculation has occurred about the development of historical thinking (cf. Hoge and Crump 1988; Laville and Rosenzweig 1982; Egan 1979, 1982), only recently have researchers actually conducted studies of the development of historical thinking with K-12 students. These studies question prior assumptions regarding children's conceptions of historical time and causation (e.g., Barton and Levstik 1994; Downey 1994; Levstik and Barton 1994); historical significance (e.g., Seixas 1994a, 1994b); the effects of particular modes of instruction (e.g., Brophy, VanSledright, and Bredin 1992; Epstein 1994; Gabella 1994; Levstik 1993; Wineburg 1992); historical empathy and perspective taking (Portal 1990; Shemilt 1984); and teacher background (e.g., Evans 1988). Much of this research challenges the "expanding environments" scope and sequence for the elementary school curriculum as well as Piagetian notions of stage constraints on learning (Downey and Levstik 1990; Laville and Rosenzweig 1982). These studies also raise questions about the formulation of "historical thinking" as currently outlined in the proposed national history standards, and about the effectiveness of an emphasis on decontexualized bits of information.

Finally, NCSS has only recently begun to devote time and attention to the special needs of elementary school instruction. The history profession has also tended to concentrate on secondary curriculum. As a result, there are relatively few resources available to help educators think about what a history program might look like at this level. The expanding environments curriculum has long been the de facto national curriculum organization at the elementary level. Although this arrangement has come under increasing attack over the last decade, NCSS has not provided clear alternative curricula.[6] Part of the problem is the link between the expanding environments model and Piagetian developmental theory. Perhaps as new research demonstrates that young children *can* think historically in ways that run counter to Piagetian theories, a more substantive dialogue will develop over whether children *should* study history from the very beginning of their schooling (cf. Thornton 1990).

Conclusions

As I conclude this chapter, I see several possible futures for history education and NCSS. On the one hand, the domination of neoconservative reform measures could continue. History would serve to transmit a narrow band of mainstream culture, maladapted to the needs of a multicultural society. History teaching and assessment would be framed by a "story," supported by masses of information and unconnected to critical thinking, cultural transformation, or civic participation. Alternately, we could have business as usual—the most likely scenario based on the impact of previous reform efforts. History instruction will continue to be textbound, with minor attention to cultural diversity but little active involvement of students in the analysis of historical sources or the development of historical interpretations. Or, we could make common cause with the new social historians and work together toward an educational synthesis centered on the study of the creation of public culture. This view of history, it seems to me, is the one option most likely to meet the citizenship aims of social studies while fully exploiting the disciplinary contributions of history. By focusing on the relationships among groups of people, how they exercise power privately and publicly, and what they do when that power is threatened, we also focus on issues critical to our students' current needs.

It is not enough for us to simply accept historians' views of history. We must enter this endeavor as equal partners with important expertise. We must conduct the careful research necessary in order to understand both the development of historical thinking in young people and the classroom practices that support historical engagement. With a solid body of research, we can better develop the kind of instruction that makes history exciting and worthwhile for young learners and better consider how history contributes to the larger goals of social studies.

Notes

[1] The definition adopted by NCSS in 1993, while declaring that social studies is "an integrated study," whose aim is "civic competence," is still non-specific enough to embrace a wide variety of interpretations and to generate continuing debate about how history and the social sciences further the goal of civic competence.

[2] While it is not possible to adequately address this issue here, I recommend Novick's *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question* and the *American Historical Profession* (1988) and Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob's *Telling the Truth About History* (1994) both of which provide insightful, in-depth and, I think, reasonably balanced discussion of the origins of this difference.

[3] In the rationale presented for the organizing themes and questions for K-12 Social Studies, *NCSS Task Force on History Standards* stakes out a position for history within a cross-disciplinary social studies framework, emphasizing the inquiry aspects of history instruction rather than assuming a single chronological narrative, as follows:

This plan has several strengths to recommend it. First, the use of questions under each theme emphasizes the inquiry aspects of social study, gives teachers some idea of the kinds of questions that might be pursued or adapted, and better represents the kinds of issues that historians and social scientists pursue. Second, these themes are more representative of the integrative nature of history and the social sciences. Third, these themes are applicable to studies of the U. S. and the world, and may encourage students better to see the connections between their own country and the rest of the world.

[4] By 1966, history projects were organized at Education Services, Inc., Amherst, Northwestern, the Newton (Mass.) Public Schools, the Cleveland Center, and Carnegie Institute of Technology. While several of these projects attempted to identify and teach the "structure of history," there was little consensus on what that structure might be. Fenton suggested that the structure of history meant the analytical questions historians put to data. He went on to describe how that process was conducted in "both history and the more rigorous social sciences" (Fenton 1966, 2).

[5] One school system in Florida, for instance, recently mandated that children be taught that the United States is superior to all other countries in the world. While this may be an extreme case of neoconservative nationalism, it is indicative of the fervor of the movement.

[6] The NCSS statement on Early Childhood and Elementary Social Studies does not really address this issue, and while the new NCSS journal, *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, has printed several articles on history for young learners, it hasn't really addressed the expanding horizons curriculum. Instead, that discussion has been largely confined to the NCSS research journal, *Theory and Research in Social Education*, where it is less likely to have an impact on practitioners.

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