

Democracy Denied: Learning To Teach History in Elementary School

By Timothy D. Slekar

Introduction

Although *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) appears to disregard the teaching of social studies, it should not be assumed that teaching and learning in these content areas is of little importance. Prior to NCLB, discussions over social studies and history standards dominated the political and cultural landscapes. The eventual conclusion from the federal government was that the social studies devalued American history (Gibson, 1998; Vinson, 1999).

However, the sharp distinctions between those who advocate citizenship education as patriotism indoctrination (Leming, Ellington, & Porter-Magee, 2003; Hirsch, 1987; Ravitch, 1987; Saxe, 2003) and others who see the possibilities a critical approach to teaching history and social studies has for genuine democratic education (Hursh & Seneway, 1998; Ross, 1998; Segall, 1999; Wade, 1999) still exist.

This article documents how one elementary preservice teacher (Amy) learned to teach history from a patriotic indoctrination approach and how powerful and appealing this approach was, considering Amy's limited knowledge of American history. Also, this article demonstrates how this approach essentially denied Amy any opportunity to learn about the richness of social studies content and the possibilities it provides for genuine democratic discourse. The outcome is a narrative portrait of one

Timothy D. Slekar is an associate professor of social studies education at the Pennsylvania State University, Altoona, Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Democracy Denied

preservice teacher and a cautious analysis of what the outcomes might mean for teacher education researchers concerned with the future of social studies and its commitment to citizenship education. The findings also suggest that we need a deeper understanding of what really goes on in undergraduate social studies methods courses (Slekar, 2006).

Social Studies Methods Courses and History Teaching

The social studies methods course is typically a standard requirement for preservice teachers in elementary certification programs. Pedagogical understanding of the social studies is a foundational goal of this course (Adler, 1991). However, it is not unusual for social studies methods professors to encounter preservice teachers with a rather negative view of the social studies, history in particular (Slekar, 1998). This early apprehension on the preservice teacher's part presents a rather challenging situation. How can a methods course intellectually influence a preservice teacher to consider teaching history as a form of citizenship education to elementary children?

Todd Dinkelman (1999) found that it was possible to encourage critical reflection (central to democratic ideals) in a social studies methods course, but was a bit cautious because of the effort required by the methods professor to guide quality reflection. In addition, Segall (1999) recommends, that, "history/social studies educators must create a pedagogical environment in which the very foundations of history ... are called into question..." (p.371). However, how often does critical reflection and the dismantling of status quo history actually occur in social studies methods courses? Not very often according to Marciano (2001), "Influential educators faithfully support a dominant-elite view [of history] that has fostered an uncritical patriotism ... undermining thoughtful and active citizenship in a democracy" (p.537).

Therefore, in what follows, I provide of vivid picture of what happens when the "ignorant activist" (Leming, Ellington, & Porter-Magee, 2003) is absent and how traditional patriotic history is seen as powerful (usually seen as boring) from a naïve preservice teacher's point of view.

Research Methodology

The following research is drawn from a study that was conducted over the course of an entire year. I use a case study methodology (Stake, 1998) in an attempt to generate a narrative account of a preservice teacher learning to teach traditional American history. The use of more naturalistic inquiry is sometimes more conducive to narrative renderings as pointed out by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and supported by Cornett (1990) and Knowles (1992). However this methodology is not flawless. And generalizations should be approached with caution.

Data generated during the course of this study were semi-structured interviews

(with Amy, the methods professor, the field placement teacher, and the host teacher for student teaching), field observations and notes, collected lesson plans, and classroom materials. A constant and comparative methodology was used while the multiple data sources were triangulated for accuracy. The narrative was given to Amy for verification purposes and she agreed that the narrative was accurate.

The Case of Amy

Amy was a 21-year-old student at the time of this study. She attended a small state school in the Northeast. The school was originally designated as a state normal school with a heavy emphasis on preparing teachers. The school is located in a semi-rural area with little ethnic-racial diversity in the school population. Amy was typical among her classmates. Most of her peers were females and between the ages of 20 and 25. She had grown up in the same area and planned to stay in the area to teach upon graduation.

When I first approached Amy, I explained how I was trying to understand how preservice teachers, like her, learn or understand how they will teach history in elementary classrooms. I explained the process I had developed that would help me understand, and also informed her of the critical role she would play in helping me to make sure that what I thought was going on was a fair interpretation of her experiences. I was looking for a purposive sample (Peshkin, 1993). Amy responded agreeably to participating in the study.

Amy's Apprenticeship of Observation

A key starting point in trying to understand how one learns to teach is by assessing the apprenticeship of observation. In Amy's case, how did her apprenticeship of observation help form the views she has about social studies and history teaching? In this section, I lay out the critical pieces of Amy's apprenticeship of observation in social studies and history and her attitudes about her preparation up to this point for teaching history in elementary school.

Teaching and Learning:

Making Things Fun and Telling Stories, but More Often Boring

Amy's view of social studies and history teachers was characterized by vivid memories of individual episodes of social studies teaching in which her teachers neglected to highlight the importance of why she was learning the subject. One teacher she remembered was very outgoing and as Amy said, "She would really get into it." However, when Amy continued to reflect on this teacher she remarked, "Now that I think about it, I think she got too involved." This teacher's tendency to place a strong emphasis on instructional techniques, Amy thought, had a negative consequence for her development. Suggesting that over-emphasis on technique excluded a focus on meaning. Amy said, "I don't remember the significance of it all." When asked

Democracy Denied

to talk about other teachers Amy also remembered, “some guy who was fun, but I don’t remember what he talked about.” Although her memories were limited, Amy constructed some ideas from these two teachers. Like the teacher she noted above, Amy remembered that two of her other social studies teachers were energetic and outgoing teachers, but the information they were trying to teach also became obscured by the mode of delivery. Amy was left with a memory of social studies teachers trying to make subject matter activities fun, but not really teaching much of substance.

Amy’s memories of social studies teachers also came from the pedagogical models she was exposed to during her apprenticeship of observation. These models of social studies and history teaching emphasized the storyteller style of delivery. Storytellers see history as a drama and attempt to convey this drama to students by conveying the emotions of a time period, and by providing students with opportunities to touch, see, and feel what it was like in the past or is like in other places (see Evans, 1989). One episode that Amy remembered well was in second grade. While learning about different cultures, Amy’s teachers used a team approach. Each of the second-grade classrooms was assigned a country. The teachers brought in and prepared food from each of the countries for the students. Amy remembered, “one teacher’s classroom was Japan and we cooked the food ... The teacher would make the stuff right in front of you.”

Seventh grade for Amy also involved a well-remembered storytelling experience. Specifically, when learning about the colonial era, the use of props helped the teacher to get a point across. Amy noted,

He [the teacher] would talk about people being punished. Because he had the, I don’t know what you call it [stocks]. He had that thing where you had your legs out in front of you and arms and you are sitting like this [Amy demonstrates]. Because if you missed an assignment or something you had to sit in it for the whole class period.

The previous examples were teaching techniques used by Amy’s teachers to bring life to history and make it story-like. According to the research literature, these techniques help the storyteller set a stage on which the drama of history can be played out (Evans, 1989; Brophy & VanSledright, 1997). Amy was quick to note that “the way he taught was like in a storytelling fashion.”

Despite several keen memories of a few isolated teachers who made learning history at least somewhat interesting, most of her social studies and history teachers during her apprenticeship of observation were characterized as didactic. These approaches led Amy to conclude that learning history was a rather “boring” process. In fifth grade, Amy remembered spending much time copying down notes from the blackboard. According to Amy, “that time of year was really boring.” When asked about the origin of the assignments Amy added, “I think from the book. I think we [did] discussion questions in there.” Here she refers to the ubiquitous “end-of-section” questions found in most history textbook series.

Timothy D. Slekar

Interviewer: What was a typical assignment from the book?

Amy: Discussion questions.

Interviewer: You had to do those?

Amy: Yes. In fifth grade.

Interviewer: Tell me how that would work?

Amy: You know, they would assign a chapter or a couple of pages to read and then you'd have to answer the questions on them. Then we would go over the questions, but ... it would happen so fast that you were like, "Okay, did I get the right answer?" Then you would just go to your next class.

It was also in fifth grade that Amy spoke to the nature of tests and added more detail about the types of assignments she had to complete.

Interviewer: What were the tests like?

Amy: Fill in the blank. It was so much fill in the blank ... I couldn't pick out the main idea of why things happened. I can remember having the assignments and stuff, but I don't remember going over them in detail to make sure we grasped the reasons why.

These approaches to history instruction continued into eighth grade. When asked to talk about a typical day in eighth grade history, Amy explained,

I know that everyday when we walked in he would have the ... four chalkboards covered with notes, and we'd be copying them down, and he'd be talking and he would say, "Don't copy those down. Wait until I'm done." But you never had time to copy them down because it was like "Okay, when do you want us to get this." ... It was pretty much a lecture-based class.

Amy recalled her high school history classes much the same way. And again in a college history class, Amy remembered,

It was just like a high school history class ... I had spent so much time doing homework in his class and I did the exact same thing. I just repeated the history of my life. It was, "read this." I would read the chapters and I would highlight and then I would answer the questions. Then I would go back and answer them ... I had the answers but they didn't go to the right questions. I know that sounds really dumb. I just got so confused because it was so many facts for different wars. I don't know. It all ran together in my head.

Memories of some social studies and history teachers and their teaching practices elicited a storytelling view of instruction from Amy. Several teachers she was able to remember used a variety of props for conducting lessons in history. From this, Amy derived a view that good history teachers should make things fun. However, the significance of the ideas raised was jettisoned in the process. This produced a view of history teaching that she summarized

in one word: “boring,” something that if made fun was bearable, but otherwise was to be avoided.

History Subject Matter: Pointless Content

Based on her view of teachers gleaned from her apprenticeship of observation, it was little surprise that Amy thought of history as rather unimportant subject matter. In general, she believed that it seemed rather pointless to study it.

Amy: I could tell you what we did in mathematics class. I can tell you what we did in reading because we did stuff. But history, ... nobody made it seem like it was that important ... They just presented this information to you with no basis for it ... Like it was history and it was in the past, so who cares now.

Also, not only did her teachers help Amy to this view of history subject matter, but textbooks also contributed to this understanding. When asked to talk about her social studies books, Amy said, “They were so wordy about one thing and [they] didn’t make key points stand out to me.”

In addition, Amy’s view of history subject matter was influenced by what Lowenthal (1996) calls “heritage.” Heritage according to Lowenthal is, “not a testable ... account of some past, but a declaration of faith in the past” (p. 121). And, according to others, there is a gap in North America between history, that which historians practice in the discipline, and what history teachers teach as the subject in schools (Seixas, Stearns & Wineburg, 1999). Rather than a lesson in critical historical inquiry that bears on the possibilities for civic engagement, heritage, or what is sometimes called “school history,” is largely a transfer of information with the intention of maintaining a cultural identity (Lowenthal, 1996; Slekar, 2001). Also, largely influenced by an economic-political-military emphasis, the curriculum is dominated by European-American’s exploration and expansion in North America (Levstik, 1995).

It was this type of celebratory “school history” that Amy remembered. Asked about any memories of elementary school history learning Amy said, “It’s coming back to me now ... I remember learning about Native Americans and explorers and like the United States ... I remember that we had to write reports. I did the Aztecs and other Indians. And we did explorers. I think I did, ... I want to say Ponce DeLeon ...” In addition to Amy’s fifth-grade experience, she also remembered an event in eighth grade. During a unit on the Civil War, Amy remembered studying Abraham Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address. In particular Amy remembered a test. This test Amy said, “was fill in the blank ... for the Gettysburg address.” She continued, “It would be written out but there would be a blank here and there and you would have to put the words in.” When asked about the importance of this document or if she had any experience comparing it to other documents, Amy responded, “We never did anything with it. He gave everybody a copy of it and told us what we had to do with it. He said, ‘You need to memorize this.’”

Amy's memories of history subject matter were fragmented. She could only recall isolated events and people. Despite extended experience with the heritage (school history) curriculum, there was little evidence that she formed any type of chronological story of American development. There also was little evidence that she felt any cultural pride in being able to retell the "story of America." However, it was generally the story she remembered, even if only vaguely. As a consequence, Amy actually came to view history subject matter as unimportant. Amy's view was consistent with results of recent research (Downey & Levstik, 1991; Wilson, 1991).

Ready to Teach?

As a result of her experience with history teachers, history subject matter, and how she was asked to learn history, at this point Amy believed she was quite unprepared to teach history well herself. Contrary to some of the research literature that suggests preservice teachers already believe they can teach by virtue of having seen it done since the early grades, when asked directly about whether she had learned enough to teach history in the elementary school, Amy responded by saying, "No! Are you kidding me? No. Definitely not."

As Amy began her last year of college and her final year in formal teacher education, she came to the social studies methods course with an apprenticeship of observation in history teaching influenced heavily by didactic teaching approaches. Her exposure to subject matter was characterized more by "heritage" than history as a medium of engagement. She felt that the subject in particular was boring and her teachers made it seem unimportant. She did not wish to repeat this in her teaching, but wasn't sure about how to do it differently.

Before the Social Studies Methods Course

View of History Teachers and Teaching

Upon entering the social studies methods course, Amy was able to recognize and identify with the sort of history teacher she admired and wanted to become. According to Amy this teacher taught history by making lessons engaging for the students and integrated learning from other subject areas. When asked to illustrate Amy said,

I would hope that I would get the students interested in [history] and not just make it ... I mean I would want them to have fun with it and see what they can find out. Not just what I give to them.

The Social Studies Methods Course Experience

It has been argued that a methods course can have a reasonably important influence on the development of preservice teachers. Much of this often depends on who teaches the course, and how he or she structures it. In this next section, I

Democracy Denied

temporarily shift focus away from Amy and onto the social studies methods course as a way of illustrating how the course looked and how it influenced Amy's development. Following this departure, I again return to Amy's case by describing where she was following the experience.

Amy's social studies methods course revolved around the idea of American heroes and American exceptionalism. She was exposed to E. D. Hirsch (1987) and the Core Knowledge curriculum. Amy got to experiment with Joy Hakim's *A History of US* and read Diane Ravitch's (1987) critique of the social studies.

Amy experienced how to make teaching the past "fun"—the course gave concrete examples such as the use of costumes, music, dramatic play, and "living heritage" in order to convince her of how engaging the American story is. In this sense, her epistemological understandings of history as a subject matter were never questioned (for a detailed rendering of the methods course see Slekar, 2006).

Amy's Reaction to the Course

What did the methods course mean to Amy? To address this question I draw on comments Amy offered during several informal interviews conducted across the semester. For the sake of space I highlight only the core knowledge component. Midway through the Core Knowledge component of the course, I asked Amy to talk about what she thought she was learning. Amy responded,

Okay, we are basically learning: everybody that talks about [Core Knowledge] says that it's a sequenced curriculum that's laid out. It's trying to teach kids in such a way that they won't have repeated information throughout their course of going to school. And that kids are getting more hands-on activities. It's gearing away from testing kids through multiple choice tests and stuff like that. It is more [about] seeing what content they are learning.

Amy appeared to grasp most of the basic ideas presented by the Core Knowledge component. When asked about her personal reactions to Core Knowledge, Amy said, "I like it. I think it is a good idea." After making this statement, I pressed Amy to identify why she thought it was a good idea. Amy stated that,

Because it is more meaningful to kids. It's not like, okay open your books to such and such page and answer these questions ... I think it is more meaningful to kids and they learn more ... [T]hey retain the knowledge a lot better because they are being interactive. That's how I see it, as an interactive way to learn.

Amy stressed the idea of children interacting in the classroom. According to Amy, this sort of interaction made learning history better. Amy thought that Core Knowledge provided a favorable medium for that interaction. Amy believed that the Core Knowledge curriculum, in effect, framed the content and stimulated interactive pedagogy, minimizing, however, the role teachers' own views of subject matter influence teaching strategies. How was it that Amy saw the Core knowledge list as engaging, as the source of providing interesting, interactive activities for students?

Most likely, her methods professor's portrayal of Core Knowledge and his "heroes" approach led Amy to this conclusion.

Later, Amy discussed the relationship between her own personal experiences and what she thought of her methods professor's message. Amy commented on the prospect of being taught with the Core Knowledge curriculum and a "heroes" approach during her elementary school years.

Amy: Yeah, [I would like to have been taught that way], because I like doing projects and working with other people... [and] I do better on projects than I do on tests. It's because you show whoever [sic] is grading you, that you understand by doing something ... I think core knowledge gives you more of a chance to show what you know.

Amy demonstrates here how she was constructing her own beliefs about Core Knowledge. Since she would rather have been evaluated like she states, she saw Core Knowledge and the "hero" approach as a way to achieve it.

Since Amy believed that her methods professor assumed elementary teachers should be using Core Knowledge, I asked her if she thought she would be able to use the Core Knowledge curriculum?

Amy: It's up to me. I am the one in the classroom teaching the information. It is up to me to bring in the extra stuff and give the kids the benefit. I mean he [gives us] all of these great ideas, and from seeing the Core Knowledge video and reading about it, it gives me ideas.

Here, Amy provides some evidence of appropriating the course's message. She said that it was up to her to "give" her children Core Knowledge for their benefit. This was part of the methods professor's strategy. He presented a case for how Core Knowledge would benefit children. At this point, Amy appears to accept this view. Also, Amy suggests that she accepts the role of a knowledge conveyor when she explains that it was up to her to "give" the curriculum to her students.

Amy's Methods Block Internship

As part of the last four weeks of the social studies methods course, Amy was placed in a local elementary school practicum for a brief internship. The internship was designed to provide Amy with experience observing a practicing teacher. During these observations, Amy was supposed to pay attention to specific aspects of classroom discourse that would refer back to her learning experiences from the various methods courses. In addition to observing, Amy was required to spend some time teaching students. However, this was left to the discretion of the internship mentor teacher.

Amy's mentor was Ms. Chase. Ms. Chase was a White female in her early 30s. She taught fourth grade in a semi-rural, geographically agricultural elementary school. Chase had been an elementary school teacher for seven years. Her first two

Democracy Denied

years were spent as a second-grade teacher. After that, Chase had spent the past five years teaching fourth grade.

The last part of the day was reserved for science or social studies. Depending on the district curriculum guide, Chase would teach one or the other. However, during Amy's internship, social studies was taught only twice. Chase later said to me that she "probably [didn't] teach it [social studies] enough." I asked her if she thought Amy might get a chance to teach social studies. Chase said she could probably "work something out." Later I got an opportunity to observe Amy and Chase teach the second half of a lesson on European explorers.

The lesson was an activity designed to enrich the fourth graders' previous encounter with the early explorers of the Americas. Teaching European explorers was new to Chase. This was the first time European explorers were to be taught by the fourth-grade teachers in the district. This was due to a change in the fourth-grade curriculum. Upon recommendations from the fifth-grade teachers, fourth-grade teachers were asked to take the explorers section of American history, so as to create more time during the school year for the fifth-grade teachers to cover material in greater depth.

Chase had orally read about European explorers to the class the day before the lesson she and Amy co-taught. Chase began the lesson I observed with a quick review in the form of questions and answers. The review required the students to recall names of explorers and areas of exploration. Chase concluded the five-minute review by introducing the "explorers cube." The explorer's cube was an enrichment activity. Each student had to construct a paper cube. The students had to pick an explorer and design each side of the cube with information or pictures about their explorer. Chase explained how to finish the cube and then gave permission to begin. The students worked in groups of three. Each student finished two cubes and attached each cube to a string. Then each group attached their finished cubes to a clothes hanger and created an "Explorer Mobile."

The students had the remaining 20 minutes to physically work on completing their "Explorer Mobiles." During the 20-minute work session, both Chase and Amy helped the students glue the cubes together. Amy's role was limited to assisting students with the gluing task. This was Amy's only active exposure to history teaching and learning during her four-week internship. Chase's approach was generally aligned with both the heritage approach and the hands-on activity Amy had studied about in the methods course.

Student Teaching

After completing the methods course and the short internship, Amy began her last semester student teaching in Redline Elementary School located just outside the University Township. Because of her minor in Early Childhood Education, she spent the first seven weeks at Redline and the last seven weeks in a pre-school practicum. Redline served an agricultural community and housed kindergarten

through fifth grade. Amy's cooperating teacher, Mrs. Hanna, had been teaching for 12 years. All 12 years she had taught second grade in the same school.

Hanna and Amy Teaching a Johnny Appleseed Lesson

As the third week of Amy's student teaching began, she called to inform me of a lesson I would want to see. I entered the classroom, Amy was finishing a spelling test with the class and Hanna was in the back of the room preparing for the Johnny Appleseed lesson. When Amy finished the spelling test, Hanna asked the class to come to the back of the room and sit on the carpet in the reading area.

As the students came to the reading area, they sat in a disorganized semicircle facing Hanna who was seated in a rocking chair holding a picture book and a basket of apples. She asked the class to look at the easel to see if they recognized the chart displayed. One of the students exclaimed that it was "some kind of chart with apples on it." She acknowledged the student and then pulled an apple from her basket. "Does anyone see an apple on the chart that looks like this one," Hanna asked while holding up a reddish green apple. One of the students frantically called out that she could. Hanna gave the student permission to come to the chart and "point to the apple that looked like the one [she had] pulled from the basket." The student came forward and pointed, while she continued by asking the students if anyone could read the words next to the apple on the chart. One student shouted out, "Johnny Appleseed apple." After being corrected for shouting out, Hanna affirmed his answer and said, "Yes, this is a Johnny Appleseed apple.

The students were then asked to follow along as Hanna read the poem out loud. The poem was set to the harmony of BINGO and went as follows:

Johnny Chapman had a seed and apple was its name – O
A-P-P-L-E
A-P-P-L-E
A-P-P-L-E
And apple was its name –O
Johnny's seed became a tree and apple was its name –O
Repeat Chorus
Good fruit grew upon the tree and apple was its name –O
Repeat Chorus

Once Hanna was confident that the students knew the words, she had the whole class sing along. The students appeared to enjoy this. Upon completing the song, Hanna and Amy took the class for a bathroom and water break.

As the students returned from their break, Hanna again asked the students to go to the reading area and sit down. The students proceeded to the reading area and Amy took charge of getting the students settled. With the students' attention, Amy looked quizzically around the room and announced, "I think we have a visitor." Through the front door came a barefoot Hanna wearing a pot on her head and an old ruff sack on her back. The class laughed out loud. Amy waited for the class to settle

Democracy Denied

down and then asked, "Does anyone know who this is?" A little blond boy shouted, "Mrs. Hanna! And she looks funny." Amy tried to ignore this comment and called on a little girl sitting in the front. "It's Johnny Appleseed," the little girl responded. Amy touched the girl on the shoulder and at the same time told her, "Yes, thank you. This is Johnny Appleseed and he is here today to read you a story about his life." Amy turned to Hanna and said, "Mr. Appleseed, I think they are ready for you."

Hanna thanked Amy and moved to the reading area and sat in the rocking chair facing the students. She started by asking the class if they knew why she wore a pot on her head, and why she had a ruff sack and no shoes. Some of the students shouted out answers such as: "To keep the rain off your head." "Your shoes are in your sack." "You have seeds in the sack." Hanna settled the class, then said, "I heard one of you say, 'I wear this pot to keep the rain off my head.' Well, it does do that but that's not the only reason I wear it." She continued by telling her students that since she is always walking across the country, she needed to keep what she carries to the bare minimum. "So the pot is my hat and I use it to cook in when I camp out for the night." Hanna continued,

You will also notice that I have no shoes ... That is because of how far I walk. My shoes wear out so it is easier to just go barefoot. And I heard one of you say that I have apple seeds in my sack. You're right. I need a big sack to carry all the seeds. How many seeds do you think it takes to be able to plant apple trees all over the U. S.?

A voice from the back exclaimed, "A thousand thousands." "No way more like a million millions," another voice rang out. Hanna interrupted and said, "You are both right. It took a lot of seeds to plant apple trees all over the U. S. I never counted all the seeds but let's just say it was more than I could count." This type of exchange took place for about five more minutes. After completing the question-and-answer period, Hanna pulled a picture book from her sack. "This is a book about my life. I am going to read it to you, and then after I'm done, Ms. Amy is going to do a fun activity with you." Hanna read the book and the students listened attentively, appearing to be mesmerized by the tale.

When the story was complete, Hanna (still playing Johnny Appleseed) said goodbye to the class. Amy stepped in and asked the students if they enjoyed their visit from Johnny Appleseed. The children responded with affirmative clichés. "OK, now I need your attention so we can do the fun activity," Amy instructed. "When you go back to your seats, each of you have three slices of different apples. I want you taste all three and then pick the one you think tastes best. Then I want you to pick the one you think taste the worst." As the students left the reading area, Hanna was back in the room wearing her regular clothes and helped get the class back in their seats.

Amy proceeded by giving instructions to the class on how they were going to make the apple graph. As Amy pointed to the first apple cutout, she asked the students to, "raise your hands if you thought the yellow apple was the best." Eight

students raised their hands and Amy asked them to come up to see Hanna. She handed each of the students a yellow apple cut out with a piece of tape on the back. Each student came to the large chart in the front of the room and stuck their apple in the yellow column. The same procedure was used to complete the red column and then the green column. Once the chart was filled with all of the different apples, Amy asked the class, "So what color apple does the class like the best?"

Amy summed up the lesson and then Hanna took over by telling the class, "We need to thank Ms. Amy for doing this fun activity with us." The students in a disjointed unison responded, "Thank you." It was now time for the class to go to music so Amy and I discussed the activity she had conducted.

Interviewer: Why did you choose the pictograph activity?

Amy: I told you before that I think when you can integrate history into the other subjects, students will enjoy it more and learn. I mean, I wish my teachers would have integrated it with other stuff. Maybe then I might know something today.

Interviewer: How much did you know about Johnny Appleseed before Mrs. Hanna told you about this lesson.

Amy: See, actually that's funny because I actually knew all the stuff she went over today ... I remember the story of Johnny Appleseed ... I'm not sure [from where], but I must have learned about him ... maybe in elementary school.

This appeared to be a positive experience for Amy. The lesson, content, and approach aligned with what she had learned in her methods course, just as the explorer cube had, and Amy thought that the students benefited from it. This content was rooted in heritage and the activity was interesting and engaging for the children. The children were required to participate and then were involved in a mathematics activity that Amy integrated into the Johnny Appleseed lesson.

The Columbus Day Lesson

Amy participated in one other activity that had a history component. On Columbus Day, Hanna and Amy designed a lesson that was to teach students about Christopher Columbus and his voyage to America. The content was rooted in heritage as it was designed to reinforce the traditional Eurocentric story of the "discovery" of America. The primary activity the children participated in was a staged skit of the Christopher Columbus story. Some of the students participated as actors, while others watched as their peers acted out the story. Hanna and Amy helped direct the children through three acts. The first act had Christopher Columbus asking the King and Queen of Spain for money. The second act involved the voyage, complete with an angry crew because they thought they were lost. Finally, the third act featured Columbus on the beach of the New World greeting "friendly Indians."

Discussion

Even though a main goal of teaching history/social studies is citizenship education and an understanding of democracy, according to Marciano (2001),

Despite claims that civic literacy is crucial to education and democracy, patriotic ... propaganda ha[s] dominated history lessons in our schools. Such education leaves students unable to make reasoned judgments on ... public policies." (p. 537)

In the case of Amy, the above statement appears to be true. Amy's year prepared her to want to teach a Eurocentric view of American exceptionalism. She learned how to make it "fun." However, the opportunity to introduce the idea of using history as a medium for teaching about participatory democracy was never presented. The content itself (history) remained an objective study of the facts with a twist—dress it up and make it fun! This alone is troubling in light of what Segall (1999) remarked concerning objective history,

Behind the façade of objectivity, truth, realism, and immediate correspondence one currently finds in many history classrooms lies a whole world of creativity ... History—a process of inscription rather than description—the emerging literature in critical history has shown us, is active, not passive. Hence its study requires ... action, not passivity, blind acceptance, and retention. (p.371)

Many studies call for history curricula to be revised to take into consideration the essential epistemological distinction between the view of the past presented by "heritage" keepers and that advocated by historical inquirers (Seixas, 1993; VanSledright, 2000). Amy's professional year experience, while potentially powerful, offered her only one way to think about the past—a way, "of not seeing and imagining" the possible pedagogical environments that are conducive to active citizenship and participatory democracy (Segall, 1999).

Also, if preservice teachers like Amy are to become agents of democratic discourse, they will need to reconsider their roles as cultural transmitters. Considering the evidence suggesting the loss of the elementary social studies curriculum as a result of NCLB, they will need to become integral to the reform movements needed to restore meaningful social studies and history in elementary classrooms.

Conclusion

Ross (1998) observed that, "teaching for citizenship democracy involves much more than fervent study of historical and related social scientific information" (p. 307). However, teaching about American exceptionalism appears to be a rather easy and somewhat enjoyable endeavor. Contrary to the "contrarians" (Leming, Ellington, & Shug, 2006), teacher education need not require more history. Rather, it would seem from the case of Amy, that empowering blind patriotism simply requires taking advantage of intellectually naïve students. Remember, prior to her

professional year, Amy thought of history as “pointless and boring.” And it is here in this quote where Amy and preservice students like her should confuse the issue of demanding more history content for preservice teachers.

Why would the “contrarians” want preservice teachers to spend more time with content most elementary preservice teachers find rather useless? In fact, if you’re making a case for creating teachers that indoctrinate their future students in only apple pie, the contrarians should celebrate the likes of Amy. She may not know a lot about history, but she’s empowered to teach it. And the “it” she plans to teach is troubling: because “it” denies children the opportunity to explore what democracy means and to participate in citizenship activities.

References

- Adler, S. A. (1991). The education of social studies teachers. In J. P. Shaver (Ed.), *Handbook of research on social studies teaching and learning* (pp. 210-221). New York: Macmillan.
- Brophy, J., & VanSledright, B. (1997). *Teaching and learning history in elementary schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Cornett, J. W. (1990). Teacher thinking about curriculum and instruction: A case study of a secondary social studies teacher. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 28*(3), 248-273.
- Dinkelman, T. (1999). Critical reflection in a social studies methods seminar. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 27*(3), 329-357.
- Downey, M. T., & Levstik, L. S. (1991). Teaching and learning history. In J. P. Shaver (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching and learning social studies* (pp. 400-410). New York: Macmillan.
- Evans, R. W. (1989). Teacher conceptions of history. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 27*(3), 210-240.
- Gibson, R. (1998). History on trial in the heart of darkness. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 26*(4), 549-564.
- Hirsch, E. D. (1987). *Cultural literacy: What every American needs to know*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Hursh, D., & Seneway, A. (1998). Living, not practicing, democracy at school. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 26*(2), 258- 262.
- Knowles, J. G. (1992). Models for understanding pre-service and beginning teachers’ biographies: Illustrations from case studies. In I. F. Goodson (Ed.), *Studying teachers’ lives* (pp. 99-152) New York: Teachers College Press.
- Leming, J. S., Ellington, L., & Schug, M. (2006). The state of the social studies: A national random survey of elementary and middle school social studies teachers. *Social Education, 70*(5), 322-326.
- Leming, J., Ellington, L., & Porter-Magee, K. (2003). *Where did the social studies go wrong?* New York: Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.
- Levstik, L. S. (1995). Narrative constructions: Cultural frames for history. *The Social Studies, 86*, 113-116.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Lowenthal, D. (1996). *Possessed by the past: The heritage crusade and the spoils of history*.

Democracy Denied

- New York: Free Press.
- Marciano, J. (2001). Civic illiteracy and education: The battle for the hearts and minds of American Youth. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 29(3), 532-540.
- Peshkin, A. (1993). The goodness of qualitative research. *Educational Researcher*, 22(2), 24-30.
- Ravitch, D. (1987). Tot sociology: What happened to history in the grade schools. *The Key Reporter*, 53(1), 1-4.
- Ross, E. W. (1998). Educating and organizing for a democratic society. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 26(3), 306-309.
- Segall, A. (1999). Critical history: Implications for history/social studies education. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 27(3), 358-374.
- Seixas, P. (1993). Parallel crisis: history and the social studies curriculum in the USA. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 25, 235-250.
- Seixas, P., Stearns, P., & Wineburg, S. (1999). History, memory, research, and the schools: A report on the Pittsburgh Conference. *American Historical Association Newsletter*, 37(3).
- Saxe, D. (2003). Patriotism versus multiculturalism in times of war. *Social Education*, 67(2), 107-109.
- Slekar, T. D. (2006). Preaching history in a social studies methods course: A portrait of practice. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 34(2), 241-258..
- Slekar, T. D. (2001, Fall). Disciplinary history versus curricular heritage: Epistemological battle. *Journal of Thought*, 36, 63-70.
- Slekar, T. D. (1998). Epistemological entanglements: Preservice elementary school teachers' "apprenticeship of observation" and the teaching of history. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 26(4), 485-508.
- VanSledright, B. A. (2000). Historical study, the heritage curriculum, and educational research. *Issues in Education*, 4(2), 1-7.
- Vinson, K. D. (1999). National curriculum standards and social studies education: Dewey, Freire, Foucault, and the construction of a radical critique. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 27(3), 296-328.
- Wade, R. C. (1999). Voice and choice in a university seminar: The struggle to teach democratically. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 27(1), 70-92.
- Wilson, S. (1991). Parades of facts, stories of the past: What do novice history teachers need to know? In M. M. Kennedy (Ed.), *Teaching academic subjects to diverse learners* (pp. 99-116). New York: Teachers College Press.