



Doing Democracy

Striving for Political Literacy
and Social Justice

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INTRODUCTION: SCANNING DEMOCRACY

*Darren E. Lund and Paul R. Carr**Democracy as More than Elections*

A book about democracy that does not focus on elections? Could there be democracy without elections? Without political parties? Without the vociferously intense strain of the media spotlight, advertisements, and staged encounters with the candidates? Without all of the infrastructure that maintains the commonly accepted notion of legitimate, representative democracy via the electoral process?

The starting point for this book is that the democratic experience does, and must, surpass the obsession with the electoral politics that pervade the public psyche. We maintain that, for democracy to be meaningful and tangible, it must be connected to education as well as social justice (Chomsky, 2003; Dewey, 1964; Portelli & Solomon, 2001). A democracy that does not discourage (or is ambivalent about) racism, sexism, homophobia, homelessness, poverty, religious/linguistic/ethnic discrimination, and the torment of macro- and micro-level legislation or government policies that further marginalize individuals and groups must be taken to task (Banks et al., 2005). In other words, apart from the all-consuming electoral periods—which seem to stretch virtually from one election to the next—and which, inevitably, consume precious resources while diverting attention from serious problems, there need to be broad entry points in which average citizens can partake in the democratic experience (Demaine, 2004).

Paulo Freire (1973), in his seminal *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, addresses the political nature of education and emphasizes the core elements of power and inequitable power relations that constitute a force in conceptualizing political literacy and transformational change in education. Although it may not be promoted on the nightly news or in mainstream media sources, students, workers, citizens, groups, associations, and myriad other groupings

in society can, and must, engage themselves, to varying degrees, in politics, attempting to have their voices heard, to change society, and to present alternatives that may not be readily recognized as standard, “textbook” democracy. Through their collective efforts, which may not be synchronized with the formal, elite-centered democratic notion of freedom and equality, people are able to effect some measure of change in their lives. The passive acceptance of majority rule from above can also have the effect of constraining and pacifying the public. Since the lens of formal democracy is often focused on formal structures and events, it is questionable how education is, and should be, immersed in shaping the political, economic, and cultural life of society, especially in relation to democratic participation and engagement (Portelli & Solomon, 2001).

From our vantage point, elections constitute but a small part of democracy. For many, elections are about limited numbers of people, often elites with well-connected and sophisticated political machines, jockeying for power, submerged in what many consider to be questionable campaign practices, often cavorting with select special interests that support causes that effectively go against the interests of those without influence. Clearly, media coverage of candidates and parties, which is arguably extremely limited, biased, and programmed, is inadequate in relation to nourishing public debate (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Democracy is about more than two sides of a coin, interlocked in a dual of talking heads, each aiming to denigrate the position of the other. While elections certainly have a place in democracy, this book challenges the commonly held assumption that they are the most fundamental part of the equation (Carr, 2007). We do, however, recognize that one of the driving concerns behind contemporary discussions about democracy in education, or democratic education, is hinged on the comparatively lower voter participation rates of young people in elections (Cook, 2004; Patterson, 2003), which raises questions about formal political engagement (Galston, 2003).

Framing the Focus of the Book

We approach this project with the firm belief that democracy needs to be cultivated, critiqued, demonstrated, and manifested throughout the

educational experience (Dewey, 1964; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Our concern is principally with how we actually *do*, or *should do*, democracy in education. Do we know how to *do* democracy, how to talk about it, how to engage with it, and how to accept, as Schugurensky (2000) has argued, that it is more of a work in progress than a fixed object that we have achieved? Is democracy merely something that is isolated to a singular course or discipline, often bottled up within social studies or civics? Following Parker (2003), we argue that democracy needs to be infused in everything that happens at school, from the curriculum to the extracurricular activities, through the formal organization and structures, including interaction with parents and communities and also comprising the infinite number of issues that blend into the realms of decision making, participation, and shaping the identity, culture, and outcomes of the educational experience. At the theoretical level, Gandin and Apple (2005) have hypothesized that, building on the work of Barber (1984), there are *thick* and *thin* notions of democracy, and teaching about and for the latter generally avoids doing critical work and engagement destined to reinforce democracy. Our interpretation of democracy in education seeks to embrace the *thicker* elements of sociopolitical democratic engagement, participation, and educational experience.

Our project related to how to *do* democracy in education overlaps with the work of Kurth-Schai and Green (2006) who, in their book *Re-envisioning Education and Democracy*, present several pivotal questions:

- Given the importance afforded throughout our history to foundational concepts of “education” and “democracy,” why does the gap between our aspirations and our achievement persist?
- Given the dimensions and dynamics of contemporary social and educational concerns, what, beyond rational problem solving, is necessary?
- Given the prevailing philosophic and pragmatic commitments to individualism, what is the meaning and purpose of social learning?
- Given the costs and consequences of failure, how can we responsibly risk innovation in an increasingly dangerous world?

Kurth-Schai and Green (2006) suggest that reenvisioning democracy involves a multitude of forces, considerations, creative forays, and ethical and aesthetic processes, which, together—given our insistence that democracy is an amalgam of factors, processes, structures, and phenomena, rendering it a philosophy, a culture, a way of thinking and living, and a political system that is flexible and responsive to the needs of a diverse society—point to a more complex, nuanced version of how students need to relate to their own implication, participation, and engagement with the society that they form (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002).

The context for interrogating democracy in education is, as Shapiro (2005) effectively points out, the crisis-like situation characterizing schools in the United States and elsewhere:

Issues such as the growing administrative control over teachers' lives, allegations about mediocrity of American schools, the crisis of funding, concern about what is called educational *excellence*, the impoverishment of increasing numbers of children and adolescents, the influence of the media on young lives, fears about moral degeneration, school violence, bitter contention over the nature of the curriculum and of school knowledge, and widening disparities in educational achievement among ethnic and racial groups must all be seen, at the same time, as both critical issues in American education and as metaphors for the larger human and societal situation. (p. ix)

When universal concerns, including the environment, racism, AIDS, war and military conflict, migration, and inequitable power relations in general, are added to the dynamic context characterizing pluralistic societies, it is easy to see how democracy, democratic values, and the democratic experience are as vulnerable as they are contested (Paehlke, 2003).

It is necessary to *do* democracy in education because to do otherwise will, ultimately, lead to apolitical, hyperpatriotic societies with only a limited understanding of what is becoming increasingly a multicultural citizenry (Kymlicka, 1995).

Democratic habits and values must be taught and communicated through life of our society, our legal institutions, our press, our religious life, our private associations, and the many other agencies that allow citizens to interact with each other and to

have a sense of efficiency. The best protection for a democratic society is well-educated citizens. (Ravitch & Viteritti, 2001, p. 28)

Patrick (2003) argues that successful democratic education must include several interconnected components:

Effective education for citizenship in a democracy dynamically connects the four components of civic knowledge, cognitive civic skills, participatory civic skills, and civic dispositions. Effective teaching and learning of civic knowledge, for example, require that it be connected to civic skills and dispositions of various kinds of activities. Elevation of one component over the other—for example, civic knowledge over skills or vice-versa—is a pedagogical flaw that impedes civic learning. Thus, teachers should combine core content and the processes by which students develop skills and dispositions. (p. 3)

Similarly, Laguardia and Pearl (2005) identify seven themes or attributes of a democratic classroom: “(1) persuasive and negotiable leadership; (2) inclusiveness; (3) knowledge made universally available and organized for important problem solving; (4) inalienable student and teacher rights; (5) universal participation in decisions that affect one’s life; (6) the development of optimum learning conditions; and (7) equal encouragement” (p. 9).

Parker (2003), one of the leading scholars in the area of democratic education, further fleshes out the conceptualization of democratic education:

First, democratic education is not a neutral project, but one that tries to predispose citizens to principled reasoning and just ways of being with one another. Second, educators need simultaneously to engage in multicultural education and citizenship education.... Third, the diversity that schools contain makes extraordinarily fertile soil for democratic education.... Fourth, this dialogue plays an essential and vital role in democratic education, moral development, and public policy.... Fifth, the access/inclusion problem that we (still) face today is one of extending democratic education to students who are not typically afforded it. (pp. xvi–xvii)

Parker (2003) elaborates on the seamless nature of citizenship, democracy, and diversity, and how teaching democracy must be synchronized with many of the same issues that are enmeshed in multicultural education. This interpretation of democracy is strongly aligned with the work of Dewey who believed in the notion of democratic education as enabling people to live

together and also as a vehicle to resolve social problems (Simpson, Jackson, & Aycock, 2005).

Teaching, Learning, and Democracy

The fundamental core of democratic education at the classroom level is the teacher, which invariably places certain responsibilities on teacher education programs (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005). Teacher educators have encountered numerous challenges in inculcating democratic values in the curriculum and practical experiences. Simpson et al. (2005) illustrate how the teacher can play multiple roles in cultivating, nurturing, and engaging in what they call the “art of teaching,” which can reinforce the democratic experience for students.

Carr (2006) has found that many teacher education students and teachers focus the majority of their attention on the electoral process in relation to their notion of teaching about democracy and, moreover, that most of the teacher education students and teachers in his study had only a limited democratic education experience while they were in elementary and secondary school. In particular, Carr (2007) emphasizes the following findings in his research (Figure 1):

Figure 1 – Carr’s research and overview of literature in democratic education

1. A critical appreciation and analysis of democracy as a philosophy, ethos, political system, and cultural phenomenon is only thinly articulated by participants. There is little commentary on critical thinking, politics as a way of life, power sharing, decision-making processes, the role of the media, alternative systems, and social responsibility (Gandin & Apple, 2005).
2. Almost all of the participants focus on elections as the pivotal underpinning to democracy. Almost all participants—although extremely supportive of democracy in the US—are dissatisfied with a number of aspects associated with democracy (i.e., elections, issues raised, elected officials) (Patterson, 2003).
3. US democracy is often considered to be a model, far preferable to what exists in other systems/countries. However, there does not appear to be a strong understanding of what democracy looks like elsewhere (Holm & Farber, 2002).

4. The study reveals an excessive emphasis on presidential politics when talking about democracy, eclipsing local, regional and international issues.
5. There is extreme reticence about “politics” being part of education, with many participants mentioning a concern about “indoctrination” (Sears & Hughes, 2006).
6. Civic engagement is understood in very narrow terms, concentrated within a specific class/course or associated with elections (Galston, 2003).
7. The connection between education and democracy is a nebulous one, with many participants questioning the foundation of such a linkage (McLaren, 2007).
8. The critical area of social justice, especially in relation to race and poverty, is not fully supported as an integral part of the teaching about/for democracy (Portelli & Solomon, 2001).
9. The study underscored significant differences between African-American and White participants in relation to the place and significance of social justice in education (Carr & Lund, 2007).

Therefore, preparing those who will be teaching diverse students one day is a fundamental part of ensuring that democracy is cultivated in education (Simpson et al., 2005). Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, and Campbell (2005) have documented the limited understanding and engagement of White preservice teachers in relation to social justice, which underpins the need for a greater focus on White power and privilege in education at the policy, institutional, curriculum, and training levels (Carr & Lund, 2007). Further, as Lund (1998) has argued, creative ways must be found to engage all students in the struggle for social justice in schools, as a way of nurturing the kind of engaged and critical forms of democracy that can attend to equity concerns. Preparing the future teachers of these students to be open to engaging the next generation in new forms of activism has proven to be rewarding work, with tremendous potential for progressive social change (Lund, 2005).

The Impact of Neoliberalism on Democratic Education

As Osborne (2001), Karumanchery and Portelli (2005), and McLaren (2007) have argued, the notion of democracy cannot be disconnected from

capitalism and neoliberalism. Hill (2003) has warned of the pervasive nature of neoliberalism in forcing a corporate, business agenda into the curriculum, the educational policy development and decision-making processes, and the myriad areas that shape the educational experience. The result is a mild, somewhat superficial, and *thin* exposure to critical democracy and engagement, especially in relation to social justice.

The neoliberal model of education involves a range of free-market principles—rationalization and cost cutting, declining investments, a limited selection of curricular options, privatization, the specter of school choice—the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in the United States is the best example—and a general assault on teachers in relation to effectiveness and efficiency levels (Carr, 2007; Hill, 2003; Torres, 2005). Similarly, a major focus of neoliberal education is the unwavering devotion to standardized testing, standards, and (supposed) accountability, all of which isolate and diminish the place of democracy and social justice in education (Sleeter, 2007).

The multiple tentacles masked in a foray of supposed prosperity, economic growth, freedom, and independence that are so skillfully articulated within the neoliberal discourse serve to undermine meaningful debate and engagement on democracy. With our focus on *doing* democracy in education, with specific attention paid to social justice, McLaren's (2007) analysis provides some context for the debate:

Neo-liberal democracy, performing under the banner of diversity yet actually in the hidden service of capital accumulation, often reconfirms the racist stereotypes already prescribed by Euro-American national myths of supremacy—stereotypes that one would think democracy is ostensibly committed to challenge. In the pluralizing move to become a society of diverse voices, neo-liberal democracy has often succumbed to a recolonization of multiculturalism by failing to challenge ideological assumptions surrounding difference that are installed in its current anti-affirmative action and welfare “reform” initiatives. (p. 268)

Our inquiry is, therefore, biased toward a more active, and activist, role for educators and others involved in education in order to fully embrace the notion of critical engagement. As Freire (1973/2005) has suggested, education is a political enterprise, so it would, therefore, be necessary to

understand, interrogate, and act upon political matters. Students are much more than the “empty vessels” of Freire’s banking education critique, needing to be filled with knowledge; they need to be engaged with how power works (Delpit, 1996), as well as being positioned to challenge, reshape, and transform society (McLaren, 2007). As Westheimer (2006) has pointed out, this academic vacuum in which democracy and social justice can be quickly replaced with the suffocating scent of patriotism serves to homogenize thinking and dampen the plurality of opinion and experience that is required for a highly heterogeneous society, such as those that exist in North America and Europe.

Sleeter (2007) summarizes some of the confusion around how democracy is considered within the educational context, emphasizing that “where one stands on the relationship among individual rights, group claims and cultural identities, and shared common interest has implications for the extent to which one will view standardization of schooling and school curricula as a just and democratic means of promoting excellence for everyone” (p. 5). Sleeter (2007) also raises the significant concern of the “relationship between democracy as a governance structure and capitalism as an economic structure” (p. 5). Linking these issues has implications for educators and decision makers who can shape the texture and shape of democracy in education through their own understanding and experience with democracy. Here, the question of whether educators can *do* democracy if they do not have a belief in the importance of formalizing democratic education and experiences through critical engagement and the interrogation of controversial issues is pivotal (Carr, 2006).

Measuring Democracy in Education

Diamond and Morlino (2005) illustrate how difficult and problematic it is to assess the quality of democracy, introducing a range of concepts as measures and indicators, including the usual components related to voting, political parties, and alternative sources of media as well as an emphasis on procedure, content, and results. They continue to identify eight “dimensions on which democracies vary in quality”: five procedural dimensions, including “the rule of law, participation, competition, and accountability,

both vertical and horizontal”; two dimensions that are substantive in nature: respect for civil and political freedoms and the progressive implementation of greater political (and underlying it, social and economic) equality”; and the “last dimension, responsiveness, links the procedural dimensions to the substantive ones by measuring the extent to which public policies (including laws, institutions, and expenditures) correspond to citizen demands and preferences, as aggregated through the political process” (p. xii).

It is our contention that education must be a factor in assessing democracy, in how it is constructed, shaped, and lived, and, importantly, how it facilitates or restricts participation in the evolving processes that Diamond and Morlino (2005) present above. This book aims to highlight the multifaceted ways that democracy can be achieved in and through education, with particular emphasis on political literacy and social justice. In sum, it is important here to interrogate how education strives to achieve a nuanced, critical understanding of, and engagement with, democracy.

Banks et al. (2005), in their analysis of *Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens*, have compiled a checklist to frame effectively the discussion around teaching for, and about, democracy (Figure 2).

It is clear that, based on the comprehensive synthesis provided by Banks et al. (2005), democracy in education reposes on a strong theoretical, conceptual, and applied engagement with diversity, which is supported by the seminal antiracism work of George Dei (1996), James Banks (2008), Christine Sleeter (2007), Sonia Nieto (1999), and others. The above checklist also responds effectively to many of the findings in Torney-Purta’s (Torney-Purta, Schwille, & Amadeo, 1999; Torney-Purta & Richardson, 2002) groundbreaking studies related to measuring civic attitudes internationally. This comparative work has demonstrated not only the need for greater political literacy and engagement in, and through, education but also, at the methodological level, the need for more research and the establishment of measures to determine and assess how and what students are learning about civic and citizenship education. We hope that this book will constructively add to the resources and thinking around how democracy should be conceptualized, cultivated, and applied within the educational context. One

obvious shortcoming in the flood of neoliberal education reforms is the absence of a clear, critical focus on democratic education that includes attention to social justice, with the requisite resources being made available.

Democratic Education and Political Literacy

One of our central concerns within this book pertains to the notion of, and focus on, political literacy in education. Do schools aim for political literacy (Davies & Hogarth, 2004)? Do they formally and informally cultivate political literacy? Is there a place for political literacy within an educational

Figure 2 – Checklist for teaching for, and about, democracy

<p><i>Principles</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are students taught about the complex relationships between unity and diversity in their local communities, the nation, and the world? 2. Do students learn about the ways in which people in their community, nation, and region are increasingly interdependent with other people around the world and are connected to the economic, political, cultural, environmental, and technological changes taking place across the planet? 3. Does the teaching of human rights underpin citizenship education courses and programs? 4. Are students taught knowledge about democracy and democratic institutions and provided opportunities to practice democracy? <p><i>Concepts</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Democracy</i>: Do students develop a deep understanding of the meaning of democracy and what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society? 2. <i>Diversity</i>: Is the diversity of cultures and groups within all multicultural societies explicitly recognized in the formal and informal curriculum? 3. <i>Globalization</i>: Do students develop an understanding of globalization that encompasses its history, the multiple dimensions and sites of globalization, as well as the complex outcomes of globalization?

4. *Sustainable Development*: Is the need for sustainable development an explicit part of the curriculum?
5. *Empire, Imperialism, and Power*: Are students grappling with how relationships among nations can be more democratic and equitable by discussing the concepts of imperialism and power?
6. *Prejudice, Discrimination, and Racism*: Does the curriculum help students to understand the nature of prejudice, discrimination, and racism, and how they operate at interpersonal, intergroup, and institutional levels?
7. *Migration*: Do students understand the history and the forces that cause the movement of people?
8. *Identity/Diversity*: Does the curriculum nurture an understanding of the multiplicity, fluidity, and contextuality of identity?
9. *Multiple Perspectives*: Are students exposed to a range of perspectives on varying issues?
10. *Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism*: Do students develop a rich and complex understanding of patriotism and cosmopolitanism?

milieu that has been submerged in the hazy clouds of neoliberalism (Schugurensky, 2000)? If we are not teaching about and for political literacy, what then is the mission of the school (Parker, 2003)? Is it to foster the skills and knowledge to prepare students for the world of work? Does it flow over to attitudes and behaviors so that students can live in harmony within a pluralistic society (Provenzo, 2005)? Are teachers trained, prepared, and able to be engaged in such a process (Fenimore-Smith, 2004)? Do curriculum policy documents nurture this order of thinking? What is inherently *critical* about the educational experience? Is the mantra of critical thinking embedded in the notion of schools being potential sites of transformational change, or is it simply loaded jargon to appease those who clamor for a more holistic educational experience?

As noted by Freire (2004), who crystallizes the notion of a socially just, politically literate society, in elaborating the conditions for a more decent society, democracy involves negotiating the limits of authority and freedom:

I am convinced that no education intending to be at the service of the beauty of the human presence in the world, at the service of seriousness and ethical rigor, of justice, of firmness of character, of respect for differences—no education intending to be engaged in the struggle for realizing the dream of solidarity—can fulfill itself in the absence of the dramatic relationship between authority and freedom. It is a tense and dramatic relationship in which both authority and freedom, while fully living out their limits and possibilities, learn, almost without respite, to take responsibility for themselves as authority and freedom. It is by living lucidly the tense relationship between authority and freedom that one discovers the two need not necessarily be in mutual antagonism. It is from the starting point of this learning that both authority and freedom become committed, within educational practice, to the democratic dream of an authority zealous in its limits interacting with a freedom equally diligent of its limits and possibilities. (p. 9)

Likewise, Giroux (1988) argues for “critical literacy as a precondition for self- and social-empowerment” and dissects the way that traditional forms of literacy, especially when imbued within the web of neoliberalism, serve to further marginalize the marginalized. He maintains that “the language of literacy is almost exclusively linked to popular forms of liberal and right-wing discourse that reduce it to either a functional perspective tied to narrowly coerced economic interests or to a logic designed to initiate the poor, the underprivileged, and minorities into the ideology of a unitary, dominant cultural tradition” (p. 61). Ultimately, in order to become engaged in democracy, there must be political literacy, the absence of which would make the prospect of meaningful social justice in society less likely.

Other authors have also emphasized the strong need for political literacy to enhance social justice. Tarcov (1996), for example, situates democratic education within the framework of popular political participation:

To think clearly about democratic education, we must reconsider the meaning and the goodness of democracy. It is sometimes said, and even believed, that democracy is the ultimate political criterion, good, or aspiration, and that all political evils should be attributed to the absence of full democracy and their cure sought in more democracy. That view is usually accompanied by an understanding of democracy that insists on the maximum of immediate and unlimited popular rule and the exclusion of any elements of other forms of government. Such a view sees democratic education as directed toward the propagation and actualization of such an understanding of democracy. (p. 1)

Davies and Hogarth (2004) argue that political literacy must be resituated as the focal point of citizenship education. Their vision of political literacy surpasses the “compound of knowledge, skills and procedural values” to also include “such areas as respect for truth and reasoning and toleration as opposed to substantive values which could mean that pupils would be told what to think about particular issues” (p. 182). They reject previous political literacy models, such as the “civics” model centered on “factual knowledge and a didactic teaching methodology” as the *modus operandi* (p. 182), and the “big issues” model in which adversarial political debates take place in class. For this latter approach, there is concern that issues will only be examined at a superficial level without serious follow up. Rather, they favor the “public discourse model,” which “seeks to induct pupils into the language, concepts, forms of arguments and skills required to think and talk about life from a political point of view, emphasizing both process and product. Factual knowledge is important but is made subservient to other aspects that are centrally important to political literacy” (p. 183).

The Interplay, Symmetry, and Compatibility between Democracy and Citizenship

There has long been a robust debate, in both the public and academic domains, on the role that citizenship education can or should play in the fostering of democratic ideals. For example, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service (2005), effective citizenship education should prepare young people in three areas:

- Civic literacy—Fundamental knowledge of history and government, political and community organizations, and public affairs; skills for making informed judgments, engaging in democratic deliberation and decision making, influencing the political process, and organizing within a community.
- Civic virtues—Values, beliefs, and attitudes needed for constructive engagement in the political system and community affairs, such as tolerance, social trust, and a sense of responsibility for others.

- Civically-engaged behaviors—Habits of participating and contributing to civic and public life through voting, staying politically informed, and engaging in community service.

In a related vein, Santora (2006) examined why cooperative learning often failed to promote democratic behavior among culturally diverse students and found that students reacted to knowledge provided by the teacher in multiple ways, including finding avenues to dispute or complement such knowledge with that acquired in/from their families, the environment, and the media. Her study demonstrates how power, as it affects knowledge construction, is locally reproduced or reconstituted through classroom interaction.

The analysis above reflects Delpit's (1996) work on how minorities are systemically excluded from the decision-making process in the classroom, as well as in the broader society, through myriad processes that codify the implicit and explicit ways that power works. Within this context, we might ask the following questions: Why is there exclusion, who defines it, how do we measure it, and what can be done to remedy it? What are the implications of sustained marginalization? What formal and informal processes are in place to effectively bring together and to ensure constructive engagement between peoples from different races, social classes, ethnicities, religions, etc.? What is the responsibility of those who have access to power and decision making?

Gilmour (2006) raises a fundamental issue when considering the salience of citizenship education:

Citizenship education has the potential to open up new and controversial areas of debate and, within the critical whole-school approach, can advance anti-racist developments. In Britain, however, the dominant tradition has been for citizenship education that reinforces the status quo by binding students to a superficial and sanitized version of pluralism that is long on duties and responsibilities, but short on popular struggles against race inequality. (p. 99)

In her work on citizenship and service learning, Waggener (2006) elaborates on this dichotomy between the political and social components of citizenship, and concludes that "more attention must be given to service learning projects that teach about the structure of governments and encourage

students to engage in political action” (p. 4). Simon (2001) complements this research by effectively elucidating the dilemma of constructing meaningful democracy and citizenship:

To be a citizen is not just to hold a legal status in relation to a particular nation state; rather it is to possess the capacities, and have access to the opportunities, to participate with others in the determination of one’s society. This means being able to take into account the inter-related character of culture, politics, and economics. If we want people to be citizens, not subjects (i.e., those to whom economics, politics, and schooling simply happen), we will need to have young people think critically and be able to participate in society so as to transform inequities that impede full participation in democratic life. (p. 12)

Portelli and Solomon (2001) further tease out the:

common elements such as critical thinking, dialogue and discussion, tolerance, free and reasoned choices, and public participation ... which are associated with equity, community, creativity, and taking difference seriously ... [a] conception [that] is contrasted with the notion of democracy that is minimalist, protectionist, and marginalist and hence promotes a narrow notion of individualism and spectacular citizenship. (p. 17)

Westheimer and Kahne (2003) have cogently argued that the emphasis on patriotism and community service in the post–September 11 era may effectively diminish the level and intensity of democracy in society, and may even be antidemocratic. They point to the formal, governmental push for volunteerism and charity as a potential lever that, despite creating the impression that society is becoming more democratic, does not achieve bona fide critical civic engagement. Friedland and Morimoto (2005), in their study of volunteerism, found that for “middle- and upper-middle-class high school students ‘resume-padding’ is one of the motivating factors driving the increase in volunteering,” and it is “shaped by the perception that voluntary and civic activity is necessary to get into college; and the better the college (or, more precisely, the higher the perception of the college in the status system) the more volunteerism students believed was necessary” (p. 1). Therefore, as illustrated by Westheimer and Kahne (2004), there must be an

authentic (and political) ring to the conceptualization and implementation of service learning for it to have any value for the students.

The absence of democratic citizenship (or rather the presence of an extremely nuanced approach to it) is evident when considering that only three U.S. states have specific standards for civic education, although almost half of them have addressed at least some components of civic education in their social studies curricula and standards (RMC Research Corporation, 2005, p. 7). Similarly, Galston (2003) has found that there is only limited civic knowledge among American students:

The National Assessment of Educational Progress Civics Assessment has revealed major deficiencies in the overall results: For fourth-, eighth-, and (most relevant for our purposes) 12th-graders, about three-fourths were below the level of proficiency. Thirty-five percent of high school seniors tested below basic, indicating near-total civic ignorance. Another 39% were at the basic level, demonstrating less than the working knowledge that citizens need. (pp. 31–32)

O’Toole, Marsh, and Jones (2003) have found, despite the contention to the contrary, that young people are not apathetic, nor are they disinterested in politics, but they are discouraged from participating because of the way the current system seems to present issues; interestingly, they note that “politics is something that is done to them, not something they can influence,” and “inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity and age are crucial features of the lives of our respondents: they are not variables, they are lived experiences” (p. 359). In sum, the present neoliberal configuration of educational curricula, standards, expectations, and testing concurrently has a tendency to isolate political literacy and places a premium on a type of learning that can disenfranchise many students.

Synthesizing a Vision for the Book

Understanding and being able to participate in society in a critically engaged manner should not be a sidebar item on the educational agenda. Without question, students need to master certain skills and knowledge, they need to become literate in certain areas, and they also need to learn certain basic notions about society. However, as cultural capital (Delpit, 1996) plays a

significant role in shaping the education experience of students, there is also the concern as to how educators understand difference and identity in doing democracy in education (McLaren, 2007). Missing out on focusing on validating and transcending boundaries, barriers and (lived) experiences can serve to further entrench injustice, inequity and antidemocratic thinking, values, and manifestations (Banks et al., 2005; Dei, Karumanchery, & Karumanchery-Luik, 2004; Parker, 2003).

Our contention that democracy is an ethos, an ideology, a set of values, a philosophy, a contested terrain of action and debate, and a complex, problematic, dynamic framework and terrain in which diverse forces, interests, and experiences intersect to develop relations and relationships that continue to evolve is the central theme binding the contents of this book. No singular or simplistic definitions of democracy exist, nor do we attempt to view democratic education in a *thin*, rigid manner (Shapiro & Purpel, 2005). Clearly, our interpretation includes, and focuses on, social justice and also involves an openly political commitment to advancing equity, the essence of democracy. We challenge those who hold that there is only one type of democracy, or that democracy is a unique political system, or that democracy is principally consumed with elections.

We are concerned that if we do not *do* democracy in education there will be clear and obvious consequences for society as a result. Is there a connection between a high degree of political literacy and a lower level of patriotism, for example, or at least a more critical vantage point concerning monumental decisions that lock societies into generations of ill-will and decline because of weak engagement and understanding of politics? Are people less likely to be manipulated if they have higher levels of political literacy? Would people likely be more critical of the media, and of democracy for that matter, if they were more fully engaged in the critiquing, experiencing, and fostering of democracy in schools? The contributors to this book collectively seek to answer affirmatively that education can and must be a vehicle for advancing a more critical engagement in democracy, one that effectively advances social justice and political literacy for the good of all citizens.

Overview of the Book

Although there is a range of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological approaches adopted and advocated by the contributors to this book, they all follow the same thread of articulating a version and vision of democracy in education. An explicit attempt to offer a critical assessment of democracy forms the cornerstone of this volume. Similarly, all of the contributors have sought to underscore the importance of social justice in their analysis of democracy in education. The theme of *doing* democracy is, therefore, illustrated through diverse strands and examples, coalescing around a framework of teaching and learning that encourages critical thinking and engagement. Each chapter concludes with five questions for further reflection that can help facilitate dialogue on the applicability of various conceptualizations of democracy in diverse education systems.

The first section of the book frames the notion of democracy and democratic education, and includes five chapters. Dave Hill, from Great Britain, has the first chapter, in which he argues for a new type of education in/on democracy, one that resists neoliberal global capitalism. In elaborating a framework that critically analyzes the political and ideological orientation of neoliberalism, Hill points out how it has become increasingly difficult and problematic to integrate social justice into the formal curriculum and educational experience. He also provides evidence of the “growth of undemocratic (un)accountability,” which has served to further drive a wedge between the social classes while reinforcing racism and marginalization. Hill concludes with three potential arenas of resistance: within the education and media apparatuses; working outside of the classroom; and mass action as part of a broader movement for economic and social justice.

Michael O’Sullivan, from Canada, continues the discussion with a critique of critical pedagogies and global citizenship education in the era of globalization, interrogating the meaning of democracy in education as well as its positioning within the school experience. Underpinning his analysis with Dewey’s (at the time) revolutionary notion of education being the lever for collective, participatory, and emancipatory action, O’Sullivan stresses how much neoliberalism is a “dominant anti-democratic ideology” and proposes a framework for introducing ideas, concepts, and experiences aimed at critical

democratic work through, and under the auspices of, global citizenship education, which can be found in the formal curriculum. He is rightly concerned with the numerous obstacles and barriers limiting critical pedagogical work in schools and advocates for a more systemic approach to raising issues and building support, especially in the area of preservice teaching.

Jennifer Tupper, from Canada, interrogates citizenship and democracy in education, seeking to examine the implications for disrupting universal values. She questions the essentialist notions of universal citizenship that are infused into what students learn in, and through, formal education. In elaborating on the concept of “commonsense,” Tupper challenges the beliefs/stories of those in power or who have privilege in society, which are considered “cultural truths” and are simply seen to “just make sense”; she writes, “the uncritical acceptance of commonsense (embodied in curriculum) shifts down possible alternative visions for what society might look like by consistently reifying a dominant vision.” By using critical race and feminist theory as a means to deconstruct commonsense, Tupper argues for a broader, more critical and meaningful place for democracy in education, especially in teacher education programs where teachers need to become engaged with social justice and democracy in authentic ways.

The next chapter, by Ali Sammel and Gregory Martin, from Australia, is entitled “‘Other-ed’ pedagogy: The praxis of critical democratic education,” and builds on some of the themes identified by Hill, namely the application of neoliberal reforms in education, especially the impact at the classroom level. Sammel and Martin focus on notions of White privilege among teachers, and draw conclusions, based on their study in Australia, that have implications for teaching and learning in relation to democracy. Their analysis focuses on the social construction of the role of the teacher within the context of the prevailing standards movement, which can constrain the quest for democratic debate and action. Interrogating Whiteness, especially when the vast majority of teachers in developed countries are White, is a necessary step in deconstructing how social justice can be advanced in classrooms.

Rounding out this section is a chapter by Reinaldo Matias Fleuri, from Brazil, who discusses the notion of rebelliousness in relation to democracy and raises important concerns about the role of power within the educational context. Using a conceptual framework based on the work of Michel Foucault to understand discipline and transgressive behaviors, Fleuri also builds on the work of Paul Freire and C  lestin Freinet to help explain the pedagogical context and experience as well as the potential for democratic experience. He introduces how discipline is structured in a school context in which exams are used as an arbiter of progress, which involve sanctioning and surveillance from above. Fleuri then presents the notion of resistance and rebelliousness to discipline in an attempt to analyze the impact and relationships that are created, and which ultimately affect the texture of, and potential for, democracy in education.

The second section of the book, entitled "Reflections on democratic dissonance and dissidence," contains five chapters that present alternative perspectives for democratic education. From an Aboriginal point of view, Jason M. C. Price, from Canada, has the lead chapter, and writes about "Educators' conceptions of democracy," underscoring "educators' understanding of democracy [that] influences their pedagogical and curricular decisions, and ... [how] the daily life of teachers is culturally, economically, environmentally and politically meaningful." He identifies four interconnected and interdependent core qualities of democracy in education (voice; critical thinking, reflection, and action; community, cooperation, and consensus; and nondiscrimination and nonoppression), explored in conjunction with the backdrop of Red Democracy. Price concludes by stating that "rather than equating democracy with process-related practices (votes, political parties and elite representation), the educators [in his study] emphasized the core qualities of democracy as being related to values, attitudes, approaches to decision making and the importance of generalized, empowered and active discursive participation by all community members."

Alexandra Fidyk, a Canadian teaching at an American university, writes a chapter entitled "Democracy and difference in education: Interconnectedness, identity, and social justice pedagogy." Fidyk emphasizes that "attending responsibly to democracy and difference in education requires

a shift (ontologically) in the way we perceive, interpret, and respond to events.” In what might seem to be an atypical approach to understanding democracy, Fidyk relies on a conceptual framework incorporating “Buddhist and Jungian thought, Vedic philosophy, and quantum physics ... to offer an integrative perspective of our deep interconnectedness as an alternative to the subject.” She explores how heightened consciousness and love can be translated into meaningful action in the classroom. Fidyk’s approach to democratic education calls for an intensive process of conscientization, one that may lead to the peaceful resolution of numerous conflicts that occur in pluralistic societies.

Lisa Karen Taylor, from Canada, discusses “Beyond ‘open-mindedness’: Cultivating critical, reflexive approaches to democratic dialogue” and illustrates how students can become engaged through critical pedagogy. Her starting point reflects one of the major premises of this book: “Within Liberal and neo-liberal conceptions of democratic societies, therefore, citizens are imagined as either unfettered by difference (being of dominant, unmarked gender, class, ethnoracial affiliation, ability, etc.) or as needing to overcome and set aside their difference from normative dominant identities through presumed neutral, universal forms of reasoning.” Through classroom activities with preservice teachers, Taylor unravels some of the anxiety, mystery, and reticence about heteronormative values and, importantly, how students can start to critically deconstruct and act through reflective dialogue aimed at enhancing democracy.

Alireza Asgharzadeh, a Canadian of Iranian origin, presents a chapter entitled “Secular humanism and education: Re-imagining democratic possibilities in a Middle Eastern context.” He raises a number of pivotal questions about how problematic it is to achieve democratic education in contexts that reject secular humanism. Asgharzadeh emphasizes that “schools can play a major role to this end by educating young people to be open-minded, to think critically, and to respect universal values, such as human rights, peace, difference and diversity.” Tackling the issue of fundamentalist thinking raises a number of related questions about normative values and power relations, thus extending the study and existence of democracy. The debate over religion in education is not restricted to the Middle East but, as is

increasingly evident, there are numerous manifestations, proposals, and conflicts over the place of religion within the curriculum, in school conduct codes, and the institutional culture of education in diverse contexts across the globe.

The last chapter in this section is by Glenda Tibe Bonifacio, a Canadian of Filipino origin, who writes about “Doing democracy and feminism in the classroom: Challenging hegemonic practices.” After having examined the salience of race, language, and religion in relation to the potential for democratic education, this chapter shines a light on how gender is an integral part of how we understand democracy and social justice. Arguing that “teaching feminism in the classroom is inherently doing democracy” and, moreover, that it “constructively builds on citizenship practice, and grounds democratic values and processes in education,” Bonifacio argues that identity is an indispensable component to any interrogation of the value of democracy. In discussing how feminist education has the potential to be transformative, Bonifacio outlines various strategies for promoting feminist approaches that overlap basic concepts comprised in democratic education.

The third section of the book presents four case studies that further raise questions about how to understand and *do* democracy in education. Njoke Nathani Wane, a Canadian of Ghanaian origin, leads off with a chapter dealing with primary education for girls in Kenya and stresses the impact of colonialism in shaping the present context, something that is a significant factor in influencing the education of hundreds of millions of students in developing countries. In elaborating on the notion of democracy, Wane explores the salience of indigenous African education, highlighting the barriers for the education of girls. In repositioning democracy from the typical North American vantage point, Wane concludes by arguing that “there is a powerful correlation between low enrolment, poor retention and unsatisfactory learning outcomes, and this requires nothing less than the integration of gender, class, regional and outcomes into the design and implementation of relevant inter-sector policies and strategies.”

Sarah E. Barrett and Martina Nieswandt, of Canadian and German origin, respectively, and who both teach in Canada, explore the role of science education in fostering democracy. They critically assess the potential for

science educators to be engaged in teaching and learning, emphasizing social justice, ethical responsibility, the implications for scientific research, and the possibility of empowering students. They raise pivotal questions about how teachers should approach controversial issues, such as global warming, nuclear weapons, nuclear power, and the exploitation of nonreusable resources including oil. Barrett and Nieswandt conclude by suggesting that teachers need to explore cognitive, activist, and critical approaches to teaching science education in their teacher education programs, with the objective of assisting them to be able to more effectively support a democratic education for their students.

Mary Frances Agnello and Thomas A. Lucey, from the United States, explore the notion of critical economic literacy, which is compatible with political literacy. As was the case with Barrett's and Nieswandt's chapter, this one makes the case for a more democratic and multicultural approach to teaching economics, arguing that an uncritical pedagogy reinforces hegemonic forces that do not serve the interests of society. Here, again, the curriculum and, especially, teacher preparation and engagement are considered key. Agnello and Lucey emphasize how the propensity for testing has limited the scope and critical nature of economics in schools. They also point out that the array of standards blanketing education in the United States does not adequately address the study of economics, which further diminishes the possibility for meaningful and contextualized learning in the field. Last, they provide evidence of only an extremely limited reference to social class issues in history, geography, and economics textbooks used in U.S. schools.

Karim A. Remtulla, from Canada, discusses the pedagogical paradoxes of online activism, highlighting the potential for social justice through electronic networks and technology. Underscoring how the integration of electronic media has created a "digital divide," and is far from being neutral in nature, Remtulla elucidates some of the issues for democracy in the classroom related to critical pedagogy and civic engagement. He introduces various angles of the problematic, including the implications for race, gender, and subjectivity, as well as for citizenship, community development, and participation. This chapter further fleshes out the concern for how we

actually *do* democracy in education, with a particular emphasis on ethical responsibilities for those in schools in relation to the Internet.

The fourth section addresses teaching about and for democracy, starting with a chapter by Suzanne Vincent and Jacques Désautels, from Quebec, Canada, entitled “Teaching and learning democracy in education: Articulating democratic citizenship in/through the curriculum.” They clearly situate the role of the school within contemporary education: “the School’s work of ‘providing an education’ can be considered to be a sociopolitical project or agenda in that it evinces the intentions underlying not only a given society’s preferred model of development but also the type of citizen that this same society aspires to produce.” Vincent and Désautels then proceed to diagnose critically the role of citizenship education within the framework of the broader mission of the school. They conclude with an analysis on the importance of addressing the hierarchy of the subject-disciplines in education, intertwined with the role of power in diminishing the impact of education on diverse groups in society, particularly if the school is not attuned to the need to achieve greater conscientization among the students.

Patrick Solomon and Beverly-Jean Daniel, from Canada, focus on the challenges of democratic engagement while reporting on a study of preservice teachers during their field-based experiences. Distinguishing between theorized and actualized democracy they find that the former affects the latter; teacher “candidates’ theoretical notions of democratic education provide them with an effective lens for critiquing educational practices within varied contexts, including their teacher education program, their practicum school, and community placements.” Solomon and Daniel make a strong case for a more explicit pedagogy and experience in the preservice teaching program in relation to democracy, including taking advantage of antidemocratic predispositions and actions in students’ field-based sites. The theme of approaching political issues from a politically sensitive vantage point is clearly framed by these writers.

Georg Lind, from Germany, writes about “Teaching students to speak up and to listen to others: Fostering moral-democratic competencies,” emphasizing the importance of cultivating skills, comportments, and experiences to be able to discuss issues with a view to resolving conflicts

peacefully. Building on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and Jurgen Habermas, Lind stresses that “to be effective, democratic competencies must be rooted in an unconscious cognitive structure.” He further elaborates on three strategies or principles for ensuring that effective discussion takes place in school—the constructivist principle of learning, the principle of maintaining an optimal level of arousal through alternating phases of support and challenge, and the principle of mutual respect and free moral discourse in the classroom—which makes the task of engaging students in democracy attainable as well as meaningful.

Heidi Huse, from the United States, tackles the issue of fostering democratic literacy, arguing that apathy, combined with a reluctance to *do* democracy in education, has imperiled the political debate and prospects for critical engagement at several levels. Huse starts with an overview of how little university students, in general, know about democracy and social justice, all the while stressing that they seem to be intoning, according to the title of her text, “Don’t teach me what I don’t want to know.” She emphasizes how student resistance to democratic literacy is twofold, encompassing simple disinterest and outright hostility, and she presents strategies to engage students in writing and thinking about democracy. As is the case in several other chapters, Huse argues for more creative teaching approaches and a more explicitly democratic curriculum as a means to help encourage democratic engagement among students.

Shazia Shujah, from Canada, elaborates on “A pedagogy for social justice: Critical teaching that goes against the grain,” making the case for social justice in a multicultural society, such as Canada, and also exploring what *doing* democracy in schools looks like. Situating the analysis on the curriculum in Ontario, Shujah advocates for a more thorough examination of lived identities in order to develop critical democratic literacy, especially since the formal requirements laid out by the government are largely silent on the issue of engaged citizenship. While highlighting the role of educators in the process of democratizing education, she states that democratic education “must commence with premise that race, class, gender, sexuality, ablism—among other social markers—are all factors that continue to influence education.” Thus, as is echoed throughout this book, Shujah concludes with a

call for a *thick* or broader conceptualization of democracy, one that incorporates and validates multiples voices and lived experience.

Each of the provocative and insightful chapters in this volume concludes with a set of questions for consideration by readers; we hope these add richly to this volume's use in classrooms and to its contribution to the ongoing debates and discussions around what kind of democracy we want, and how we might best use educational settings and institutions to bring it about. Far from providing a straightforward roadmap on this journey toward social justice, we have gathered these original contributions from leading and emerging scholars from around the globe to serve you as a helpful guide along your own path. As editors, we are in admiration of the dedication to excellence and the creative and thoughtful research and reasoning of these amazing colleagues.

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