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Social Class: The Forgotten Identity Marker in Social Studies Education

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Abstract
This paper describes a study that took place from 2002-2004 in which I critically examined the discourses pertaining to social class in two sources: first, the state-sanctioned social studies curriculum used in British Columbia high schools from the first version published in 1941 to the 1997 version; second, interview transcripts with ten social studies department head teachers in Vancouver British Columbia that focussed specifically on working-class issues in social studies. The ideologies that emanated out of modernity—liberalism, socialism and conservatism—form the basis of the analysis. The evolution of the BC social studies curriculum has undergone an ideological shift in terms of social class represented from conservatism to liberalism. References to social class have almost completely disappeared. The majority of the teacher discourse about class incorporated ideas from both conservatism and liberalism. There were some occasional remarks that demonstrated a radical influence on the thinking and teaching of a few teachers. The most important conclusion is that there is a clear mirroring of the political ideology underlying the formal curriculum with the attitudes of the teachers: issues of social class were almost completely absent from both data sources. Some suggestions for social studies teachers to address this are offered.

Key Words: ideology critique, discourse analysis, social class, social studies curriculum, teacher education

> In North America, discussions of social class are considered to be in questionable taste, indeed are surrounded by formidable taboos. It is less outre to converse graphically about kinky sex than to suggest that social classes exist, or that their existence has important consequences.
> James Laxer, *The Undeclared War* (1998:32)

A prevailing assumption in our time is that class awareness is a thing of the past, that anyone who engages with it is either misguided, revels in mischief-making, or mistakenly blames others for their own ineptitude or low station in life. Indeed, the meritocratic notion that anyone can make it through hard work seems to be as deeply embedded in North American consciousness as the Christian idea that there is a beautiful afterlife for those who simply grin and bear their lot in *this* life. Yet, there are several extremely important reasons to discuss social class in both the Canadian and American contexts today.

Child poverty is greatly increasing at the same time that provincial governments across Canada are reducing funding for public education (Maynes and Foster 2000:56). Free trade deals like NAFTA are lowering the wages, job security and working conditions for vast numbers of the working class in both Canada and the United States (Laxer 1998:17-18). One of the greatest accomplishments of all western societies (except the United States) took place in the post-war decades when state-financed health care systems made available for *all* citizens high-quality health care. This is undoubtedly an egalitarian transforming achievement in which liberals and social

democrats can take pride. Yet, in Canada and Britain today there is increasing pressure to create two-tiered health care systems to more closely resemble the American system (Laxer 1998). Moreover, social scientists who study life expectancy have known for a long time that the biggest single factor in elongating life is social class (Laxer 1998). With the current dismantling of the social welfare state, an increase in this longevity gap can be expected. Just as ideology was instrumental in helping to build the social welfare state, it is also involved with its current dismantling.

Yet, how well understood is the role of ideology in our day-to-day lives? If one were to examine the ways the mainstream media portray social, economic, and political debates and struggles, they would discover that the entire notion of ideology is rarely mentioned. Even in public education circles, despite the myriad examples of ideology-influenced reform, the role of ideology is excluded. As Leonardo explains, "there is a general tendency for educators to avoid talk of ideology. It is not uncommon that one is labeled 'ideological' when confronted by someone whose opinions differ from his own" (2003:204).

Despite the obvious role that ideology plays in almost all aspects of public education—including debates about curricular content, teacher neutrality, and the role of the school itself—Leonardo points out that the term most often has negative connotations. Schools attempt to inculcate students with a set of diverse and sometimes contradictory values in myriad ways. Social studies is an obvious source of values, something I can personally attest to because I have taught in high schools in British Columbia for the past 19 years. Even within this discipline, however, there are debates about its purposes (Ross and Marker 2005).

This paper describes research that is part of a much larger project, one that explores the ways in which political ideology has influenced discourses of race and class in both the formal curriculum and teacher attitudes in B.C. social studies education. Social studies teachers have developed numerous and diverse ways in which young people are taught to perceive the world. These values and ways of seeing are influenced by political ideology, whether the public, the teachers, or the students are aware of it. Indeed, Leming (1994) argues in support of the traditional form of social studies instruction that attempts to transmit knowledge as facts and eschew critical thinking. Ross counters that this conservative approach to social studies is tantamount to training students to support the "arrangements of the social, economic, and political order" (2000:57).

To determine the political ideologies involved, I looked for discourses, either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, that work to entrench or destabilize ideologies pertaining to social class. In order to accomplish this, I have drawn on my textual analysis of the British Columbia high school social studies curriculum, from the original document in 1941 through to the one used today, and on my analysis of interviews I conducted in 2002-2003 with ten social studies department head teachers in Vancouver, B.C.[1] This critical examination of class discourses in the formal curriculum and teacher attitudes positions the paper within a progressive paradigm. Before the analysis, however, it is prudent to describe the ways in which I am using the term ideology and the accompanying three ideologies of modernism: liberalism, socialism, and conservatism.

The Ideologies of Modernity

Karl Marx was the first to use the term ideology to critique social relations of domination. According to Giroux, Marx conceptualized ideology in political terms both as "a critique of consciousness" and as "possibilities within consciousness" (1981:19). Schwarzmantel re-states Marx's conceptualizations in a clear manner by explaining that each political ideology consists of three elements: a critique, an ideal, and agency (1998:2). In other words, each ideology has a response to the prevailing social conditions, either favourable or not, depending on the degree to which an individual's perspective agrees

1 Vancouver is a large, multi-racial/ethnic school district in which more than two-thirds of the students come from homes in which a language other than English is spoken. The district enrolls almost 60,000 students (K-12 and adult education), making it the second largest school district in British Columbia, after Surrey. There are 18 secondary schools and over 100 elementary schools in the Vancouver School District.

with the dominant ideology. The ideologies that arose out of modernity—liberalism, socialism, and conservatism—form the basis of the analysis for this paper. Each has its own articulation of the ideal society.

Liberalism is the direct progeny of the Enlightenment. The two social cornerstones of liberalism in its classic form were "the supreme value of the individual and the need for a political system that was suitable for an emancipated and rational population" (Schwarzmantel 1998:68). Hence, it can be argued that the concepts of *emancipation* and *democracy* are the progeny of liberalism. Economic freedom, in the form of capitalism, also formed the basis of liberalism. Yet, at that point in history, there was very little thought given to the emancipation for those who had been colonized or enslaved.

Socialism can be seen as a spin-off ideology from liberalism, another attempt to realize the same emancipatory goal. The original socialist tradition was in agreement with the liberal idea that a rationally controlled society could be made even better; that is, progress through conscious human action. Both ideologies agreed that the notion of divine guidance was simply not credible. The major difference was that liberalism identified the individual as the prime social unit whereas for socialism it was social class.

It is paramount to my argument that the original socialist ideology also articulated a vision for a socially just world in the same vein as its liberal predecessor. The liberal conception of freedom fits perfectly with the economic theories of capitalism, and on its own terms appears coherent. Yet, as Marx pointed out in the first volume of *Capital* (1961), from a broader, historical perspective, the liberal idea of freedom is unattainable for most people within capitalism. This is because of the basic contradiction that workers cannot be free when they are vulnerable to the capitalist tendency to exploit them and sell products at exorbitant prices. Marx gained few allies from opposing ideologies, given his view of the inevitable clash between social classes.

The conservative ideology developed as a reaction to modernity and the revolutionary fervour it spawned. The commercial forces unleashed by the liberal project were tearing apart the bonds needed for social cohesion. Moreover, conservatives considered the notion of *progress*, central to both liberalism and socialism, as unsettling and threatening to tradition and community. For them, tradition gains strength from the long held views inherent in the common sense of the community. Conservative theorists believed in "the idea of an organic and hierarchical society, in which people knew their place yet are related to each other as part of a totality" (Schwarzmantel 1998:110). A central tenet of conservatism is that society should be led by a stable group of people who, through past experience, would have the ability to do so wisely. In other words, tradition and progress are directly at odds with one another; conservatives cherish the former while fearing the latter.

The critiques of conservatism from both the liberal and socialist camps are clear and succinct and based on several principles of social justice. To begin, traditional communities are most often non-egalitarian with entrenched social hierarchies and therefore clearly anti-democratic. Traditional hierarchies by definition take exception with the discourse for the emancipation of the masses, a situation that can lead to the oppression of many for the benefit of the few. Lastly, the focus on tradition and the past often seems to lead to the exclusion of certain groups from attaining equal rights and citizenship. Even more disturbing, extreme conservatism in the form of right-wing nationalism often scapegoats vulnerable groups of people.

From the taxonomy of political ideologies I have described, it is clear that, by calling for the emancipation of all, both liberalism and socialism include progressive principles of social justice. Both couplings, liberalism/socialism and conservatism/nationalism, work, to a large extent, in opposition to each other. Ideology is involved in all aspects of our social, political, and economic lives to such an extent that it is located everywhere. It affects the ways we view each other and all of the institutions we have created, including the public education system. Ross succinctly defines ideology as "the frame in which people fit their understanding of how the world works" (2000:50). All of these ideologies have changed over time to adapt to changing conditions, and adherents alter their frame as well. Similar processes occur over time with the social studies curriculum.

Ideology and the B.C. Social Studies Curriculum

Those who tell the stories also hold the power.

This quote attributed to Plato has never been lost on the privileged groups of any society. The elites have long recognized the potential of the school curriculum to be used as a hegemonic device (Osborne, 1995). Consequently, the school curriculum is created by curriculum developers who are themselves influenced by the dominant political ideologies; indeed, they are aware of the political stakes involved, the political sensitivity required, and the power of the state to grant approval to their work (Manicom, 1995). Stated more bluntly, the official knowledge in the formal curriculum or Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) is political and most often serves the interests of those with the power to decide what gets into these documents. The curriculum is not an apolitical or neutral document (Ross 2000). Indeed, I maintain that the formal social studies curriculum can be viewed as a set of discourses, or discursive formations, connected to power. Epistemologically, this notion assumes that knowledge is socially constructed, of course, and that school knowledge has a political dimension. So who actually develops the IRPs? In British Columbia today, a team of curriculum developers is composed of teachers, all of whom are union members, and Ministry personnel, who also oversee the process and have the final say on the completed document. (See www.bctf.ca/ministrycommittees.) Whether it is conscious or not, as Manicom reminds us, ideology is still at the root of what becomes official knowledge. A study of several versions of the B.C. social studies curriculum from 1941 until 1997 attests to this assertion.

The first published B.C. social studies curriculum came out during the Second World War in 1941. Not surprisingly, much of the curriculum is centered on issues concerning aspects of war and nationalism. Yet, there is no mention that the hellish trenches were filled by legions of working-class young men. The curriculum does include a section in a unit on "troubles arising from the [first] world war," however, entitled "The Disruption of the Economic Structure" (1941:168). Two of the Specific Objectives that teachers are expected to cover are clearly in support of business interests. The first objective contains the phrase "increased tariffs and the strangulation of world trade" (168), clearly in support of free trade. The second objective refers to "unemployment and heavy taxation" (168) in a way that clearly links the two as problematic. Although both twentieth-century conservatism and liberalism support large-scale capitalism, the 1941 curriculum developers were conservative in their overall outlook. It is clear that the discourse of capitalism is supported by this document. The rights of workers were very much in the background in the 1941 curriculum.

With the publication of the 1949 curriculum, the rights of workers had completely disappeared. This may be a consequence of the growing negative attitudes toward Bolshevism and the communist movements within North America at the time. American anti-communist crusader Joseph McCarthy was beginning his rise to fame. In Canada, Cold War hostilities were evident but not at the same level as in the United States. This is reflected in the rise of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a socialist-based populist movement that rose to power in Saskatchewan in this era. Almost immediately after forming government in 1940, the CCF opened a public debate on the merits of a publicly-funded healthcare system versus the private system that was the only option at the time (McLeod and McLeod 1987). Yet, there is no mention of this very important debate in the 1949 curriculum.

By the time the 1956 version of the B.C. social studies curriculum was published, it was generally acknowledged that the economy was robust, healthy and growing across the continent (Laxer 1998). Significantly, and consistent with the liberal ideology, the *conflict* between labour and capital, which is especially a part of British Columbia's history (Palmer 1992; Leier 1990), does not appear at all. The learning objectives are worded in such a way that a student might be inclined to believe that the legalization of trade unions, for instance, came about out of the benevolence of capitalists and right-wing provincial governments. In terms of social class, the 1956 curriculum appears to have been written from a com-

bination of conservative and liberal perspectives.

With the publication of the 1968 curriculum, however, all of the learning objectives about trade unions and labour legislation were completely removed. There was some coverage of the life of the common labourer before and during the Industrial Revolution in the grade 9 social studies course (1968:28). Yet, the representation of conflict so long ago is a safe way to maintain power and privilege for the capitalist classes. This approach is hegemonic in insidious ways. It appears to acknowledge some strife between workers and owners, but because the events described are in the distant past, it tacitly implies that life has improved for current labourers and their families. This may very likely be the case, at least for those living in western nations. Yet, problems of representation remain.

The 1968 curriculum is noteworthy in another respect. In Canada, the CCF evolved from a socialist party to a social democratic one, renaming itself the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. One of the greatest achievements of the CCF-NDP occurred in 1962 in Saskatchewan when the NDP implemented the first public health-care system in North America (Whitehorn 1992). Even though the federal Liberals implemented the same service across the country a few years later, this pillar of the Canadian social welfare state is not mentioned at all in the 1968 document. This was also the case with its successor, published in 1980, although corporations and unions made their way back.

In a unit entitled "People and Resources" in grade 9 social studies from the 1980 curriculum, students were expected to come to an understanding of "citizens as consumers, producers, taxpayers" (1980:100). Furthermore, there were two institutions stated as major "components of the Canadian economy:" corporations and labour unions. One of the unit generalizations states that all "students should come to recognize that all peoples and societies are faced with the same economic problem: conflict between unlimited wants and limited resources" (1980:100). By overstating the case for material consumption, the curriculum performs once again as a hegemonic device in that it normalizes a major aspect of capitalism, namely, the purchasing of *wants* and not just *needs*. In this way, the curriculum is serving the pro-capitalist process that transformed workers into consumers, thereby leading to waning class consciousness (Hobsbawm 1995; Walker 2002). It also supports an imperialist discursive formation.

The 1988 curriculum had a similar approach in its representation of economic issues as its 1968 and 1980 forerunners. Borrowing from the 1968 document, Social Studies 9 addresses the lives of working families during the Industrial Revolution (1988:46). By focusing on working conditions and "worker organizations" in Britain over two centuries ago, criticism that these issues are being neglected in the present is effectively muted at the same time that *current* power arrangements remain hidden. Yet, in both Canada and the United States, relations between the capitalist class and labour became hostile during the 1980s, bringing to an end the relatively long truce that had more or less prevailed since the end of the Second World War (Laxer 1998). Yet, *these* conflicts are omitted from the liberal-influenced curriculum. Legislation around replacement workers, picketing and collective bargaining, to name but a few, are of paramount importance to working-class families. Yet, the 1988 curriculum failed to address any of them. Its successor, published in 1997, was even less forthcoming about working-class issues.

A Prescribed Learning Outcome in the 1997 social studies curriculum, which is the one used in some B.C. classrooms today[2], is worded in the following way: "It is expected that students will assess how identity is shaped by a variety of factors, including family, gender, belief systems, ethnicity and nationality" (1997:A-4).

Despite the massive body of scholarly work that supports the notion that an individual's social class position significantly shapes and limits their experience throughout life (Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller 1992), it is not included in the list of factors that the

2 At the time of this study, the 1997 curriculum was the one in use for grades 8 to 11. Since then, there is a new Social Studies 11 IRP (2005) and a new Social Studies 10 IRP (2006). Social Studies 8 and 9 still use the 1997 IRPs. As well, there is a new Civic Studies 11 course, which I discuss at length for its potential to raise political consciousness in students (Orlowski 2008).

curriculum developers consider to be important in the construction of identity. Moreover, there is very little in the way of suggested learning resources that refers to issues of social class, such as labour struggles, trade unionism, tax reform, and free trade. Is this an oversight or is it an intended hegemonic strategy? Hegemony is involved either way. Even well-intentioned curriculum developers may be influenced by the dominant values of capitalist society that includes the meritocratic anyone-can-make-it ethos. This would result in the omission of working-class issues in the official knowledge of the formal curriculum.

The answer to this question about intention is not as important as the omission itself. It is clear that working-class students are at a disadvantage when compared to their middle-class counterparts, especially in terms of representation. Their situations and concerns are not addressed at all, while the middle class is entrenched as the hegemonic norm. Although there is a Suggested Instructional Strategy about the Great Depression in Social Studies 11, the root causes of the Depression and who suffered the most are not included. A critical or radical interpretation of this omission is that the curriculum is based in liberal power-blindness. A radical-influenced curriculum would have pointed out the huge discrepancies in suffering based on social class, as well as the role of the banks in creating a culture of credit and the role of industrialists in creating an ethos of overproduction.

The authors of the 1997 B.C. social studies curriculum did not consider social class to be a factor in the identity construction of an individual. Nor did they bother to represent the role of the public sector as "an alternative source of capital and creative energy in both the economic and cultural spheres" as it was in the post-war years up until at least the 1980s (Laxer 1998:41). Consequently, Canadians are experiencing attacks in both spheres, led by the neoconservative and neoliberal federal and provincial governments. The social studies curriculum cannot be blamed for the lack of resistance to this dismantling, of course. Yet, it is clear that the spirit of educational philosopher John Dewey and his dream of an informed citizenry have had very little success here, as elsewhere. Middle-class normativity is a key hegemonic component in the liberal ideology, and this is clearly reflected in the 1997 social studies curriculum (Orlowski 2001a). In this way, the curriculum helps maintain the status quo in ways that are difficult for the majority of students, as well as teachers, to detect and resist. The curricular focus on the *individual* has the same effect.

The concept of the individual made its first significant appearance in a B.C. social studies curriculum in 1949. A learning objective for students in one of the sample units is stated as "a realization of the importance of the *individual* in the advancement of civilization" (1949:70, emphasis added).

The 1949 curriculum also has several references to community. References to any collective ideals, however, have completely disappeared with the 1997 curriculum. The 1997 B.C. social studies curriculum does not encourage students to recognize the benefits of the collective or of community; nor does it help them to understand that the individual really exists as a social being who has responsibilities to help others, especially those who are having difficult times. This is yet another way that the school curriculum has failed in helping students understand what is in their best interests. It is also a failure of the state to develop educated citizens aware of what is in their best collective interests. The liberal focus on the individual all but obliterates social connections, supporting business interests and regressive tax reform in the process. Michael Apple furthers this line of reasoning. The curriculum "does not situate the life of an individual … as an economic and social being, back into the unequal structural relations that produced the comfort the individual enjoys" (1990:10).

Not able to see who is producing what we consume, we live in a society in which the majority of people will wear clothes and buy stereos produced by sweatshop labour. Of course, I do not intend to imply that schools work in a vacuum, able to be a panacea for all of our social ills. They must contend with myriad social forces, especially the media, that are competing to shape societal values.

Except for a brief period of minor representation during the middle decades of the past century, working-class issues were not represented in the *formal* curriculum. In order to determine how political

ideology has influenced the way that veteran teachers look at social class issues, I will briefly discuss the findings of a study on how the Ontario public views the unequal success rates of students from various class backgrounds. This taxonomy may shed light on the ways in which veteran Vancouver teachers and their students engage in the *enacted* curriculum.[3]

Ideology and Discourses of Working-Class Academic Performance

To help me determine the degree to which the various political ideologies have influenced the teachers' attitudes around issues of social class, I used the taxonomy developed by Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller (1992). In *Stacking the Deck: The Streaming of Working-Class Kids in Ontario Schools*, the authors refer to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Bernstein (1977), and Lareau (1989) among others, to support their claim that "every study of schools that has paid attention to class differences has found that working-class kids have always fared much worse than middle- and upper-class kids" (1992:7). They claim that working-class students leave school for poorer paying jobs with little or no security because they have not been served very well by the public education system. In their words, "working-class kids still receive less schooling, and a different kind of schooling" than kids from more privileged economic backgrounds (1992:8). Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller have developed a taxonomy based on the explanations people offer as to why working-class students fare less well in school. This helped me determine the political ideologies underlying the teachers' attitudes and beliefs.

"Socially powerful people tend to encourage the less powerful to blame themselves for their own misfortunes" (Curtis et al 1992:14). This idea, based in nineteenth-century Social Darwinism, promotes the meritocratic notion that people who are bright, talented, and hard-working will rise to the top. By corollary, lazy and dull people will fill the lower ranks of society. This version of meritocracy differs from the liberal version in that it is applied to whole groups of people rather than individuals. In this way, it is imbued with an essentialist component. Many conservatives, therefore, still claim there is a genetic component to explain the conditions of poverty many social groups experience, a position still held by a couple of the teachers in this study.

Rather than using the *genetic-deficit theories* of traditional conservatism, people who see the world through an ideological lens of either contemporary conservatism or liberalism explain the stratified nature of our society using *cultural-deficit theories*. Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller specify three different types of cultural-deficit theories. Because I consider these social theories to be interwoven with power, I will use the word *discourse* in place of the word *theory*. First, the *value deficiency discourse* claims that working-class people hold the same values as their more privileged peers, but it is their traditions or circumstances that keep them from being as successful as middle and upper middle-class people. In particular, it is the failure on the part of the working class to "defer gratification of baser subsistence needs for nobler ones like formal education" (1992:16). This translates into the idea that all people within a capitalist society, regardless of class background, want to become rich. This is hegemonic because it leads to the conclusion that if fortunes were reversed and the poor were indeed the wealthy, they would have the same attitudes toward the poor themselves. Consequently, the notion within this dominant discourse is that the less fortunate should figure out how to help themselves. This pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps notion is part of the conservative and right liberal ideologies.

Sociologist Oscar Lewis (1966) developed a variation of this discourse, which he called the *culture of poverty*. This variant cites a lack of role models in the life of working-class youth as the main reason for their lack of academic success, as poor skills and attitudes are handed down through the generations. The focus of this discourse, the way conservatives see it, is to blame entire groups for the oppressive situations in which they find themselves. Liberals, on the other hand, focus on an individual's shortcom-

3 The *enacted* curriculum refers to an alteration of the formal curriculum. It describes the ways teachers and students engage in the classroom with the course content. (See Ross, 2001.)

ings. The results of these variations are the same for those at the receiving end, of course. *Cultural capital discourses*, the third variant within these conservative/liberal discourses, emphasize that students from middle-class families have an advantage over their working-class peers by learning from their families the "general culture knowledge, elaborated language codes, and information about how schools work" (1992:16), all things that tend to increase academic proficiency.

Traditional solutions, according to cultural-deficit theorists, is for the schools to provide more programs geared toward helping the working classes learn skills so they can find gainful employment. This reasoning results in a call for *streaming*. As with almost all aspects of cultural-deficit theories, this position "tend[s] to ignore or discount the material conditions, such as inadequate food, housing and clothing, that can limit poor people's learning potential" (Curtis et al. 1992:17). Moreover, according to Ken Osborne (1991), support for streaming conceals a middle-class bias.

The radical-influenced *class-power approach* described by Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller critiques the connections "between the forms of schooling and the structures of capitalist society" (1992:19), as well as a curriculum that favours the middle and upper classes. Any teacher who explains the lack of academic success of working-class students as a failure of the system to serve them properly, rather than as a failure by the students or their families, has been influenced by a radical ideology.

The class-power approach is related to *critical multiculturalism* as described by Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997). A key component of this form of multiculturalism is the demand that people comprehend how "power shapes consciousness" (1997:25). This is also a key feature of the class-power approach. It is also similar to the focus in the article by Sleeter and Grant entitled "Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionist" (1994). They demand that students be taught to understand the social construction of knowledge and that they become politically literate. Illuminating the hegemonic veils that conceal the ways power works to maintain the privilege of certain social groups while oppressing others is common to all of these discourses and theories. The variation is on the degree of emphasis they place on social class as a marker of a person's identity. (See also Malott and Pena 2004.) It is time to look at the findings of the curricular analysis. It is crucial that we find out the degree to which the veteran social studies teachers consider social class to be a marker of a person's identity.

Ideology and How Veteran Teachers View Issues of Social Class & Working-Class Students

This component of the study consisted of ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews with high school social studies department head teachers. Department heads are veteran teachers who often act as mentors to their more junior colleagues and are well positioned to understand how curriculum is shaped by context. Reflecting the demographic profile of social studies department heads in Vancouver overall, my purposive sampling strategy resulted in interviews with 10 white men. There were four interview questions that referred directly to social class. (See Appendix 1.) Yet, many of the teacher responses to other questions—for instance, about race—revealed aspects of how they either think about social class or how they teach about it. In analyzing the teacher interviews, I employed Steinar Kvale's five approaches to interview analysis: condensation of meaning, categorization of meaning, structuring of meaning through narratives, interpretation of meaning, and ad hoc methods for generating meaning (1996:187-204). I have divided the analytic codes into two groups: the ways that teachers *think* about social class, and the ways that they think about *teaching* class issues.

How teachers think about social class

Despite the 1997 curriculum's omission of social class as a factor in a person's identity construction, I will not do the same here. All ten participants are white men. In terms of social class background, however, there was less homogeneity. (See Table 1.) According to their own perceptions, four of the ten teachers grew up in a middle-class household. One of the questions I asked the teachers during the interviews was whether they considered social class to be

an important factor in a student's identity construction. Only one of the teachers, Steve Graham[4], an east side teacher who ironically grew up in a middle-class family, considered social class to be very important.

> SG: I see their class as a big factor because it has a lot to do with their opportunities. And they know this from a young age. Kids at west side schools just assume they're going to end up at university. It's assumed by mom and dad. It's assumed by them. And guess what? The money's there for them and they'll go. Here, it's the opposite. Here the kids won't even be thinking of university but maybe some particular kids should be thinking of university. So I see it as pretty important, personally.

Graham focusses on the varying degrees of opportunities afforded to students based on their social class. He rightly points to higher education as a crucial factor in a person's future (Laxer 1998; Levin 1995; Curtis, Livingstone, & Smaller 1992).

Most of the teachers did *not* consider social class to be very important in a student's identity construction. In fact, six of the remaining nine expressed this very perspective. Three of these six expressed the same reason for holding this view, namely, that compared to countries in the Third World, no one in Canada is very poor. Yet, there were significant differences in their reasoning, as well as significant differences in their background. Here are quotes by the three teachers, Craig Evans, Eric Quinn, and Barry Kelvin, responding to either my query about the importance of social class in a student's identity construction or my point that the wealth gap in Canada is growing:

> CE: The working class [in Canada] isn't necessarily poor, either. They're just the working class. It's a different history from the real poor. I mean, do we have the working poor in Canada like they do in the United States? It's a coming thing. We don't have them yet, but it's a comer.

> EQ: I think we've got to have a global focus. One of the things I do with my students here is, like, point out that poverty is relative. In a way, wealth is relative. So let's have a Canadian focus but also let's remember that, for instance, poverty here is actually contextually defined. And that's not to say that it's not a problem. But let's also remember to look at this globally and realize the privileged base of all of Canadian society.

> BK: When I travelled, poverty is just so obvious. You know, when I was in Egypt, there were thousands of men in the streets, unemployed, smoking those tobacco things, just sitting there all day. And I'm thinking, "This is a crappy life." And I guess I just don't pay enough attention, you know, when I go downtown here, which I don't do very often, but then you see [poverty]. I'll do like probably most people do, try to give some money to the fella, depending on—but I'm also a little more severe than some people because I have a handicapped brother and he doesn't beg. He's got cerebral palsy and he tries to work. Then I get caught up in thinking, "You're only 18. What are you doing with a squeegee? You can't possibly be that run down."

Although all three teachers expressed the same sentiment, namely, that there are people in other countries who are worse off than the poor people in Canada, there are important differences, as well. Craig Evans, who grew up in a working-class home in the Maritimes, expressed disdain for the United States several times during our interview. He also teaches at Victoria Park Secondary, an inner-city school where I was a colleague of his for eight years. It is my belief that Evans is naïve in his thinking around poverty among the student population at this particular school. Elsewhere in the interview, he recalled childhood friends who were poor, who "lived in one room with their mother … and the food was measured out" but, according to Evans, Canada no longer has that kind of poverty. Craig Evans was not old enough to have been a child in the 1930s. Consequently, I consider his views on contemporary poverty in Canada to be erroneous. The "working poor" definitely do exist in Canada today, and they are growing in number (Laxer 1998).

4 For the purpose of confidentiality, only pseudonyms are used in this article.

Table 1: Participating Head Teachers of Social Studies Departments

Name	School	Years Teaching	Years Dept. Head	Student Demographics	Other
East Side Schools					
Craig Evans	Victoria Park	23	16	90% working class, 80% East Asian	Christian, working-class upbringing
Steve Graham	Turner	9	3	95% working class, 80% East Asian	middle-class upbringing
Hal Nagel	Hedley	19	12	80% working class, most racial groups	taught on a Saskatchewan reserve
Larry Nelson	Larson	31	3	70% working class, 80% East Asian	working-class upbringing
Carl Tragas	Wilson Heights	34	8	85% working class, over 50% ESL	working-class upbringing
West Side Schools					
Dave Carson	Hudson	15	7	equal groups of working, middle & upper middle classes	Geography/PE major
Ed Hitchcock	Kipling	23	6	mostly upper-middle class, 70% Asian	music/history major, working-class upbringing
Barry Kelvin	Chamberlain	19	12	mostly upper-middle class, 50% Asian, 50% Euro	MA in curriculum, under-class upbringing
Tim Patterson	Greenway	13	3	mostly upper-middle class, 60% East Asian, 40% European	middle-class upbringing (Ontario)
Eric Quinn	Warner	18	6	mostly upper-middle class, 70% East Asian	Christian, middle-class upbringing

Eric Quinn, on the other hand, is clearly a liberal thinker. He grew up in a middle-class Christian home and teaches in what is ostensibly the wealthiest neighbourhood in Vancouver. His experience is perhaps why he does not consider poverty in Canada to be significant. At the least, he has not taught very many poor students and therefore may have a legitimate reason for being unaware that poverty is not a serious problem in Canada. Moreover, this notion is nowhere to be found in the formal curriculum. In terms of social class, Quinn exhibited a strong power-blind liberalism.

The response given by Barry Kelvin, however, is very significant for a number of reasons. By pointing out what he observed on his travels to Egypt, he agrees with Quinn in looking at poverty in a global context. Yet, he knows that poverty also exists in Vancouver. In fact, more than any of the other teachers, Kelvin's philosophy around class issues is commonly referred to as pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps conservatism. This explains his comments about a hypothetical "squeegee" kid. Yet, there is a reason why he feels so strongly about this.

> BK: I came from a fairly bizarre background…. And my mom was quite sick so we were a welfare family. So in school, I had extremely low self-esteem.

Kelvin's upbringing shaped the way he perceives poverty today. Regarding issues of social class, however, Kelvin is a conservative. The influence of the conservative ideology was further demonstrated later in the interview when the conversation digressed to the topic of unions.

> BK: I think unions were created rightly for industry. And now they've incorporated themselves in other areas and I'm not sure that's the way it should have turned out… And that's not to say I'm White collar because I like playing hockey. I like to have a beer. I like to get down to earth. But I just see a difference. I also, arrogant or not, I like to think of myself as educated, as in a position where I've worked hard to get here. And it's a position that's fairly powerful in society, powerful in a good way… Self-respect is something that comes along with teaching.

Kelvin exhibits an elitist view toward unions in that he considers his high level of education to put him above membership in a union. Regarding poverty, it is the last sentence in particular that reveals the reasoning behind Kelvin's seemingly unsympathetic view toward poor people. "Self-respect" is particularly important to him because of his upbringing, which was laced with "extremely low self-esteem." For Kelvin, self-respect must be earned. It is not that he is unsympathetic toward the poor. In fact, Kelvin claims to protect students from ridicule who he thinks have family and financial problems. All of this would at least partially explain why he has developed a *tough love* perspective toward underprivileged students and why he disdains unions, which he claims are much too "overly protecting." It is clear that for Barry Kelvin, his own upbringing has had a large influence on the way he views social relations today, especially around issues of social class.

In general, class-blind liberalism is the dominant ideology among this group of teachers, as with the current formal curriculum. It is therefore difficult to imagine the enacted curriculum dealing with social class in a critical manner, if at all. Yet, conservative teachers are even less likely to do so.

Carl Tragas described the differences in teaching at an east side working-class school, primarily composed of East Asian immigrant students, and a west side upper middle-class school.

> CT: I can give the same exam, teach the course the same way. Well, I don't quite teach it the same way because I do more visuals here because so many of the students are ESL. And still, the students here get 10 to 15% less than the students at Greenway. So, is that genetic? Or is that socioeconomic? You can't be politically correct and say it's the gene pool. But I think it is. There's a little bit of that, at least. And also socioeconomic.
>
> PO: So in terms of the old nature-versus-nurture debate, how exactly would you position yourself?
>
> CT: I'm saying that I can buy the logistics that it's mainly socioeconomic. But I also think there's a genetic component.
>
> PO: Do you think this is why someone ends up being a labourer rather than, say, a professional?
>
> CT: I think, although I know it's not popular to say, that there's something to that.

Tragas' reasoning is what Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller (1992) call the genetic-deficiency theory. They dismiss the premise of any essentialist explanations of a stratified socioeconomic society as false.

The variations are much greater within than between such groups of people. These criticisms do not necessarily deny that there is some genetic basis to intelligence. But they definitely refute the long-standing claim that there is a primary biological basis for either class differences in schooling, or the intergenerational reproduction of social classes (Curtis et al 1992:15-16).

These educators believe that the problem lies in the environment, especially the school system itself. There are clear implications about the fairness of the school system for working-class students: teachers in primarily working-class schools who accept this essentialist discourse will be less likely to develop critical thinking skills in their students.

Tragas wasn't the only one to use the essentialist discourse in describing the working class: Carl Evans believes that there are elements within the working-class mindset that simply cannot be changed, no matter the pedagogical strategies employed. Although he does not suggest a genetic component to support his argument, he is using an essentialist discourse. Such an attitude is pessimistic and defeatist because it is based on the premise that the "fear and hatred is in the culture" itself. In other words, Evans considers it near impossible for schools to change these traits.

Usage of the essentialist discourse demonstrates that the conservative ideology has influenced these teachers. Moreover, it is not very difficult to see how this conservative view can negatively impact on the learning and subsequent future options of students from marginalized groups. On the other hand, the pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps philosophy of Barry Kelvin also stems from conservatism; yet, his perspective may lead to increased motivation for both teacher and student.

In terms of political ideology, it was also interesting to note the teachers' thoughts around why children who come from poor families graduate from B.C. high schools at much lower rates. Two teachers mentioned curriculum relevance but spoke of it in conservative terms, indicating that vocational courses need to be increased for working-class students who show a lack of ambition. The majority of the teachers used the traditional discourse of cultural-deficiency to explain the low graduation rates. In particular, all of these teachers utilized elements of the culture of poverty discourse to make their points. These teachers pointed to a lack of positive role models in the home. The quote that sums this position best was offered by west side teacher Barry Kelvin who posited "it could be low self-esteem of the parents, who didn't succeed in school either … family problems … money problems … split parents … a feeling of failure." Kelvin's west side counterpart Tim Patterson added that a major reason is that "their parents are in varying degrees of sobriety."

Two of the teachers cited financial problems as a key reason for academic problems. Dave Carson said it best: "I think that there is a whole cocktail of social reasons that lead to people dropping out of school… I work under the assumption that poor kids have harder lives. For example, they might have a desire to work, to help their families out." Three other teachers pointed to the latch-key phenomenon as the main reason, which can obviously be linked to familial financial concerns, as well. This view tends to be more liberal than conservative.

In short, the majority view of this group of teachers is that it is the home life of poor students that causes them to leave school before graduating. The discourse most frequently used is the culture of poverty discourse, which locates the central problem within the lives of the victims themselves. Yet, Kelly (1996) suggests that such reasoning ignores the role of the school system itself in "pushing out" these students from the regular mainstream schools. Schools are exonerated from any blame. Teacher attitudes, however, are one of the forces that can result in lower academic achievement and ultimately, students leaving school before graduating (Ornstein and Levine 1989).

The majority of the teachers used a blame-the-victim discourse for the academic shortcomings of poor students. What is most curious, then, is the reluctance on their part to teach about disparities in wealth and the current dismantling of the social welfare state in social studies. Is this because of hegemony and the power of the capitalist discourse? Is it because of a hegemonic notion around social hierarchies? I will address this incongruency in the next section.

How teachers think about teaching social class issues

I will begin this section by exploring certain attitudes of the five east side teachers. These teachers are more likely to have a significant majority of working-class students in their classrooms.

One of the questions I asked each of the teachers pertained to their thoughts on how labour issues are represented in the latest social studies curriculum. Sometimes responses to other questions yielded information about their thoughts around teaching issues of social class. Four of five east side teachers claimed that the problem with teaching about labour issues, working-class issues, or the dismantling of the

social welfare state resided with the students themselves. Hal Nagel claims that it has nothing at all to do with either the formal curriculum or the teacher's role in the enacted curriculum.

> HN: Well, when you look at the content, you try to cram knowledge into them and that's it… Hopefully in grade 11 you can draw on it, if they remember it. That's a big if! I think it's a natural maturity that the kids, when they get to grade 11, they have different issues. They're getting a part-time job. They may have to support themselves in their own living space, or support the family. Whatever the case is, they're more involved in society from a tax-payer's point of view. So I think it's partly the socialization that naturally occurs that they're dealing with.

Nagel points out that working-class students have more important things to do at that time in their lives than learn about working-class issues. He described a right-wing populism developing in the students as they get to grade 11 in which they resent having to pay taxes. As a veteran teacher of working-class students myself, I have come across these same right-wing populist sentiments (Orlowski 2001b). The point of taxes and any notion of the social-welfare state have long disappeared from the formal curriculum. Yet, the adapted curriculum in the social studies courses that I teach has units on these very topics. Nagel, on the other hand, is opposed to these adaptations because of an already over-crowded curriculum.

East side teacher Carl Tragas, who also taught for over 20 years at a west side school, made the following comparison:

> CT: The east side students are less aware than the west side students.
>
> PO: Do you mean that the east side students are less aware politically? Or that they don't know what's in their own best interests compared to west side students?
>
> CT: I think the first. The knowledge isn't there because of, I don't know, I don't even think it's so much a language barrier. I think it's a socio-economic generalization you can make that that they're less attuned to be interested in [politics]. Whereas a west side kid has the home life where there's expectations, academic expectations, where there's news, newspapers, *Time*, *Macleans*, *The Economist*, those kinds of things … I could start a current events class in grade 11 socials, and be quiet for the rest of the hour. And they, generally, in a civil manner, would have a pretty intelligent conversation.

Tragas' strong use of the culture of poverty discourse is very significant for this research. His position around teaching working-class students about working-class issues is the same as Hal Nagel's, namely, they don't do it because the students are not interested. Tragas claimed that all students, regardless of social class, have a "lack of sympathy for unions," which he said he doesn't understand.

There was one teacher, however, who experienced teaching working-class students about working-class issues quite differently. Like Carl Tragas, Steve Graham also taught for several years on the west side before becoming the head teacher at an east side school. In fact, the two were colleagues at the same west side school for two years.

> SG: At [the west side school], I found myself being the devil's advocate for what could be broadly called socialistic perspectives, because the kids, like kids in every school, they bring what they bring from home. There'd be a handful of kids who, perhaps, would bring the minority point of view. And there'd be the overwhelming majority that would have what we might call the Vancouver Sun's [right wing] endorsed view … At that school, you feel kind of like a person who's been in a war zone, providing an alternative perspective, and you'd get a barrage of kids coming at you going, "Wow, those people on welfare!" Here [at the east side school], it's a lot less. It's not to say that every kid here comes from a family that is, you know, more left-wing. That's not true. What it is, is that kids here seem to inherently appreciate that First Nations people have been mistreated. There's a perfect example, compared to [west side school], where you would encounter what you'd call discriminatory attitudes toward First Nations. Here they seem to inherently, or

> innately, what's the word I'm looking for, innately know that sometimes large corporations or banks screw people around. So I guess, at a working-class school, to stereotype it, there's a greater appreciation of some of the stuff that others have been through.

The different descriptions offered by Graham and Tragas about teaching working-class students versus upper middle-class students could not differ more. This is especially interesting considering that both of them are describing classroom discussions that occurred in the *same* west side school. What is the crucial factor for these different perspectives? It has to be the political ideologies influencing the teachers themselves. For the most part, Tragas has been influenced by conservatism. On the other hand, Graham is a progressive in his thoughts on class issues.

Ornstein and Levine (1989) consider teacher attitudes to be of paramount importance. They contend that one of the major reasons for low achievement among many working-class and non-White students is teacher perceptions of student inadequacy.

> [M]any teachers in working-class schools reach the conclusion that large numbers of their students are incapable of learning. This view becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy because teachers who question their students' learning potential are less likely to work hard to improve academic performance, particularly since improvement requires intense effort that quickly consumes virtually all of a teacher's energy. Because students are influenced by their teachers' perceptions and behaviors, low teacher expectations generate further declines in students' motivation and performance.
> Ornstein and Levine, 1989:153-154

Ornstein and Levine believe that the perspectives of conservative teachers have most likely affected the motivation and performance of their working-class students. There are differing discourses within the conservative ideology, of course. The tough love approach of Barry Kelvin's bootstraps conservatism is *not* what Ornstein and Levine are referring to. Kelvin believes that students from under-privileged backgrounds *can* succeed, provided they get the support they need, whether from peers or the teacher, *and* they put in the effort. The genetic-deficiency discourse espoused by Tragas and Evans, however, is exactly what Ornstein and Levine are referring to about negative effects on teachers motivating students and, by corollary, student performance.

All ten participating teachers stated that the current social studies curriculum was *not* fair in its depiction or lack of depiction of labour or working-class issues. Despite this uniform perspective, there was very little agreement on what should be done about this. Three teachers gave responses that are progressive in nature, or somewhere in the overlap region of left-liberal and radical. For example, east side teacher Steve Graham stated emphatically that teachers of working-class students *should* teach about working-class issues even if they are not covered in the curriculum. According to Graham, "I think it's important for them in their development as citizens." He admittedly found it difficult in "bringing to life the Winnipeg General Strike" of 1919 for his students. Yet, he found it "easy" to teach them about current examples of working-class exploitation, such as the recent lowering of the minimum wage in British Columbia.

Cornbleth would approve of Graham choosing relevant topics, such as the recent lowering of the B.C. minimum wage, for his working-class students to discuss: "Sociocultural context includes demographic, social, political, and economic conditions, traditions and ideologies, and events that actually or potentially influence curriculum" (1990:6). Cornbleth calls for contemporary and historical conflicts to be brought to the fore in the enacted social studies curriculum (34). She theorizes that "curriculum is contextually shaped" and "always mediated by students" (53). Part of what Cornbleth means by contextually shaped is the sociocultural aspects of the local population.

Two teachers claimed that the reason that they don't cover working-class issues in the classroom is because they "don't have the information needed to cover" them, as Dave Carson said. Indeed, all of the teachers were aware that the gap between the wealthy and the poor has reached unprecedented rates in B.C. and in Canada, but not one of them discusses this in their classroom. Carson wished that we taught in a system that sent teachers back to university "with pay"

in order to learn about these topics. This is unlikely, but teacher education courses should consider these issues.

There were a variety of reasons among the remaining six teachers for not teaching about poverty and labour issues. Two of them, Carl Tragas and Hal Nagel, put the blame on textbooks and the lack of coverage there. (Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to address the textbooks used in B.C. social studies courses, there are more references to labour struggles in some of the prescribed texts than in the formal curriculum itself.) The two remaining teachers, Tim Patterson and Barry Kelvin, were able to articulate a few examples of labour issues they covered in the classroom. Patterson emphasized twice in the interview that he "signed a piece of paper" to cover the curriculum and "not to push a particular personal agenda." Consequently, the only topics he named were "the Industrial Revolution in Socials 9" and "the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike in Socials 11," both of which are included in the formal curriculum.

Summary and Conclusions

The most important conclusion of this study is that there is a clear mirroring between the political ideology underlying the formal curriculum with the attitudes of the teachers and, by corollary, the enacted curriculum. Simply put, issues of social class were absent from both data sources. This is not surprising when one considers that neither the formal curriculum or the vast majority of the teachers claim social class to be an important factor in a person's identity construction. In fact, the curriculum currently used in B.C. social studies classrooms emphasizes that each student should understand that a person's identity construction is affected by a list of factors that sociologists would accept, *save for the omission of social class from this list*.

The evolution of the B.C. social studies curriculum has undergone an ideological shift in terms of social class representation from conservatism to liberalism. What began as a stridently conservative document in 1941 underwent changes such that it is now almost completely liberal in its ideological orientation. There was some oscillation between the two ideologies in the 1956, 1968, and 1980 versions. By 1988, however, conservatism had been displaced by liberalism as the central curricular influence. The 1997 document continues the liberalization of the curriculum. The only mention of any aspect of social class is a reference to the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Mirroring the formal curriculum, only one teacher considered social class to be a central factor in a student's identity construction. An argument can be made that implicates teacher education for this overall glaring omission. Despite this match with the curriculum, the teachers responded to questions that allowed me to glean the ideologies influencing the ways they think about social class.

The *class-power discourse* was almost completely absent from the thoughts of the teachers. This indicates a paucity of radical thought among the entire group. Three of the teachers turned any mention of poverty in Vancouver or Canada to worse conditions for poor people elsewhere in the world. The hegemonic strategy of displacing a local and present concern for social class to economic conditions perceived to be worse in distant places or long ago was also reflected in their teaching: almost all of them taught about class issues either outside of Canada or in a historical context. The gains made through the construction of the social welfare state and its current dismantling were also omitted from the enacted curriculum that each described. This is another match with the formal curriculum.

In terms of explaining the lack of academic success by poor students, the most common discourse used by the teachers was the *culture of poverty*. Almost all of the teachers considered the home of poor unsuccessful students to be the root cause rather than the curriculum or the school system itself. Half of the teachers also cited familial financial concerns for the main reason poor students often fare poorly in academic terms. These teachers are using the traditional culture of poverty discourse that straddles conservative and right-liberal perspectives. Two teachers used the conservative essentialist discourse to explain low graduation rates of poor students. One of these educators spoke of a genetic deficiency as a major reason why people become labourers.

Despite the awareness of class issues, teachers were, by and large, extremely reluctant to address a

critique of material inequality in our society. Part of the reason for this was that some consider the Canadian poor to be much better off than the poor elsewhere. This reluctance may also be a result of the normalizing effect of certain hegemonic discourses in support of capitalism in both the curriculum and in mainstream media (Ross 2000). Fear of rebuke from authority figures may also be a factor.

All ten of the teachers considered the curriculum to be unfair in its depiction of labour and working-class issues. Yet, there was considerable disagreement over what to do about it. Several of the teachers who grew up in working-class families claimed that working-class students are simply "not interested" in working-class issues. Ironically, a middle-class teacher was the only one who described his working-class students as enthusiastic learners, especially if they felt "the heat of the issue." The ways in which the teachers perceived working-class students and their abilities appeared to be very influential in the academic expectations they held for their students and, subsequently, student efforts. Political ideology was involved in the ways teachers described their students' learning interests and in the topics they chose to cover.

In sum, the majority of the discourses used by teachers to describe issues of social class were traditional ones that incorporate ideas from both conservatism and liberalism. In this way, they are a clear reflection of the formal social studies curriculum itself. Although the latest versions are mostly liberal, their predecessors had a conservative perspective. The teachers also demonstrate this combination. Occasionally, a few demonstrated a radical influence on their thinking and their teaching.

The analysis about *social class* indicates that there has been an ideological struggle between conservatism and liberalism during the twentieth century in B.C. social studies education. The radical ideology that questions aspects of capitalism has made only fleeting appearances. In fact, despite the overwhelming evidence that suggests the importance of social class in identity construction and determining one's life chances, there is very little directly referring to it in the curriculum or in the thoughts of the teachers. In this manner, the curriculum and the teachers' thoughts are quite similar. The curriculum matches the low comfort level of most people when the topic of social class enters the conversation. The curriculum both reflects and entrenches this reluctance.

Implications: Can Social Studies Bring Social Class Back to the Fore?

The study made it clear that if social studies education is to be used for the purposes of social and economic justice, changes must be made to both the formal curriculum, ongoing professional development for teachers, and teacher education. The current liberal-influenced B.C. social studies curriculum highlights the individual to such an extent that it virtually ignores all aspects of social class. Consequently, there has been a concerted movement to dismantle the social welfare state, including public education, in both Canada and the United States (Laxer 1998). A number of teachers in the study mentioned they do not cover poverty and working-class issues because they have not been taught about them themselves. Requiring some labour history in teacher education would clearly go a long way toward rectifying this situation. In other words, a more radical approach to social studies teacher education is required.

The populist movements that swept western nations beginning in the 1920s, culminating in the post-Second World War social welfare state should also be represented in the curriculum. The struggle that first took place in Saskatchewan resulting in the first publicly-funded healthcare system in North America should be the focus of social studies lessons for *every* student in Canada. Today's concerted attacks to dismantle the egalitarianism of our current medicare system would undoubtedly meet a higher level of resistance if this were the case. All students should be given the opportunity to grapple with issues such as private versus public ownership, the effects of corporate political donations on law-making, the average income of CEOs versus labourers in their employ. A radical-influenced curriculum should include labour struggles and the construction of the social-welfare state in its content.

Such a curriculum would better enable students to become informed citizens who are aware of past struggles, as well as *what is in their best future interests*. This would engender a stronger democracy supported

by participatory citizens, rather than the current one in which so many people are passive and unaware. After all, progressive changes have always come about as a result of the agency of dominated groups, rather than out of the kindness of dominant ones. I contend that not only working-class students would benefit from this; rather, the majority of Canadians would.

Appendix 1: Interview Questions Pertaining to Social Class for Social Studies Teachers

(Note: The original schedule had 15 questions – some about race, democracy, and the purpose of social studies)

1. Some teachers think that it is important that they remain neutral, not express their opinion in class, and instead focus on creating an open and supportive environment where students feel free to express their thoughts and feelings. Others, while agreeing that diverse views should get a fair hearing, think that it is important for teachers to clearly articulate their own positions. Where do you stand on this issue?
2. Do you encourage classroom discussions around controversial issues? (If so) Which ones? Why?
3. In teaching social studies, how do you teach about the "discoverers, adventurers, and heroes"? How important is it to highlight the members of non-dominant groups who have achieved success or made contributions to Canadian society?
4. Do you feel the Social Studies IRPs adequately cover or represent fairly the contributions or experiences of workers? (If not) Do you do anything to compensate for this? What? Why?
5. Why do you think certain perspectives on historical events are in the social studies IRPs rather than others?
6. Do you read a student's social class as central in the construction of their identity? Recent Statistics Canada data confirm that the gap is widening between rich and poor Canadians. Do you address the growing gap between the rich and the poor in Canada? (If yes) How so? (If no) Why?
7. What are your thoughts on "streaming" or ability grouping? What are the positives, if any? What are the negatives, if any?
8. What does the term *multicultural education* mean to you? How do you think of this type of teaching in relation to the overall role of the teacher?
9. Why do you think that children of poor families leave school before graduating at a much higher rate than middle-class children? What about First Nations children?
10. What does the term *social justice* mean to you? Do you think the role of the teacher includes social justice? (If so) In what ways? (If not) Why not?

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