Curriculum in the Making
Theory, Practice, and Social Action Curriculum Projects

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Introduction

IN THIS ARTICLE, we explore the ways a Social Action Curriculum Project (SACP) framework offered opportunities for students, in a graduate level education course at the University of Illinois at Chicago, to wrestle with the complexity of an ever-evolving school experience. SACPs are a curriculum process that provide multiple and varied ways for teachers and participants to engage in active democratic participation and experiential learning, based on their priorities and concerns. SACPs are a clear departure from theory-driven coursework that typically dominates college classroom curricula. That is, SACPs challenge normative approaches to schooling in teacher education courses (and subsequently in P–12) settings because they focus on the potential of a *curriculum in the making* through action-oriented, theoretically-grounded projects related to the graduate students' immediate concerns and interests that are reflective of social issues.

We are most interested in analyzing the ways that democratic skills practiced through a SACP framework can push schooling beyond classrooms and schools, out into the public sphere—a place where we believe authentic, integrated, emergent, organic, and rigorous learning can take place. By using a teacher education college classroom curriculum course to experience induction into this approach, the opportunity to further understand how teachers can utilize such a framework with their P–12 students is described. The problem solving, decision making, and political action (Parker, 2001) associated with such public pedagogical learning through SACPs is ripe with challenges and barriers, controversy and differing perspectives, and perhaps most importantly for the learning process, all kinds of consequences.

Public Education, Active Democracies, and the Reality of Schooling

Educational theorists have long recognized that active democracies require sustained dialogue and debate. For instance, John Dewey argued that one of the tenets of public schooling should be to teach the practices, habits, and ideas that support democratic processes. Dewey (1916) contended that the "ideal may seem remote of execution, but the democratic ideal of education is a farcical yet tragic delusion except as the ideal more and more dominates our public system of education" (p. 98). Public schools, he purported, ought to be spaces that support teaching and learning that engenders critical thinking rather than the far more commonplace practices focusing on rote memorization and acquisition of compartmentalized facts. Schools have the "chance to be a miniature community, an embryonic society" (Dewey, 1899, p. 32) if immediate participants act to ensure collaboration, collectivism, and if democratic practices are infused in daily classroom life. Dewey's argument can be found reaffirmed in contemporary curriculum literature. More recently, James Beane (1993) building on related ideas of Dewey and L. Thomas Hopkins (1937) contends, "A curriculum developed apart from the teachers and young people that must live it is grossly undemocratic" (Beane, 1993, p. 18). If the skills supportive of these democratic processes were readily inducted in schools, then this ideal has the potential of permeating society.

Unfortunately, in most P–12 schools today, there is a severe lack of engaging curricula promoting such democratic decision-making and authentic problem solving. Rather, the current ideological movement associated with accountability and top-down mandates from district, state, and federal governments promotes scripted curricula and endless hours of standardized test preparation. As a result, there is very little local control over the teaching and learning that occurs in classrooms between students and teachers. Under threat of school reorganization, closure, and teacher reassignment, educators, especially those in low-income communities populated by students of color, are often under the greatest pressure to conform. This seemingly never-ending assault on learning through the use of fear tactics in the name of raising achievement not only uses a deficit lens to view students but also highlights the gross disparity of an expectation of equity (measured through high-stakes tests) without a foundation of equity (via resources, school funding, etc.).[1] As we challenge the misplaced accountability and the disparity of school funding in order to rethink how education can be, we are reminded that this is not a new dilemma. Even before the passage of No Child Left Behind, Alfie Kohn (1999) cogently argued: "Holding schools 'accountable' for meeting 'standards' usually means requiring them to live up to conventional measures of student performance, and traditional kinds of instruction are most closely geared to—and thus perpetuated by—these measures" (¶31).

Linking Theory with Practice: The Social Action Curriculum Project

A social action curriculum project allows immediate classroom participants to determine what is most important and relevant to them. By focusing on a community or societal problem, the SACP forces students to grapple with personal needs and desires as they relate to the world around them. As students and their teacher engage in SACPs, they not only identify relevant and pressing issues, they work through possible solutions, which in turn provide chances for engagement in contingent action planning to solve their identified issue. The SACP process is described at length in Schultz's (2008) book, *Spectacular Things Happen Along the Way*.[2]

When a social action curriculum framework is utilized, it affords the learner and teacher alike opportunities that resist the current dehumanizing and demeaning practices of so-called "educational reforms" that focus solely on standardized test performance in exchange for an alternative—direct engagement in active democratic participation, thus, transforming the curriculum and themselves. No longer does a cultural literacy-based canon or scripted knowledge (e.g., Hirsch, 1987; Success for All, 2008) drive content in classrooms. Instead, students' own problem posing initiates a curriculum of consciousness where classroom participants become readers of their world, working to make their immediate environment a better place (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970). Further, the potential associated with such a curricular approach diminishes the shackling effects of *public schooling as usual* where decontextualized, fact-based learning is simply done for its own sake. Instead, learning can be an enriching and invigorating space that realizes the potential of an out-of-school-curriculum (Schubert, 1981), a curriculum that pushes conventional education beyond the classroom.

We borrow from Ellsworth's (2005) "learning in the making," to develop this student-focused *curriculum in the making* not simply to follow the whim of students (the often misunderstood "progressive" or "student-centered" classroom). Rather, by leveraging participants' interest to engage in real world problem solving, the *curriculum in the making* becomes a basis for challenging expectations, content-oriented teaching, and emergent possibilities. Allowing college students, especially those who teach or will teach in lower socioeconomic class neighborhoods of color,[3] to experience this kind of curricula offers multiple lines of inquiry related to matters of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and evaluation. It also foments a rethinking of how we approach schooling that highlights practical life skills associated with explicit societal participation.

While we envision such opportunities associated with enacting SACPs, we are cautious not to overly romanticize its potential and possibility. In problematizing SACPs, we embrace Delpit's (2006) imperative that for our poor students of color "to affect change which will allow them to truly progress we must insist on 'skills' *within the context of* critical and creative thinking" (p. 19, emphasis in original). Within this framework our future P–12 students "must be *taught* the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful endeavors" (p. 45, emphasis in original). To do so, these meaningful endeavors must come from the students, be intellectually rigorous, be associated with standards of excellence, and be culturally relevant as purported by curriculum theorizers over the last century from Dewey (1929), Hopkins (1954), and Alberty (1947), to those more recent ideas generated by Beane (1997, 2005), Schubert (2007), or Ladson-Billings (2006). Although we see a great potential in SACPs—especially because it is rooted in such theoretical guidance—we certainly understand that it is not a magic elixir to counter the "accountability-based" school reform efforts and should not be seen as a framework that be used in place of innovative content-based approaches.

A SACP framework requires that students, whether in college or P–12 settings, immerse themselves in the practice of democratic engagement by learning content-specific as well as transferable skills as they navigate the world around them. They learn to participate in mainstream aspects of participatory democracy while also learning "to challenge that mainstream and engage in a concerted public campaign" (Schultz & Oyler, 2006, p. 424). And, although there is an assumption that public education should prepare students to become productive citizens, the typical P–12 school environment does not provide many opportunities for children to practice

this preparation. These schools do little more than pay lip service to this democratic ideal. With so little attention in most schools (or schools of education for that matter) to such curricular orientations, the majority of practicing educators do not have direct experiences enacting such work and often lack the capacity to scaffold this kind of learning project for their students.

Many colleges of education teach about theories of engagement, but more often than not, they fail to encourage students to practice or apply these theories within the college classroom context. This translates into teachers in P–12 settings often forcing their students to memorize political factoids (i.e., the functions of the three branches of government, state capitols, the number of representatives, etc.), but this kind of learning does not readily encourage participatory or change-oriented engagement. As Westheimer and Kahne (2004) explain, most education for democracy focuses on creating citizens that are personally responsible—promoting charity, service, and character—instead of encouraging more participatory or justice-oriented conceptions that focus on promoting social change and taking action. Accordingly, Westheimer and Kahne describe that personally responsible citizens act responsibly in the community; work and pay taxes; obey laws; recycle; give blood; and volunteer to lend a hand in times of crisis. Participatory citizens are active members of community organizations and/or improvement efforts; organize community efforts to care for those in need; promote economic development, or clean up the environment; know how government agencies work; and know strategies for accomplishing collective tasks. Justice-oriented citizens critically assess social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes; seek out and address areas of injustice; and know about democratic social movements and how to effect systemic change (p. 240). How can we expect students to acquire the necessary skills of democratic participation if we do not provide teachers induction in these processes within college classrooms so that opportunities to develop and refine these skills are then fostered in children?

With such little attention paid to teaching students (at any level) how to make or effect change, the SACP framework is one possible way to deal with this dilemma. A SACP pushes students to not only learn but also to practice mainstream aspects of participatory democracy. Students begin to understand how complex local and federal government entities are set up, understand how decisions are made within those entities, and comprehend who has power and why they have power so as to ultimately learn how to navigate such systems, and thus, become agents of change.

Taking Public Education Public:
Out-of-School Curricula and Knowledge in the Making

In 1970, Ivan Illich's controversial call to "deschool society" challenged the status quo trajectory of schooling. His questioning of whether schooling was appropriate and meaningful for those who attended was based on his argument that schooling was not serving individual needs; that schooling had misconstrued notions of progress and achievement; and, that school was a manifestation of consumption and the corporate state. Although our ideas about schooling may not be as radical as Illich's, we resonate strongly with them and think that schooling can offer more to its immediate participants. Connecting Illich's call to what Schubert described as the possibilities of "deschooling schooling" (Schubert, 1989a),[4] we begin to not only rethink what can be done in schools today but to embrace the Schubertian (1981) idea that "life continuously enables reconstruction of our experiential maps of the world… [and] the development of such

understanding is never fully made and always in the making" (p. 186). Schubert's contention that the myriad of curricula extraneous to what is found within schools has tremendous potential as it is comprised of the societal elements with which students come into contact beyond classrooms. These very societal elements can become a part of school curricula through concerted efforts of teachers using SACPs that transcend school buildings and move teaching and learning into broader (public) arenas for investigation, inquiry, and transformation.

Teachers, alongside their students, can develop the required frames of learning as well as gather the necessary experiences for the development of political and civic participation to practice curriculum in public spaces through SACPs. Engaging in the public domain demands that educators reconsider the long-held perspective of teacher as the gatekeeper of knowledge. Curriculum cannot always be preplanned since it emerges as project goals are pursued with authentic, outside audiences. The SACP also views alternative public spaces as ripe for pedagogical exploration. Because of this potential, we echo calls for the creation of a "critical public pedagogy" (Sandlin & Milam, 2008, p. 325) manifested in non-privatized ways (Haiven, 2007) when considering the SACP. Accordingly, we parallel Haiven's critique of privatized resistance, in that we see the engagement in a SACP as having the potential to challenge the apolitical individualism associated with common manifestations of citizenship where "good" citizens are nothing more than consumers. In so doing, we are urging the development of critical citizens who are able to engage in collective critique and action, thus sidestepping the focus on the glorified solitary activist that Haiven critiques as actually fostering, rather than resisting a kind of neoliberal individualism. In this way, the SACP can be conceived as a pedagogical force resistant to the oppressive dimensions of the status quo since it can challenge social inequities while bridging spaces between classrooms and the public sphere.[5]

As the SACP pushes learning into the public sphere, we may abandon our tendency to "center pedagogical practices in schools in a close and regular orbit on curricular goals and objectives, as well as measurable, verifiable educational outcomes" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 5). With this liberation from the controlling facets of traditional school practices and resistance to the often bastardized interpretation of the Tyler Rationale (Schubert, 2007; Tyler, 1949), a multiplicity of pedagogical opportunities emerge beyond conventional curriculum and pedagogy's myopic view (Schubert, 2009). This liberation may lead us to "the outer fringes of education's charted solar system and beyond" and into "other systems of practice and thought" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 6).

Furthermore, challenging the traditional conception of knowledge as a "trafficked commodity of educators and the educational media" and as a "decomposed by-product of something that has already happened to us" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 1) provides a powerful hinge for the argument of emergent SACPs. The *learning self*, as Ellsworth calls it, posits that authentic learning results from our constantly changing self in relation to time, space, and experience, a similar argument to Schubert's (1981) reconstruction of life experience. And, because individuals name the problems most important to them via the SACP, there appears to be a virtually limitlessness potential of this idea as it shifts our understanding of when and where this *learning self* emerges. Ellsworth's theorizing of *knowledge in the making* and the *learning self* represent a fundamental challenge to long-held beliefs about how and where learning takes place, or should take place. Knowledge is redefined not as a means to predict, control, and objectify the world but rather as a vehicle through which exploration of sensations, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, values, and habits is evoked. These explorations are "invented in and through its engagement with pedagogy's force" (Ellsworth, 2005, p. 7) becoming a result of that new experience, particularly in the space where schooling might transcend the schoolhouse.

Storying the Experience: Modes of Inquiry

Narrative inquiry provides a means for us to examine how teaching the framework of a SACP through experiential induction and hands-on learning in a college classroom can be better understood and transferred to P–12 settings. As well, the narrative lens allows us to see how knowledge is constructed outside (school) curricula via the public sphere rather than the bounded classroom.

The narrative emerges through storytelling about experiences, as evidenced in the vignettes that Jon Barcovich provides below. This narration of his thoughts and actions in his role as a student "involves a struggle to gain new and difficult concepts" where "learning [occurs] for the sake of learning" (Hughes & Wiggins, 2008, p. 58). Analysis and introspection of "personal practical knowledge" as the "nexus of the theoretical, the practical, the objective, and the subjective" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 361), helps to seek meaning. Furthermore, *Jon's Narrative* incorporates elements of teacher and student lore. Schubert and Ayers (1999) define teacher and student lore as the artistic practices both teachers and students engage in as they actively seek to learn from their own experiences in classrooms. This construction offers a vivid portrayal through the "practical research and inquiry" that the student conducted "through daily practice" (Schubert, 1989b, p. 282) within the college classroom, and in turn, how this induction experience may affect his practice as a P–12 teacher.

A multiplicity of data informs the following narrative vignette and ensuing discussion including: college classroom dialogue, semi-structured interviews between the professor and the graduate student, student work/artifacts spanning the length of the college course, and a reflective journal kept by the professor throughout the course.

The narrative portrayed is analyzed within the college classroom context, as well as through subsequent reflection. This subsequent reflection about the induction via a SACP is portrayed through the student's storytelling of specific points-of-entry to the experience. These points-of-entry were neither predetermined nor prescribed; rather, the student chose to tell the stories of his experience in his own way. In so doing, Jon chose to tell some parts of his experience and leave out others. Clearly, if another one of the group members or the professor were to tell the story of the classroom induction experience into the SACP, it may be very different from Jon's account. Further, in light of the SACP's focus on developing democratic practices in and out of school, we understand that it may be perceived as problematic that only one student's voice is highlighted in the following narrative. Whereas a multiplicity of voices may add to and/or complicate the potential strength and/or drawbacks of SACP induction, we feel that the emergent student lore from even one student's perspective is valuable to understanding student experience. In this way, the student and the professor were able to dialogue, review classroom artifacts, and examine the narrative points-of-entry in detail in an attempt to illuminate this particular experience. It is not our intent to honor Jon's narrative over the narratives of others, but instead, we allow this one (student) voice to be heard for illustrative purposes. In addition, the subsequent discussion and analysis following Jon's narrative was initiated by the professor drawing on the multiple sources of data, but the interpretations and reflection were synthesized jointly by both the professor and the student.

Jon's Narrative: The Issues of Recycling and Consumption

A Veteran's First Impression

There is a practical reason for everything you will do in this class…. If so, then how can professors do more to contextualize our learning, to make it meaningful? Will our activities lead us to transferable educational knowledge for our students?
—Scribbled in the margins of my notebook from the first day of class

I'd been dragged through some of the most inane things: endless readings, thought papers, reflective journals, often for no apparent reason at all. In those classes you just have to put your head down and bull through it, earn your A and move on. Then there are others, the ones that show you something you haven't seen before—the ones that make sense for what you do in the day-to-day with your students. These are harder in a way, getting pushed into something new, taking risks, and being uncomfortable. And yet, after all these many semesters those are the only ones this old grad school veteran can remember. I've come to believe that the courses you remember are not the easy, the safe, or the ploddingly predictable ones but the ones in which you're forced to learn something you can actually use as a teacher.

Curriculum by *and* for Students? Really?

You know what really pisses me off? The fact that 140 of the 150 cars that get mileage over 50 mpg aren't even sold in the U.S.….they can still sell Joe American a $50,000+ Land Rover that gets 12 mpg, because we don't know any better or don't care. No, we haven't forced them to sell us those cars yet; we haven't yet given them a reason to.
—My response during whole class problem identification for a SACP

My contribution, *Rampant Consumerism*, added to the growing list on the blackboard. How many people did I know who bought things simply because they **had** to have them; a newer laptop, another iPod, a bigger TV, and, yes even a gas guzzling SUV? The wanton excess literally drives me crazy.

It was an interesting activity, but I didn't immediately grasp where all these ideas were going to lead us (some other ideas included gentrification, recycling, gang violence, rude people that didn't say hi to you, etc.). Sure, they made you angry, and maybe even made you think, but what did this have to do with teaching kids? Slowly I began to realize that this **wasn't** for our kids—at least not yet.

As we were asked to think about what we would do to change these things, I began to glimpse the process involved in breaking away from that small room and out into the world to which we benignly retire every night as we file out of class, happy to leave all that learnin' right there in the classroom where it belongs. How could you get your message across to others while advocating for change? We would have to experience this process firsthand in this course before we could share it with our students. We were going to practice this concept experientially rather than simply learning about it from afar so that we eventually lead our students in a similar endeavor.

The graduate class was being asked to assume the role of students, but at the same time, we were to preserve our knowledge as educators. It was initially confusing yet intriguing, elusive but tantalizing, and at the end of the day and most importantly, it was useful, transcendent. I left that night with the realization that this project was emerging out of us, out of our real experience and had the potential to stay with us even after we slipped away from those tired walls and out into the night.

Contentious Negotiations and the Power of Perseverance

I don't get it. I have no idea what we're supposed to be doing. To be honest, at this point, I think we might all flunk.
                                                —My comment during initial stages of SACP planning

When we first met, it seemed like we were all over the place. It initially made sense to congregate; all of us interested in recycling, but it became quickly apparent that we had very different ideas about how to approach the project. I don't think anyone, including myself, really knew what we were supposed to do. Too many voices talking about too many things all at once. Some wanted to send out surveys. A few thought to write letters to aldermen. Still others thought the point was to devise a unit to be taught in some hypothetical classroom. Our most skeptical group member questioned whether or not such a project had the academic rigor to serve as the central component of the curriculum. By the end of that first night, several were discouraged enough to not really care what we did, so long as we did something. Our first brainstorming session was at best simply chaotic and at some points downright confrontational. I left class that night discouraged and unsatisfied.

When we reconvened, we continued to grapple with the process until Brian conferenced with our group. He told us that the deliberation that we were engaged in was healthy and could, under ideal conditions, take months to resolve. His encouragement led to the realization that what I thought was confusion and discord was actually a component of our negotiations. We were in the midst of a process of deliberating about our differences, finding those points of commonality and divergence deep within our own personal beliefs, and ultimately struggling to find consensus through compromise. Armed with this knowledge, I began mentally reframing our contentious deliberations. A certain momentum eventually emerged as we began to formulate a concerted action plan incorporating all of our many ideas. But, I did wonder that if such deliberations were this problematic for us as adults, how might our students fare in such situations? As our action plan gradually grew in complexity and scope, we realized that the SACP could, in fact, replace a traditional subject area approach with an integrated curriculum based on student inquiry.

Some of us would challenge our families to reconsider recycling by documenting what went into the trash. Others would investigate the role of city hall in making recycling more available by writing letters to local officials. Another set off to visit a landfill to document the unnecessary waste accumulation. All these things were surely connected to recycling, but more importantly, they were connected to each of our interests and to our areas of influence. I left that night encouraged, satisfied, and with a renewed faith in the power of perseverance.

Into the Public Sphere

What are you doing!? You can't do that! Okay, I'm walking away now. If you get thrown in Target jail, I'm not bailing you out!
—My wife's response to leaving post-it notes with eco-friendly messages scrawled on them in the aisles of a big box store in Chicago.

I had scribbled, "Store Visit," on the growing list of possible action plan activities. The idea had actually come to me before, but until now I didn't know what to do about it. It was an eerie sight, a fifty-foot tall logo perched smugly over the hapless and unwitting scurrying in and out of the revolving door like lemmings over a cliff aglow in neon. I wondered how much we really think about what we do once we cross that threshold and begin consuming. I wanted to get that idea off that blackboard and out into people's faces. As I was initially more interested in counter hegemony and anti-consumerism rather than simply recycling, I decided to devise a campaign based on agitation and culture jamming by staging a public demonstration in a big box store. The flexible nature of the SACP allowed me to explore this related topic while remaining under the larger project umbrella of recycling.

I was brought back to the video we watched in class about Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping and his efforts to avert the *Shopocalypse* (VanAlkemade, 2007). Reverend Billy could be described as a public performance artist, but what he seeks to do is far more than entertain. He engages in a focused and powerful campaign of culture jamming to warn the unwitting "audience" against the evils of overconsumption and the hegemonic force that is corporate-driven consumerism. The reverend and his "congregation" hold religious services in public places preaching against the "sins of shopping" all in an effort to create a momentary displacement of self, allowing us to reconsider our consumption. At first glance, I was taken off guard, tickled pink, and entirely fascinated with the spectacle.

Inspiration struck as I entered the big box armed with my digital camera, a marker, and a stack of post-it notes. At first I was nervous, but as I turned down the aisle filled with paper plates, paper bags, and plastic silverware, I knew what I had to do. Initial uncertainty was replaced with resolve as, right there in that aisle, I whipped out my Sharpie and scribbled a note, placing it right under a shelf of paper plates. It read: "*Mother Earth would appreciate it if you bought a plate and washed it*!"

I waited there, surreptitiously perusing the dishwashing fluid until someone came along. It was a young couple that first drew near. They read my note, raised their eyebrows quizzically, chuckled, then walked off. I don't know if the intervention stopped them from buying those plates, but I like to think so. I was suffused with a sublime sense of satisfaction and a renewed sense of purpose.

I spent the next three hours up and down aisles leaving post-its for whoever would read them. I documented everything, with my mortified wife's reluctant assistance, and compiled a picture book to share with my classmates. This experience was like no other that I'd had before in a college course. What I was doing was something personally vital and relevant to me. In that exact moment I realized what a SACP was supposed to be; I was exhilarated.

Taking This to *My* Students

My mind was racing with all the ways my students could engage in a similar process and experience this same rush of emotion. If schooling could transcend the traditional trappings of schools in this way, extending itself into the lives and communities that we live, treating the issues that we hold most dear, then what great, endless potential it could contain.

Earlier this school year I wandered unwittingly into the lunchroom to see (and smell) the cafeteria fare that my kids were regularly subjected to. They reluctantly poked and prodded the greasy, grubby "French toast sticks" served that day. That afternoon I asked how many days they were fed something they just couldn't bring themselves to eat. Apparently, in an average week, three of five lunches were discarded untouched. I wondered if this happens in other schools that aren't populated by students of color. I wanted to empower them to do something about it, but I couldn't fathom what or how. The same helplessness that I confronted and conquered below that big box neon sign, my students felt in that moment. As this next school year approaches, I hope to help them develop the tools to make those changes that were, until now, too abstract to bring to life.

If all our prospective teachers could experience a similar yet highly personal realization, then what great change we could make alongside our students. The induction in a SACP is unique—I can't think of another instance in college when I was afforded such practical insight—since it allows those of us in a teacher education setting to experience firsthand what we hope our P–12 students might experience. Our task as educators then becomes an exploration conducted side-by-side with our students in search of meaning and equity, a function of our existence and our experiences in relation to one another instead of an isolated, compulsory foray into the minutia of all the knowledge that has already been discovered by those that came before.

Deliberating Divergent Perspectives:
Experience, Negotiation, and Induction

The induction of college students into the process of the SACP is a vital but normally absent link to engaging students in emergent curriculum founded in the democratic ideal. Central to this induction process is engagement in discussion amidst divergent viewpoints. The college classroom was transformed into a space where practicing and future teachers were left to deliberate as students. This deliberation may vary to a great degree. In Jon's narrative, the deliberation spanned the gamut from peaceable, consensus-making to the contentious discussions seen in the narrative describing discussions as "downright confrontational."[6] This debate, whatever its form, forces students to engage in cooperative inquiry as group members' perspectives are unified by a common purpose and social interest. In this case, the issue of recycling allowed the group to share a vision of what they were ultimately trying to accomplish and challenged them to rally behind the issue at hand in order to arrive at the culmination of that shared vision.

Beyond the classroom, group interactions and opportunities for engaging with differing outsider perspectives present themselves in varying ways. Students are forced to navigate complex systems traditionally found outside of school. Jon's attempt to bring his message to others by peppering a big box with anti-consumerism subvertisements (see AdBusters, 2009; Sandlin & Milam, 2008) highlights one of the multitude of venues where public pedagogy can take shape.

These forays into environments—especially public ones outside of the normal boundary of schools—required authentic, and perhaps uncomfortable, interaction with people holding different agendas. Equally as important, they required the students to be well-informed via research and data about their issue. Inducting prospective educators in this entire process represents a necessary and deliberately orchestrated connection between the pre-service teacher preparation program and the realities of designing, adapting, and implementing curriculum in the P–12 setting. As Jon remarks, moving through the varied stages of the SACP on a personal level allowed him to connect with and begin to understand how it could be realized for his students.

The traditional school classroom limits opportunities for authentic engagement, or even confrontation. The broader community on the other hand, offers a public square to tackle social issues. Because authentic problem solving, by its nature, cannot be conducted in the hypothetical, these public spaces—traditionally seen as non-educational for school purposes—become integral. The narrative offers insight into this phenomenon: The group discusses a highly political issue and engages it within the community at large while detailing comprehensive methods of confronting consumerism and strategizing how to enact local change. This group's actions highlight how entering spaces atypical of schooling provide opportunities for challenging pedagogical assumptions (i.e., that school learning can only take place in classrooms, that teachers need to be experts in all content explored in classes they teach, that teachers must know the results of discovery or exploration before engaging in inquiry with students). This understanding can be drawn from the group's obstacles with surveying or how the group leveraged familial ties to increase awareness about recycling. These experiences typify the boundless, untapped potential of what schooling can be by escaping the confined classroom and entering the public sphere.

Public Barriers, Challenges, and Consequences: Curricula outside the Comfort Zone

With the redefinition of where learning can flourish, students engaged in SACP confront challenges and barriers as part of the process as they wrestle with the prospect of interaction with other entities outside of the classroom. Although traditional school settings avoid conflict by adhering to contrived textbook learning, the SACP seizes opportunities that arise from these obstacles. These potential difficulties are ripe with learning opportunities, presenting participants with multiple challenges with which to engage. Importantly, neither teachers nor students know the outcomes prior to action. Rather, working to solve the identified issue allows for the learning to evolve in organic ways. In Jon's narrative we see how his group problematized complex exchanges as part of their efforts. We also see how the novelty of emergent curriculum is both comprehensive and rigorous. When working to overcome impediments, the group focused on their envisioned end result (e.g., evidenced by their shared description of the community problem they all wanted to solve and the ensuing negotiation of contingent action planning) and was able to harness each individual's personal capacity to overcome hurdles as fuel for her or his pursuits (e.g., no one group member was assigned a specific part of the action plan, but instead, all were free to develop a task or topic that personally interested them or tapped into their expertise: leveraging familial ties to increase awareness, lobbying in the community, or guerilla communications campaigning in a big box retailer). And yet, the group assigned equal value to the means of carrying out the process rather than focusing entirely on an end goal or product. The project's

culmination was not a premeditated endpoint. Rather, it emerged organically as the group collectively engaged in weighing a wide array of possible courses of action and considering various modes of action planning. The fluid nature of these negotiations created an end goal that remained emergent throughout and that focused on the process of realizing desired results.

This process orientation was evident in multiple situations presented in the narrative. Overcoming time limitations was a challenge the group identified as an issue in achieving their goals. The group struggled to fully articulate and implement parts of their action planning in the time allowed by the college course and was forced to curtail or discontinue certain lines of inquiry that they would be unable to fully realize. For example, the group did not even attempt to enact a "recycling rally" that they believed might have brought needed public attention to their cause. Further, the group discovered that certain entities, like government agencies, were not responsive to written communication. Likewise, administering surveys did not always yield reliable and trustworthy data (e.g., in an online questionnaire to the classroom community through *Survey-Monkey*, the group did not receive a large sample for analysis—actually only two classmates responded and their responses provided only cursory insight to the questions raised), so they were forced to once again reform their action planning. Similarly, Jon's convincing of his wife to participate in the public communication campaign clearly indicates not only the need for persuasion but also the necessity of content knowledge to back up one's argument. For example, Jon's wife initially saw his actions more like vandalism than as an opportunity to engage in critical public pedagogy or democratic action. After sharing his views of SACPs and his vision of challenging rampant consumerism, Jon persuaded his wife to support his action and to take part alongside him. In this case, Jon convinced a seemingly skeptical, yet authentic audience in his wife to aid in his cause, potentially challenging others in the store who bore witness to their messages.

Building consensus within the group was also a sticking point, albeit for very different reasons depending on which participants discussed the topic. This point of contention was most clear when the group was trying to identify the issue and decide on ways to take action. The disagreements inevitably slowed progress and formulation of a concrete, defined action plan, poignantly highlighted when some students reached the point of not caring as long as they did something. This example is important as it highlights the complexity of engaging is a SACP. Nevertheless, these clearly surmountable barriers should not discourage engagement in issues that generate conflict. Rather, this conflict serves as an integral part of the SACP as it reflects the reality of living in a democratic and pluralistic society fraught with the possibility of rigorous debate and exchange.

The emergent nature of the SACP often requires that students revisit the action plan to revise, refine, and reconsider activities. This process of refining the action plan activities was continuous and ongoing throughout the entire project and is key to the development of the transferable skills that students take away from such experiences. Impediments to initial framing of action planning activities often spur students to explore and undertake entirely new directions to achieve their ends. It is in this fluid, organic, unpredictable nature of the SACP that we find one of its greatest strengths since students engaged in the process of identifying, planning, and enacting a SACP bring varying experiences, perspectives, ideas, and approaches to bear on how a particular problem can and should be solved. It forces students to constantly evaluate and reconsider the effectiveness of their efforts while the project reflects the realities of a complex external world. And, neither teacher nor students are able to readily anticipate specifically how

their actions will be received or what sorts of obstacles they will face as they take on an issue they are passionate about.

Because of this emergent and integrated nature of the SACP, it has the potential to drive much of, or possibly the entirety of, a curriculum in the P–12 setting. This kind of approach to curriculum begs the question and challenge of its sufficient academic rigor. Can a curriculum devised and articulated in this way encompass the depth and breadth of all that is worth knowing in the classroom and beyond? How will students know what they are "supposed to know?" This issue became part of the process of enacting a SACP in the teacher education context—graduate college students wore hats both as students themselves engaged in the SACP and as practicing or future teachers. Perhaps the thought from one of the most reluctant members of the Jon's group demonstrates the potential to transform how we think about classrooms: "At first I thought the SACP was indefensible…then I experienced it… and realized that I could cover all the standards for every subject area, and I could prove it to my principal!"

As current and future teachers experientially grapple with the potential of the many points of curricular intersection that come out of from the SACP, the possibilities for pedagogical exploration become increasingly more apparent. Traditionally compartmentalized subject area competencies (i.e., effective persuasive writing, mathematical computations, and scientific reasoning) are transformed into an integrated toolkit capable of carrying out purposeful social action. This social imperative creates relevancy, context, and purpose. Motivating participants to engage in the personally relevant activities associated with the SACP becomes less of an obstacle than those commonly found in traditional schooling. Students not only pick the issue at hand but have the space, opportunity, and are challenged with the responsibility to solve their identified issue in the manner most readily suggested by a collectively and organically budding toolkit of skills and knowledge of their own making.

What then can be the end result of a SACP? On a superficial level, the purpose is to address social problems of immediate importance to its implementers. SACPs provide the opportunity to practice the very democratic and active participation that is often missing from classrooms, and from society as a whole. But when examined more thoroughly, however, SACPs do not necessarily restrict their implications to only these explicit, stated objectives. There are other consequences that materialize out of authentic engagement in this type of public pedagogy. By virtue of its public nature, the SACP affects all of those within range of witnessing its implementation. Within Jon's account of his culture jamming and public pedagogical communications, we see people that might have had their minds changed about the implications of their consuming. In that moment when passers-by comes across a message scrawled on a post-it note in a big box store in Chicago, it is hoped that they experience détournement in what Adbusters' founder Kalle Lasn describes as a "rerouting of images…to reverse or subvert their meaning, thus reclaiming them" (Lasn, 1999, p. 103) and, therefore, allowing spaces for their own meaning making. Whether the passers-by experience détournement in ways Lasn describes is clearly debatable, but the experience certainly pushes for a more nuanced understanding or interpretation of individuals' consumption habits.

This moment represents an opportunity to redefine of our relation to others and the world around us and is both corporeal and emotional (Sandlin & Callahan, 2009; Sandlin & Milam, 2008). The contingent action planning endeavors associated with the SACP push against the status quo and business as usual, forcing challenges to individuals' comfort zones through newly opened windows of awareness. The artifact created by Jon to approximate his experience was a "nearly wordless" picture book containing pictures of him in physical space, the only text being

the messages left for others to read and the emotions he felt upon carrying out his campaign (rage, astonishment, inspiration, triumph then satisfaction). Admittedly, it was Jon's intention to embody both the physical and emotive response that was created by this version of guerrilla culture jamming. In this way, too, the message of the SACP also speaks to those for whom it was not expressly intended. As Maxine Greene (1995) contends, individuals can find themselves becoming "wide awake" where heightened consciousness furthers change. SACPs have the potential to affect all of those with whom they come into contact through the opening of un-tapped arenas of pedagogical potential, and their ability to embody a curriculum in the making.

NOTES

1. Although many states (including Illinois) have tried to rethink funding schema, most U.S. school districts use a funding model based on local property taxes. Because of this, there is a disparity between rural/urban schools and more affluent (typically suburban) areas. This translates into differences in everything from class size and teacher qualifications to books and building quality. Yet, despite the inequality of resource distribution and allocation, the rhetoric (via policies like No Child Left Behind) decrees that *all* students be "proficient" (in reading) by 2014 and schools make "adequate yearly progress" towards this proficiency (see Kozol, 2005).

2. Aside from Schultz's (2008) account of a fifth-grade classroom in a school serving Chicago's Cabrini Green public housing neighborhood engaged in a year-long SACP, educators interested in an established framework tangentially related to the process of doing a SACP may refer to the Center for Civic Education's *Project Citizen* curriculum and the materials associated with their student-guided, public policy program <http://www.civiced.org/project_citizen.php>.

3. We focus explicitly on teachers who will work with low-income students of color because it aligns with the university's urban mission focused on access and diversity. We see great potential in a SACP's ability to empower historically-marginalized youth because of its inherent critical nature capable of challenging existing power structures. Additionally, students of low SES are traditionally (ware)housed in under-performing schools and are therefore most at risk of being immersed in curricula driven by rote, factual memorization, skill and drill teaching practices, and are often bereft of meaningful models of democratic engagement and participation. Whereas we focus on this demographic for the purpose of this article, we strongly believe SACPs are vital, empowering, revolutioniz-ing, politically feasible, and needed in higher SES contexts as well.

4. Schubert describes how he became a learner alongside his elementary-aged students, challenging common assumptions related to schooling. Instead of being an omnipotent teacher or following predetermined scripts, Schubert looked to his students for what was worthwhile and allowed them to inquire and lead each other via their own curiosities. Echoing Illich (1970), Schubert (with students) rethought the educational space.

5. Here we follow Sandlin and Milam's (2008) interpretation of culture jamming as "the act of resisting and re-creating commercial culture in order to transform society" (p. 323). Their interpretation allows SACP participants to challenge widely consumed cultural messages through a powerful methodology of public display in order to carry the SACP to a broader audience, thereby creating new spaces to explore possibilities of subsequent applications of pedagogy. Whereas we see the potential of such critical public pedagogy through avenues of direct participation and active engagement involved in a SACP, we only tangentially ground the SACP in this theoretical foothold. We are fully aware of the criticisms that exist in such often-privatized, shortsighted, or even counter-productive manifesta-tions of public engagement (see Haiven, 2007; Sandlin & Callahan, 2009; Scatamburlo-D'Annibale, 2009).

6. Jon's description of group interactions raises serious questions about the nature and purpose of such deliberation. Whereas there was no clear objective related to deliberation aside from working to solve the group's identified problem, many aspects of this deliberation need to be problematized since consensus is often seen as binary or two-dimensional when it is much more complex. For instance, there was no directive to build consensus, as consensus often silences voices, but this SACP group clearly sought out such spaces in their interaction.

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