cation," not civic or citizenship education.

The 1971 report of the Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education criticized the lack of connection and communication between precollege educators and political science faculty and the content of instruction about politics and government in elementary and secondary schools. Precollege courses were faulted for their lack of realism and comparative perspective on U.S. politics, for too much emphasis on institutions and legal aspects of government, and for a reliance on memorization and rote learning.

The Committee identified eight objectives for precollegiate political science education:

1. knowledge about the realities of political life as well as the cultural ideals of American democracy
2. knowledge about political behavior and processes as well as formal governmental institutions and legal structures
3. knowledge about other political systems and particularly about the international system
4. a capacity to think about political phenomena in conceptually sophisticated ways
5. understanding and skill in social science inquiry
6. a capacity to make judgments about political decisions and politics
7. an understanding of the social, psychological, historical, and cultural origins of their own political attitudes and values and the capacity to critically analyze personal and social implications of alternative values
8. the skills to participate effectively and democratically in the life of society

(Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education 1971, 434–37)

This education committee defined the profession's educational mission in terms of providing guidelines and resources about the analytical skills and subjects of political science rather than on the normative goals associated with citizenship education. Successive APSA education committees and projects have adopted the recommendations of the 1971 Education Committee report with respect to contents but have not implemented the recommendations for greater involvement with precollege teachers and students.

Recent precollegiate projects developed lessons for students and lesson plans for teachers, including *Lessons on the Constitution: Supplements to High School Courses in American History; American Government and Civics*; *Ideas of the Founders on Constitutional Government: Resources for Teachers of History and Government*; and "APSA Guidelines for Teacher Training: Recommendations from the American Political Science Association for Certifying Precollegiate Teachers of Civics, Government and Social Studies" (*PS: Political Science & Politics* 1994, 261–62.)

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Review of National Standards for Civics and Government

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Should there be national standards for civics and government for students in primary and secondary school, and if so, what shall they be? Responding to a congressional declaration of national education goals in the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994*, the Center for Civic Education has developed a 179-page booklet entitled, *National Standards for Civics and Government* (1994).

The Student Achievement and Citizenship goal of this legislation proclaims that "students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including . . . civics and government . . . so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment" (preface, v). Consequently, after an introduction that makes the case for education in civics and describes goals, standards, and skills, this work lays out content and performance standards in an outline form for grades K–4 (13–40), 5–8 (43–83), and 9–12 (89–137).

https://doi.org/10.2307/420193 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This federal project was initiated by state governors, and the proposed standards are for reference only. That is a good thing for two reasons. First, Americans tend to resist the imposition of civic or governmental standards of any kind; the debate over flag burning indicates a widespread aversion to the use of governmental authority to enforce a pattern of behavior that most people engage in voluntarily. Second, this effort at a statement of standards is both carelessly written and misdirected in its abstract conceptual approach. After presenting the basis for my two criticisms, I will conclude by suggesting an alternative approach for teachers of civics or government.

Careless Mistakes

The conceptual outlines make for tedious reading. It will take a diligent and imaginative teacher to plow through the outline appropriate for his or her grade level and convert it into a lively lesson plan, especially since there is no accompanying text, bibliography, or sample syllabus. In addition, the reader must figure out that the curriculum is presented at three different levels, which causes both repetition and elaboration as one moves from the curriculum for grades K–4 to grades 5–8 and then grades 9–12. The key headings of the outlines remain fundamentally the same (in some cases they are identical); subdivisions are added to provide further elaboration for the higher grade levels.

But sometimes the same material is unintentionally presented differently. The booklet's authors produce a page of their outline in their introduction, page 4, for illustration. The illustration is said to come from page 118–19, which comes from the grades 9–12 outline. The major heading ("How does the American political system provide for choice and opportunities for participation?") actually appears on page 117, with the illustrative subdivision on pages 118–19. In addition, virtually the same material is also produced at pages 68–69, in the outline for grades 5–8.

And yet, what is presented on page 4 as coming from pages 118–19 contains an elaboration not presented in the source. The passage from page 4 includes these two topics under the heading "Political Communication:"

—explain the meaning and importance of freedom of the press
—evaluate the role in American politics of television, radio, the press, newsletters, data bases, and emerging means of communication, e.g., the internet, faxes, electronic mail

The version of the second item as it actually appears on page 118 does not include any examples of "emerging means of communication," and the version of the first item on page 69 reads "explain the importance of freedom of the press to [sic] informed participation in the political system."

. . . Americans tend to resist the imposition of civic or governmental standards of any kind . . .

A second source of carelessness concerns the numerous quotations presented on the borders of almost every page of the book. The passages come from the Constitution, the *Federalist Papers*, presidents and justices of the Supreme Court, and other authorities on both American government and government in general. With the exception of the Constitution and (for some reason) Aristotle's *Politics*, authors and dates are given but the speeches, books, or documents are omitted. I enjoyed reading these passages, even if the citations were missing. Perhaps teachers will take this as a challenge to identify the unidentified text.

This task is made more difficult, however, by the fact that several of the dates are incorrect. I found six mistakes: (1) on page 40, the Lincoln passage, concerning the Know-Nothings, is identified as "(c. 1859)," when it came from his 1854 Peoria Speech; (2) on page 52, the second article of the Articles of Confederation is quoted and then simply identified as "Articles of Confederation (1788)," when the ratification date was 1781 (it is correctly given in the outline for grades 9–12, on page 99) and our current Constitution was framed in 1787; (3) on page 82, the Lincoln passage about "no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet" is dated "(c. 1859)" when it comes from his July 4, 1861 Special Message to Congress, and it could not have been before the South attempted to secede (the passage quoted is also not precise); (4); on page 106, another passage from Lincoln, this one on slavery, is misdated 1853, when it comes from a fragment he wrote in 1858; (5) on page 107, a passage from John Marshall about the nature of the union is misdated 1810 when it comes from the famous *McCulloch v. Maryland*, decided in 1819; and (6), a passage from Learned Hand, to the effect that "liberty lies in the hearts of men and women, not simply in constitutions," is misdated 1941 when it comes from a famous 1944 speech.

Difficulties with the Conceptual Outline

Teachers will have difficulty using these outlines to create engaging classroom inquiries because the material is presented as if the task were simply one of imparting conceptual information. And sometimes words are used without sufficient attention to their appropriateness, or distinctions are made that are too sophisticated or not sufficiently clarified.

The main headings of the K–4 curriculum concern what government is and should do, the basic "values and principles of American democracy," how those values and principles are embodied in the Constitution, the relationship between the United States and other nations, and "the roles of the citizen in American democracy." It's unfortunate that the authors chose 'values' to accompany principles, since the former term connotes a mere personal preference whereas

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the latter term suggests a generally applicable and defensible standard. Of course, if the difference between the two terms had been explained, then teachers in grades 9–12 could have been invited to ask students whether they thought American government stood for anything beyond protection of personal preferences, and if so, when and how.

The authors also introduce distinctions between power and authority (16) and limited and unlimited governments (20). Limited government is described with reference to the rule of law and effective controls over the powers of the rulers (20). The distinction between power and authority is important but probably should wait until grades 5–8.

In a section on "the basic values and principles of American democracy," we read that "important beliefs Americans have about themselves and their government (23) include "freedom of religion, speech, the press, and . . . the rule of law." While the importance of work is noted, a straightforward mention of the rights of "life, liberty, and property" must await grades 5–8 (66).

The grades 5–8 outline elaborates on the meaning of government, the significance of the Constitution, and the foundations of the American political system. In place of government, the authors now introduce and attempt to distinguish the terms civic life, politics, and government (45–46). The distinction between private life and civic life is important and clear, and further elaboration is presented for grades 9–12.

The distinction between politics and government, however, is not so clear; the former is defined in terms of ways in which binding decisions are made, while the latter is defined in terms of the people and institutions with authority to make and carry out or enforce laws. This treatment resembles the distinction known to political scientists between politics, as opinion formation and legislation, and administration, or the implementation of legal decisions. Without elaboration, which would make the distinction and its importance clear to teachers, I think it is best to drop it and concentrate on the clearer and more important distinction between the private sphere and the public sphere.

An examination of how the same topic is treated for grades 9–12 (89–91) confirms this point. After using a few more phrases to describe politics as the power to make and/or influence decisions, and government as the formal institutions with the authority to make and implement binding decisions, the authors discuss the necessity of politics and government, taken together, in contradistinction to individuals in society. Then, after elaborating on the difference between limited and unlimited government (cf. pages 91–92 with page 20), they write that "students should be able to explain and evaluate the argument that civil society is a prerequisite of limited government" (93).

We may quibble over whether the terms should not have been reversed (with limited government the prerequisite for civil society), but the larger point is that for limited government, which is implicitly identified with good government, the distinction between the voluntary sphere of civil society and the governmental or public sphere is well presented. The unsuccessful attempt to make a coordinate distinction between politics and government, however, may detract from the significance of the fundamental public-private distinction.

The section on the nature and purposes of constitutions (for grades 5–8) explains how "constitution" may refer to a document and/or form of government, and that constitutional government requires "effective ways to enforce [the constitution's] limitations." That is fine, but the authors run the risk of confusing their audience when they write "in the United States, as well as in some other nations, a constitution is a form of **higher law** that **establishes** the powers of government and limits them . . ." (48, bold in original).

Much better to say that the Constitution is fundamental law, leaving the term "higher law" for notions of natural law, such as we find in the Declaration of Independence, and divine law, which Martin Luther King, Jr., refers to when he defines and defends civil disobedience, in his famous "Letter From Birmingham Jail." The authors' treatment of the Constitution as 'higher law,' which is repeated for grades 9–12 (94), would make it difficult for teachers to figure out how to confront the question of civil disobedience. This is an intriguing and engaging topic, since it was an important part of the Civil Rights Movement, and yet much of that movement's success depended on respect for the rule of law. Can civil disobedience be reconciled with constitutional government? What is the difference between appealing to the Supreme Court to nullify racial segregation laws in the name of the Constitution and appealing to the divine law?

For a work that repeatedly discusses the importance of students' learning how to make arguments, it is strange that the topic of civil disobedience is not discussed. A serious consideration of King's "Letter," especially if combined with *Brown v. Board of Education* and an argument about the difference between the two different kinds of appeals to justice would have been instructive, and it would have told a lot about American government.

Finally, in the subsection on alternative ways of organizing constitutional governments (96), two points about parliamentary government in Britain need emphasis—that the British constitution is unwritten, which means that while courts interpret laws, an act of parliament is supreme; and while bicameralism exists, the House of Lords is not a coordinate legislative body with the House of Commons.

The section on the foundations of the American political system begins with an account of American constitutional government, which is followed by a description of the distinctive characteristics of American society—the absence of feudalism, the existence of a frontier, large-scale and continuing immigration, and widespread ownership of property. The next subsection begins with the question, "what is American political culture?" This term, which many political scientists use, is not defined; the reader

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is left to infer, from the context, that "political culture" comprehends our traits and our conflicts. (When this material is repeated for grades 9–12, at pages 113ff., political culture is not defined there either.) And while America is said to be "less divisive and violent than . . . other countries," due to its "constitutional framework," four "major exception[s]" are noted: "the Civil War, labor unrest, civil rights struggles, and the opposition to the war in Vietnam" (56).

If Americans could be expected to agree on anything, I think it would be the importance of constitutional government on the one hand and the Civil War, as the unique test of whether such a government can be maintained, on the other hand. Of course, teachers need not accept such a proposition at face value. After having their students read some of Lincoln's speeches, and especially the "Gettysburg Address," teachers might turn to the conflicts over civil rights and the war in Vietnam, both of which took place in the 1960s. Then the class could engage in a discussion of the similarities and differences between these conflicts. Thus, in place of an innocuous list, which does not seem to do justice to the significance of the Civil War, we have the suggestion of a lesson plan and an interesting inquiry.

In the material for grades 9–12, the discussion of limited and unlimited governments includes a further distinction, among unlimited governments, between authoritarian and totalitarian governments (92). Examples of the former distinction are given, but examples of the latter are not, although they do appear in Index B (148).

Second, in the section on the "values and principles . . . basic to constitutional democracy," the authors introduce the terms "classical liberalism" and "classical republicanism." These terms are intended to convey the two related but distinct concepts of the protection of individual rights and the deliberative activity of a popular citizen body. But the terms are difficult to treat so distinctly, even though some political scientists and historians have done just that.

For example, the writers discuss democracy under liberalism, not republicanism, and under republicanism they introduce the idea of "civic virtue," which implies an active citizenry, if not some form of popular government. In addition, the writers claim that "the basic premises of liberalism and democracy are joined in the Declaration of Independence, where they are stated as 'self-evident truths.' " This is misleading, since the Declaration does not discuss democracy, and the notion of consent of the governed was understood to comprehend a limited monarchy as well as republics.

Furthermore, in accordance with an earlier statement to the effect that "American society is perpetually 'unfinished,' " this would have been a good place to indicate that democracy was viewed differently at the time of our constitutional founding. Governments "instituted among men" were not understood to require "one person one vote." Altogether apart from slavery, which implicates natural equality, and the nonenfranchising of women, which introduces the question of domestic life and its relation to political life, property qualifications for suffrage and for office holding were common.

These important changes in American political life should be treated fully. Such a treatment might include these questions: in what ways are we perhaps less democratic than we were? and does more democracy always mean better government? The first question is intended to get at the significance of the increased size of the country and population; the second question points to the lack of accountability of the people, say for their ignorance or their passions.

Conclusion: What About National Standards for Civics?

The most obvious shortcomings of this book are avoidable. The attractive quoted passages should have been fully identified, and each one should have been correctly dated. More attention should have been paid to the terms that are used and the distinctions that are made. Finally, the conceptual outlines should have been reduced in length and accompanied by illustrative texts and ample discussions of illustrative cases from political history. These remarks assume that courses in civics should provide accurate information, provoke inquiry, and develop the ability to make an argument. To do this, important conflicts, either between individual rights and the common good or between rights themselves (including the right of the majority), need to be presented, and thoughtful argument concerning controversial issues must be encouraged. The end, civic education, is desirable, but the means presented in the standards need improvement.

In fairness to the authors of the work, it should be acknowledged that the task of setting standards for civics and government is inherently more difficult than setting standards for other subjects, such as mathematics or literature. It is easier, I think, to describe a progression of math or reading skills that need to be learned over a period of years of schooling than it is to describe a comparable progression regarding civics and government. (The current controversy over national standards for history indicates the kind of controversy that would develop over civics standards, especially if they were mandatory.) It is hard to imagine a comparable mathematics discussion to a discussion of civil disobedience or abortion, to name two prominent political topics.

Education in politics involves more than moving from the simple to the complex. On the one hand, a civics curriculum should impart basic information to future voters and potential office holders. On the other hand, the curriculum should cultivate skills in logical reasoning and effective argument. One task may conflict with the other and, in addition, experts are likely to disagree on how each task should be performed.

Perhaps the closest that we can come to making useful suggestions to primary and secondary school teachers is to ask the most experienced and able teachers to give ex-

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amples of what they have taught with success. I suspect those examples will involve classic speeches and writings and the most significant events in American political history, e.g., the Revolution, the framing and ratifying of the Constitution, the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, some examples should come from political history generally, such as the French Revolution and the World Wars.

Any general treatment of the concepts of government should be illustrated by specific examples. If that is done, we will discover that Americans agree more on matters of procedure, such as the rule of law, than they agree on substance, but that even where they disagree, they tend to frame their arguments in terms of rights. Both the procedures associated with the rule of law and the concept of individual rights say a lot about American politics, or, as some would say, American political culture.

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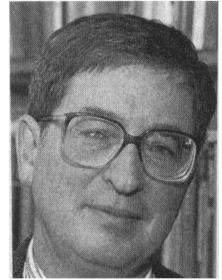
About the Author



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Symbols as Substance in National Civics Standards

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In the first chapter of his path-breaking *The Making of Citizens* Charles Merriam observed, ". . . every modern state develops a far-reaching program designed to maintain the morale of its constituent members at a point where their activities will fit in with and perform the functional activities necessary for group survival" (1931, 13).

At approximately the same period the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci wrote from a Fascist prison cell, ". . . every state is ethical inasmuch as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level. . . which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes" (Hoare 1971, 258).

Though two writers more politically opposed than Gramsci and Merriam would be hard to imagine, both agreed that the school played a vital role in this process of sustaining the state politically. Merriam put it this way: "With the development of universal and compulsory education covering a considerable span of life, the importance of this institution for the purpose of fostering group solidarity becomes increasingly evident" (1931, 17). This observation resembles Gramsci's: "The school as a positive education function is one of the most important State activities in this sense" (Hoare 1971, 258).

Despite these prognostications, American public schools have long resisted national control over such features of political education as textbook and curricular content, teaching certification, student selection, and performance criteria. Indeed, the legislation that established the U.S. Department of Education in 1979 stipulated that the department must not establish a national curriculum. And the recently enacted *Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1993* only sets up a mechanism for creating *voluntary* national education standards.

But even voluntary national standards and assessments in civics represent a potentially significant centralization of American political education, following the direction Gramsci and Merriam would have predicted. What is the significance of this belated development? What accounts for the recent movement towards national educational standards in civics? What consequences will flow from the new national civics standards and performance assessments?

To answer these questions, consider four different models of civics in political education. In terms reminiscent of Gramsci, Pamela Conover outlines the first model—civics as a means of supporting a system of unequal political power. Conover writes, "Socialization is . . . a process used by those who rule to reinforce their rule" (1991, 135). From this perspective, national standards in civics can best be understood as serving the interests of American political elites. Following Gramsci, let us call this the *hegemonic model* of civics education.

A different model is that of civics promoting public control over the powerful. In its 1971 call for improvements in civics education, the American Political Science Association Committee on Pre-Collegiate Education advocated precisely this form of political education:

> While schools should not be a birth place of cynicism or despair about the political life of the society, neither should they communicate to

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