SOCIAL STUDIES AND CURRICULUM HISTORY: AN ASSESSMENT OF ALICE MIEL'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

Elizabeth Anne Yeager

Alice Miel, a nationally prominent curriculum development scholar-practitioner at Teachers College of Columbia University for some three decades (1942-1971), frequently has been overlooked in research on the nature and evolution of the curriculum field and the progressive education movement. Furthermore, her contributions have been overlooked even as attention to women in the curriculum field and in educational history has risen. This study addresses this oversight.

Miel became a leading figure in the curriculum field largely on the basis of her progressive-era advocacy and practice of democratic social learning as a primary goal of schooling in the United States. This study explores major influences on her ideas, her understandings of democratic concepts and principles, and her application of these concepts and principles both in her own college classroom and in her research on childhood education. It also explores Miel's notions of the elementary school social studies curriculum and situates those notions within the context of the "conventional wisdom" of her day regarding a discipline-centered curriculum.

In a broader context, this study contributes to the body of curriculum history scholarship. According to Kliebard (1992), for example, curriculum history often deals with the relationship between social change and changing ideas and contains significant social and cultural artifacts of knowledge that have become embodied in the curriculum of schools. Davis (1976, 1977) characterizes curriculum history as a reflective enterprise for curriculum workers that contributes to their understanding of present courses of study and of the professional field by lending a framework for thoughtful deliberation of what the schools should teach. With these observations in mind, Miel's work may be understood as both "artifact" of curriculum history and as mindful reflection, situated within a particular social and historical context, on democratic meanings and processes. Biographies of Caswell, Taba, Tyler, Schwab, Kilpatrick, Rugg, Bobbitt, Zirbes, Stratemeyer, and others have yielded significant insights. In addition, Seguel's study of early curriculum leaders (1966) constitutes an important theoretical contribution to the field. The study of Miel's life and work adds to this body of knowledge.

MAJOR THEMES OF MIEL'S WORK

Several themes emerge readily in Miel's body of work. First, Miel advocated the development of democratic behavior as the ultimate goal of American schooling. Second, she applied theories of social learning and her own ideas about democratic principles and processes to specific areas of the elementary school curriculum, particularly to the social studies. Third, she emphasized that the creation of a democratic social learning environment involved an array of participants, including students themselves, in individual schools and communities. Fourth, she articulated aspects of cooperative learning and other democratic procedures available to teachers.

Moreover, as this study shows, Miel's work on democratic social learning was a scholarship of the practical; indeed, practitioners constituted her audience. She did not pigeonhole her work, nor was she narrowly or sharply focused on a single issue or concern. Her work on democratic social learning and the elementary school social studies curriculum clearly exemplified connections and relationships of people, of ideas, and of varied situations.

MIEL, DEMOCRACY, AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL LEARNING: INFLUENCES

Miel never adhered dogmatically to a precise definition of democracy. She believed that, although certain fundamental ideas were embedded in the term, its meaning - like that of curriculum - must be developed and nurtured by people who professed it. She also conceived of democracy as more than a system of government. For her, it was a unique way of living and thinking (Miel, 1994).

Miel's interpretation of democracy was developed in the context of the Franklin D. Roosevelt era. As a staunch liberal Democrat, she greatly admired Roosevelt throughout her life (Miel, 1994). In terms of Miel's understanding of democracy in practice, especially her own opportunities for democratic participation in educational settings, she benefitted from her early association with Stuart Courtis, professor of educational philosophy at the University of Michigan, and from her experiences in the Ann Arbor (Michigan) public schools with Otto Haisley and G. Robert Koopman. "No teacher could have spent the Depression years," she wrote, "in a situation more conducive to learning some of the ways of democracy" (Miel, 1991, 269). She noted that Courtis was "the first deliberately democratic teacher" she had ever encountered (271). Courtis "analyzed cooperative behaviors from compulsion through compromise to democratic cooperation and gave his students a chance to practice democratic skills" (271).

In Ann Arbor, Miel worked with and observed democratic leaders who created settings in which teachers and students could practice democracy. Haisley, the Ann Arbor school superintendent with whom Miel worked, organized each school faculty "as a team working cooperatively together and with students and community...He coordinated those efforts to make a systemwide impact on the schools of that city"(269). Also, Miel recognized a sharp contrast between other

administrators with whom she had worked and Koopman, the principal of Tappan Junior High in Ann Arbor, who "wanted to involved people and have joint decision making, as opposed to someone who wanted to be the overall 'boss'" (Miel, 1994). While working with Koopman at Tappan, Miel had "all sorts of opportunities" to teach in a cooperative setting, to share in school management, to help plan the social studies curriculum, to set up a student government association, and to prepare bulletins for communication with other educators and the community (Miel, 1991, 269). Later, as teaching principal of the K-3 Donovan School in Ann Arbor, Miel worked with an administrative staff that "rounded out the numerous models of democratic leadership to be found in the Ann Arbor schools" of the time (Miel, 1991, 269).

As a doctoral student at Teachers College from 1942-1944, Miel developed her ideas in the context of the Teachers College "democratic mission" that the faculty had articulated during World War Two (Cremin et.al., 1954). In addition, her studies there in educational philosophy inevitably led her to John Dewey's ideas on democracy and education. Of particular significance to her was Dewey's emphasis on the role of the individual in determining "the conditions and the aims of his own work" and the "free and mutual harmonizing of different individuals" in the sharing of "responsible tasks" (Dewey, 1931, 216; quoted in Koopman, Miel, and Misner, 1943, preface). As long as the structure of schools remained undemocratic and repelled "intellectual initiative and inventive ability," Dewey argued, all efforts toward change would be "compromised at their source and postponed indefinitely for fruition" (Dewey, 1931, 218).

More important in her Teachers College experience was Miel's doctoral study with Hollis L. Caswell, who had helped to establish curriculum as a field of study (Caswell and Campbell, 1935, 1937). His work in curriculum development derived from his belief that schools should play a viable role in helping to mold a democratic social order (Seguel, 1966; Burlbaw, 1989). In fact, Caswell viewed the "ideal man" as one who acted as a democratic catalyst for social reconstruction. Unlike Bobbitt, for example, whose "ideal man" was the finished product of the educational process, Caswell stressed man's continuous growth and learning in attempts to correct society's problems. Moreover, while Caswell borrowed from Rugg's identification of key concepts helpful to children's understanding of those problems, he went further to underscore the preparation of children for social action through appropriate social learnings in school (Seguel, 1966).

In a broader context, Caswell claimed a role for the schools in the cause of social improvement, as Miel did later. He believed that the school was responsible for ensuring that "all American youth would learn to work together harmoniously for their mutual advantage" (Franklin, 1986, 120-123). Caswell continually was concerned with how people could learn to cooperate well enough to live in an increasingly interdependent world. He also recognized potential threats to liberal democracy in people's inability to work together to solve society's problems (124). A traditional "mental discipline" curriculum, he argued, did not necessarily prepare young people for their place in modern society. Instead, he advocated, as Miel later would, a "more functionally oriented curriculum based on problems of youth in contemporary society" (126). Such a curriculum would serve the purpose of schooling that he envisioned: "to educate the citizen for effective participation in those common undertakings and cooperations which are necessary to sustain our democratic way of life" (Caswell, 1938, 180). These concerns appear throughout Miel's work and illustrate the extent to which Caswell and Miel shared the same vision of a democratic society.

With regard specifically to democratic social learning, Miel also was informed by some of the theories of social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Lewin argued that "in democracy, as in any culture, the individual acquires the cultural pattern by some type of 'learning'" (Lewin, 1948, 38). Democracy could not be imposed upon people; it had to be learned by a "process of voluntary and responsible participation ... The policy determination in democracy is done by the group as a whole" (39). The goal of democratic leaders, then, was eventually to make themselves "superfluous," to be replaced by other leaders from the group; in this way, he asserted, the goal was the same as that of any good teacher (39). Furthermore, the task of the schools in democratic society was crucial because of the importance of reaching the adolescent at a critical period in his or her development:

> The frontal attack on the task of transforming this very age level - which is full of enthusiasm and, in many respects, accustomed to cooperation - into cooperative groups for productive reconstruction in a radical democratic spirit might be one of the few chances for bringing about a change toward democracy which promises permanency (42).

To facilitate this transformation, Lewin explained, young people needed to learn to accept a particular system of values and beliefs by "accepting belongingness to a group...the establishment of this feeling that everybody is in the same boat, has gone through the same difficulties, and speaks the same language" (67). Lewin also emphasized the school's role in the improvement of inter-group relations in American society, calling particular

attention to the problems of cultural minorities and expressing concern over the "forces that developed in children and adolescents that determined their attitudes toward people from other cultural groups" (201-216).

MIEL'S DEMOCRATIC TEACHING AND LEADERSHIP AT TEACHERS COLLEGE

Primarily through her role as teacher and advisor at Teachers College from 1944-1971, Miel refined her efforts to practice democratic principles in her classroom and in her professional relationships with students. Fundamentally, Miel believed that "central to producing opportunities for students to develop the qualities requisite to life in a democracy was the preparation of teachers who taught in creative ways" (Berman, 1992, 107).

To this end, she structured the courses that she taught in ways that not only promoted students' involvement, but placed a responsibility upon them to think and plan cooperatively and creatively. Wendell Hunt, a student and advisee of Miel's in 1950 who later became principal of Western Michigan University's laboratory school, recalled that Miel "put into practice (in the course) her principles regarding democratic teaching and cooperative planning" (Hunt, 1994). For example, class members were involved in the selection of curriculum issues and concepts that they wanted to address in the course, and in the nature and direction of class discussions. He explained that Miel "structured the course around what the students wanted to learn and played a facilitator role" (Hunt, 1994). Other former students were impressed by the overarching consistency between Miel's beliefs and her actual classroom practices (Martinello, 1994; Varis, 1994; Passow, 1995; Hunt, 1994; Dwyer, 1971; Corbin, 1971; Berman, 1992). Berman (1992) summarized Miel's teaching.

> Never were 'right' answers taught. Rather, preferred ways of solving problems, relating to others, and searching for knowledge were sought. Her teaching was quiet but penetrating; the questions she evoked in learners were lingering ones.
>
> (1992, 107)

Moreover, Miel was noted for her democratic leadership of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching. As chair of the department from 1960-1967, Miel tried "to apply the democratic principles she had been crafting so carefully through the years," attempting to use group problem -solving approaches (Berman, 1992, 108). Although she came to the position with a structured agenda, Miel was noted for her "willingness to entertain a wide range of alternative viewpoints" and for her willingness to permit professors to "pursue their individual research, writing, and other professional activities, while at the same time fostering consensus when consensus was essential to carrying out departmental affairs" (Bellack, 1994, 1). Miel was able to survive in this sometimes rancorous environment because of her efforts to build consensus, develop democratic processes, and support her opinions with strong evidence (Passow, 1995; she was "very skilled in human relations" (Alexander, 1994).

MIEL AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIAL LEARNING: CONTEXT AND ISSUES

Miel came to believe that the school was democracy's proving ground because it had a large share of the responsibility for socializing the nation's young people into participation in democracy - in other words, instilling a particular type of social learning within the framework of schooling. For her, one of the "pressing needs of our country...(is) to increase the sophistication of people...regarding the nature of democracy and what it takes to maintain and enhance such a form of government" (Miel, 1986, 320). School was the ideal environment for democratic socialization, she believed, because of the possibilities for group process in a structured, particularistic setting. While some critics may have demurred that democratic lessons could be gained from an institution that required involuntary participation, Miel preferred to view the school as society in microcosm, where people from a variety of backgrounds learned valuable lessons about freedom and responsibility, individuality and cooperation - all with an eye toward future citizenship.

Clearly, Miel's own democratic predilections were whetted in a particular school context - that is, her work in the Ann Arbor schools with Koopman and others. Furthermore, throughout her own life, Miel continued to develop a keen sense of the historical context of social problems that, for her, raised acute concerns for the future of a democratic society. For example, in anticipating the postwar changes in store for American society and its schools, she wrote in 1944 of the problems of helping children to "live more effectively in the modern world" (Miel, 1944, 6). Emphasizing the importance of meeting changing conditions in democratic societies, she suggested that the curriculum shift its focus "from almost exclusive concern with the past to a concern with the present and the future" (11-17). Miel also was attuned to the Cold War ideological and military struggles in developing nations, to the implications of nuclear proliferation, and to anticommunist activism in the United States. Further, Miel's awareness of the social tensions between "haves" and "have nots" also extended to her increasing concern for the state of race relations and for civil rights issues in American society. Her views on this aspect of social learning were shaped by her growing realization, after coming to New York City from the homogeneous world of

rural Michigan, of the status of African-Americans, a number of whom came from Southern states to Teachers College because of discriminatory admissions policies in Southern academic institutions. Miel often taught African-American students in her classes. Also, she had several formative experiences in her adult life that brought racial issues into increasingly sharp focus for her (Miel, 1994). Through these experiences, Miel sought to move beyond the outmoded notion of "racial tolerance," which, for her, connoted someone's "putting up with" people who were "different" and "strange," to a more active, broader notion of "intercultural understanding and appreciation" (Miel, 1944, 15-16).

Even after her retirement in 1971, Miel frequently turned her attention to democratic concepts and behaviors, particularly in 1976 in the aftermath of Watergate, President Richard M. Nixon's resignation, and the constitutional questions embedded therein. At the same time, Miel sought to refute the claims of back-to-basics school reformers who were, in the 1970s, enjoying their moment in the spotlight. She argued that the "basics" also extended to the "moral-ethical-social realm," and that they should be given a prominent place in the school curriculum. "Surely the concepts and behaviors requisite to democracy," she wrote, "are among the most basic things to be taught-learned-experienced if adults and children are to perform competently as citizens" (Miel, 1976, 235). While schools alone could not take care of society's major problems, such as the public and private abuse of power, they still had a substantial role in helping children participate in the "needed self- disciplining of our democracy" (235). Most importantly, Miel was convinced that students' understanding of freedom and responsibility "should be high on the agenda of every school in the United States ... Failure to include such matters implicitly and explicitly in the curriculum and institution of our schools is more dangerous than it has ever been" (237).

She returned to these themes in 1986 in the context of the "educational excellence" movement, manifested in reports such as A Nation at Risk (1983), that called for higher achievement in the schools in order to ensure American competitiveness in the global economy. Miel criticized

> remedies (that) give little consideration to the individual ... Young people are being put under enormous pressure to perform for their society's sake ... It is distressing that those claiming our nation is at risk do not see how risky it really is to overlook the power of a populace informed about, committed to, and competent in the ways of democracy.
>
> (Miel, 1986, 322)

Miel believed that young people needed to acquire such competence. They must experience democratic learning in school, at home, and in the community in order to be able "to distinguish between arbitrary uses of power and shared power...They need to know both the theory behind democracy's view of freedom and responsibility and how to apply the theory in actual living" (Miel, 1986, 322). Young people must learn the value of their unique identities, their privileges and responsibilities, as well as the exercise of their citizenship rights. Responsibility, she asserted, was "a necessary companion to freedom" with "two faces, individual and social" (Miel, 1991, 275). For Miel, the overarching responsibility in democracy was to know how democracy worked, how it was won, and what was necessary to maintain it through changing conditions (276).

Miel's Themes of Democratic Social Learning

Miel's work expressed fundamental ideas about what she considered to be appropriate democratic social learnings for children. Furthermore, she connected these ideas to her interest in democracy by focusing on the development of social behaviors that would best serve a democratic society (Miel, 1994). Her writings featured a number of recurring themes.

First, a "democratically socialized" person, according to Miel, "sees democracy...as an ideal arrangement for keeping individual and group considerations in balance" (Miel, 1949, 51). Such a person had respect for the individual, as well as for group intelligence, welfare, and cooperation. He or she participated constructively in group activities, tried to understand another's point of view, helped to build consensus, and assumed responsibilities, submitting neither to "blind obedience or ruthless self interest" (50-51). Her concern centered on how the schools could develop many more individuals socialized in this way.

In a democracy, Miel argued, especially in "critical times," students needed "a better grasp of the tools of learning than under any other circumstances" in order to safeguard against irrational thought and behavior (Miel, 1939, 110). Miel conceived of these skills in terms of social learnings for which the schools should share responsibility and specified in 1945 for the first time that such learnings included:

- bearing a friendly feeling
- having concern for all mankind
- valuing difference
- being a contributing member of a group
- seeing the necessity of a cooperative search for conditions guaranteeing maximum freedom for all
- taking responsibility for a share of the labor involved

in a common enterprise
- working for "unanimous consent"
- evaluating and cooperating with authority
- refining constantly one's conception of the "good society"
- making use of communication skills(Miel, 1945, 51)

Miel particularly emphasized her theme of cooperative learning to build good relationships - what she called the "fourth R" in schools - and specifically focused on "getting along with people" and the development of "friendly feelings" as essential components of democratic social learning. She later explained:

> Cooperative learning is not just sitting down with partners and children helping each other to learn. I think that's a very limited concept. Learning how to cooperate is the basic democratic skill...including learning to listen, learning to contribute, learning to work usefully in a group, learning to take action to carry out ideas...I saw these as the basic skills for cooperative living and action.
>
> (Miel, 1994).

Schools that "turned youngsters into self-centered individualists" failed to instill such feelings; they focused excessively on preventing misbehavior at the expense of helping children learn how to behave (Miel, 1946, 11). She recommended three approaches that teachers use to help children improve human relationships: creating a friendly, respectful atmosphere in the classroom, teaching ways of working together and "managing group endeavors," and teaching about peoples' commonalities and differences (11-12).

Miel also focused on social learning opportunities for "world understanding." "Our English-speaking fraternity," she asserted, "has managed to condition its children toward certain attitudes of superiority, a basic psychological orientation that must be changed if we are to build real world understanding" (Miel, 1945-46, 33). She denounced "culture units" commonly taught in the elementary schools for encouraging unhealthy stereotypes and generalizations of various cultural and ethnic groups. Such depictions did not promote "friendly feelings" that were characteristic of the democratically socialized person who respected individuality (35). The attainment of such a goal in the schools, Miel explained, was possible through helping individuals to become comfortable with freedom and responsibility in a "group situation." This "group situation" involved the social learnings of discussion, cooperation, evaluation, and consensus-building essential to democratic society and understanding of other people (36-37). The elementary school was in a unique position insofar as it presented numerous opportunities throughout the school day for "practicing democracy" and learning "world citizenship" (37).

Problem solving was another specific area of Miel's concern. Miel believed that "the modern school works hard to develop in young people the inclination and ability to solve (actual) personal and social problems, alone or in cooperation with others...through guided and examined ways" (Miel, 1954, 2). She underscored the importance of teachers' planning with children, not just for them, so that children could learn intelligent, purposeful behavior, make wise choices, use time more efficiently, and develop a "thirst for learning" (Miel, 1952, 7). She used school situations to illustrate ideas in her writing whenever possible, and various problem solving scenarios provided her with interesting material that presented a variety of challenges for children. Miel's illustrations were selected to show the practical possibilities of "educative experiences centered around problems as children meet them," many of which arose in school living or in the community (Miel, 1950, 158). Most importantly for children's social learning, however, the problems she described were "manageable by children and the solutions reached could be tested in action and revised if found wanting" (158). Moreover, Miel stressed that planning and problem solving with children did not mean "cleverly manipulating" them and making decisions for them in advance; planning meant "studying (children) to judge their readiness for planning of different degrees of complexity...making arrangements of time and resources that will enable children to have reasonably successful experiences in planning together" (Miel, 1952, 7).

Another theme underlay all others-- the teacher's professional development with regard to children's social learning. According to Miel, teachers needed to "teach beyond themselves." That is, they needed to go beyond what and how they were taught to bring their students more current knowledge, more relevant experiences, and more appropriate methods of learning (Miel, 1957, 19). Most importantly, teachers could model democratic behavior themselves and help young people "to observe and learn from those in our society who...exemplify our highest values" (20). She asserted:

> We can and must help our children to use a more intelligent approach to problems, to act on the basis of informed judgment, to apply our democratic values in more and more aspects of living...We shall have to be our most creative selves to find ways to help children and youth stretch their meanings beyond the limits we have had set for us by habit and tradition (20).

One of the larger tasks facing teachers, she explained,

was helping the younger generations to realize how democratic institutions had the capacity to respond to changed conditions at home and around the world, to build the values children needed to develop a positive view of their relations with others, and to teach skills of "international problem solving that will be adequate for (children's) future needs" (21).

Finally, Miel strongly believed that no single school subject, including the social studies, could be expected to carry the full load of children's social education. "From the morning greeting to the farewell at the end of the school day," she explained, "every school experience must be utilized for social learnings...(and) these experiences must be reinforced...in the home and community" (Miel, 1949, 51). She criticized the "traditional school" for failing to impress upon children the social value of what they were learning and for drilling them in "isolated skills" without challenging children to "use (their) gifts for the benefit of others" (Miel, 1939, 110-111). If, as she assumed, teachers' responsibility was to do "everything in (their) power to promote the socialization of children," then this meant that all teachers must provide experiences that gave children certain "tools of learning" - particularly better reading and language skills, good discussion techniques, research skills, problem solving methods - so that children could "become highly sensitive to the needs of people...and deeply appreciative of the living world" (112).

More Than Social Studies

In 1957, Miel published one of her major books, *More Than Social Studies*. In this book, she and former student Peggy Brogan fully integrated and elaborated their themes of social learning - themes that were consistent throughout Miel's entire body of work. Miel and Brogan asserted that this work was "not a book on social studies alone" and that "some of the most significant opportunities for social learning are to be found in the give and take of general living in the classroom and school rather than in one part of the school curriculum" (Miel and Brogan, 1957, v). Miel and Brogan acknowledged that the role of the social studies deserved special attention, but they based their ideas on the assumption that "all of the skills in human living need the deliberate attention of educators who focus on social learning" (v).

Because individual behavior was of special concern in a democracy, Miel and Brogan recommended that educators keep certain democratic behaviors in mind as they helped children to understand the meaning of their society:

- sharing through the "give and take" of human relationships;
- communicating openly and sharing meanings;
- participating through both leading and following in a group;
- developing both individuality and sociality in order to cooperate democratically;
- developing an intelligent sense of loyalty through knowing when and how to protest and conform;
- claiming rights and taking responsibility in the exercise of citizenship. (14-24)

Consequently, Miel and Brogan outlined four strands of social learning that they believed to be useful in democratic social education, each of which highlighted a "certain aspect of democratic discipline" and made "certain demands on adults responsible for helping children to learn" (26). These four strands included: helping children feel good about themselves and others through good interpersonal communication and democratic relationships; using democratic methods of problem solving; building socially useful meanings about democratic concepts and beliefs; and selectively broadening their life spaces (26).

Miel and the Social Studies Curriculum

In terms of the unique contribution of the social studies to children's learning experiences and to their democratic socialization, Miel and Brogan's *More Than Social Studies* pointed to the field's capacity to place social learning at the center of the curriculum. Teachers could provide experiences designed to develop children's interpersonal and intergroup relationships through solving problems of daily living; to satisfy •hildren's curiosities about the world; to solve problems of understanding and community action; and to build positive attitudes toward others through organized individual and group studies. Most importantly, they could help children to develop socially useful concepts, generalizations, and skills so that children could organize the experiences they gained "in all parts of the school and out-of-school living" (140-142).

In fact, in bringing social learning to the forefront of the social studies curriculum, Miel and Brogan criticized traditional approaches to the organization of the social studies based upon compartmentalized subjects and separate textbooks. Also, Miel and Brogan asserted that children reaped no benefits of social learning when they were simply taken through the motions of choice and discovery. If, as the authors believed, the fundamental goal of social studies derived from its social learning function, then any approach that overrelied on a preplanned scope and sequence could not help but fail. Myriad learning opportunities were embedded in the concept of "social" studies, but these would be wasted if social studies designs were "divorced from living...(and) looked upon merely as a new way to cover certain subject matter," instead of as a way to learn lessons "needed by people in a democracy" (120).

This analysis notwithstanding, Miel's other publications

rarely focused on the role of specific social studies subject matter in a social learning context. She suggested how the social studies could "make much more difference in the lives of individual children and in the society educating them" (Miel, 1962, 45). However, her suggestions usually were quite general and did not delve into disciplinary perspectives. She sought instead to discourage teachers from merely "conveying bits of information" (45). Rather, teachers could help children to "clarify, organize, and extend information...to see how facts are interrelated, and to draw useful generalizations" (45). Miel stated that social studies on the elementary level, although not always well developed, contained opportunities for thoughtful study of people, current events, societal movements, and global problems that required children to investigate, cooperate, and become better informed about their world.

Miel recalled that her view of social studies was less than warmly received in some circles. She said that she was "roundly scolded" by a colleague in the social studies, for example, for the title *More Than Social Studies*. Perhaps thinking her presumptuous, the colleague objected specifically to her use of the word "more" in presenting her perspective on the social studies field. Her response, which she was compelled to reiterate from time to time, was that "social studies" content in the traditional sense was important and was "well covered" by other scholars, but that the field had "stopped with merely providing an information base ... there was no understanding of relationships, let alone caring and action" (Miel, 1994). Her social studies focus, centered on problem areas and cutting across different disciplines, was simply different, and it was not confined to the area of the curriculum or the part of the school day labelled "social studies" (Miel, 1994).

Perhaps the most concise, illuminating statement of Miel's perspective on the social studies, and on what she meant by "more than social studies," came after her retirement from Teachers College. In 1981, she offered ideas for the development of sociopolitical "giftedness" towards useful social ends. Miel adeptly characterized talent in this area as uniquely and totally "group linked ... It cannot be developed or demonstrated except in a social context" (Miel, 1981, 257). This feature, she claimed, placed a special burden on the social studies to help students understand themselves and others and to participate constructively in societal and global affairs. In a cogent statement of the nature and mission of the social studies curriculum, Miel argued that social studies must be designed for:

> 1) understanding - of conditions and demands of people and society in an interdependent world (258); But also, social studies was more than understanding; it should be conceived more broadly to include
>
> 2) caring - or moral development, in terms of positive attitudes of respect, trust, esteem, and concern for others;
>
> 3) action - for developing "inclination and skills to carry thought into deed and to engage in joint ventures requiring decisions" (258-9).

To illustrate her point, Miel drew from the social studies content disciplines to offer representative suggestions for how teachers could developing social meanings, extending children's lifespaces, and helping them learn to take socially useful action (259-265).

Furthermore, in reiterating a prominent theme in her work, Miel again emphasized that, while such activities engaged students in productive interactions with others, the curriculum also must contain opportunities for students to use their knowledge, group discussion techniques, and social skills to help in solving actual community problems with which they had a reasonable chance for success. In Deweyan fashion, Miel averred that such a well-rounded, interdisciplinary and interdimensional approach to the social studies, students would "see how the information they are gaining relates to existing bodies of knowledge" (268). Moreover, teachers could help them "to organize their learnings and fill in gaps so that they are constantly building a more systematic view of the world" (268). If social studies content were selected to facilitate observation, generalization, evaluation, and application of learnings to new situations, students would become "lifelong social learners" (268). According to Miel, there could be "no better equipment for political leaders and all participants in our democracy than knowing ways of gaining understanding, ways of extending feelings of caring, and ways of acting on convictions" (268).

MIEL'S VIEWS OF SOCIAL LEARNING AND SOCIAL STUDIES: AN ASSESSMENT

Several factors likely limited the widespread acceptance of Miel's conceptions of social learning and social studies. First, Miel believed that social learning should be taught throughout the school day and not compartmentalized into one particular academic subject area - and especially that it should not be the exclusive domain of the social studies curriculum. This view may have posed problems for teachers and curriculum workers, who, even at the elementary school level, increasingly tended to think in terms of discrete subjects, whether they were integrating these subjects or teaching them in traditional organizational forms. "Social learning throughout the day" was probably too nebulous a concept to fit into such a structure,

especially one with a predetermined, written course of study. In addition, teachers may have shied away from explicit attention to the complexities and controversies of moral development and social action as components of social learning, preferring instead to inculcate certain proper behaviors in their students. Some social studies teachers may have felt no unique responsibility for these components in their curriculum.

Second, the circulation of Miel's ideas was restricted by the publication of More Than Social Studies during the conservative, subject-centered reform movements of the late 1950s. The book's publication unfortunately coincided with increasing public criticism of the perceived academic "softness" of American schools and growing demands that mathematics and science receive priority in education. The Sputnik-inspired National Defense Education Act, linking federal support for schools with national policy objectives, ensured that social studies would be deemphasized and that traditional academic history likely would prevail in new federal guidelines for education (Spring, 1991). Miel's notions of democratic social learning throughout the curriculum simply found no place in anti-progressive times.

Third, Miel lacked affiliation with social studies traditionalists, and she did not consider herself to be a specialist in any of the social studies content areas. These factors likely limited her role as an expert in this specific area of the school curriculum. For example, Miel considered herself a weak history teacher when she was at Tappan Junior High School, mainly because she had taken so few history courses at normal school and had to rely heavily on the school textbook (Miel, 1994).

After the 1950s, the social studies became increasingly dominated by subject matter experts in academia who viewed and shaped this field through the lenses of their particular disciplines. Miel simply did not have the academic credentials or teaching background to be considered an expert in any of these disciplines. In the 1960s, the research of Bruner (1960), Phenix (1961, 1964), Schwab (1962) and others on the "structure of the disciplines" was in vogue in the curriculum reform discourse (Mehaffy, 1979). Bruner, for example, suggested that each discipline had an inherent structure and that curriculum content should be presented in a form that helps students to comprehend this structure (Bruner, 1960). Phenix (1961) argued that the curriculum should consist entirely of knowledge that comes from the disciplines, because the disciplines revealed knowledge in its teachable forms. Also, a sizeable contingent of leaders of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) began to assert that ASCD's emphasis on group processes, which Miel had helped to develop as ASCD president in the early 1950s, came too much at the expense of content knowledge in the academic subjects. Arthur W. Foshay, for example, in his 1961 presidential address, spoke to ASCD members of his concerns about planning curriculum without due consideration for formal knowledge (Davis, 1994; Hass, 1994). Furthermore, advocates of discipline- centered views claimed that curriculum developers should rely on the "expert interpretations of subject matter specialists who reveal the logical patterns that give shape to their discipline and imply the order in which its elements should be learned" (Schubert, 1986, 238).

Miel's work did not focus on inherent structures in particular realms of knowledge and the feasibility of "expert" agreement on the dimensions of that structure. Rather, much of her work revealed a strong belief in other variables that influenced learning, especially those that related to the social context of schooling. In fact, partly because of her concern that "problems of a modern society cannot be solved by specialists in any one discipline," she produced at least one brilliant critique of the "structure of the disciplines" approach upon noting that "separateness (of knowledge and disciplines) is once more on the ascendancy" in schools of the 1960s (Miel, 1963, 94). She cautioned that no general agreement existed on what a discipline was or on what the structure of particular fields should be. Moreover, she argued that structure was not a thing, unchanging and unchanged, to be packaged and handed over "ready-made and full-blown" (80-82). Furthermore, Miel criticized Bruner's neglect of the "interrelationships among disciplines... (and of) the question of the structure of the curriculum as a whole within which the fields of knowledge are to find their place" (86). Most importantly, Miel's preoccupation with a "disciplined way of dealing with social policy questions, where values must be applied and strategies worked out" led to this criticism.

> Becoming enamored of the idea of teaching the structure of a subject may lead to emphasizing the fields most easily structured, mathematics and science. This, in turn, often leads to an emphasis on education relating to production of knowledge and a neglect of education for knowledgeconsumption, for it is the mark of a science that it is knowledge producing but not concerned with any use of the knowledge produced except for continued exploration in the field. After we have the best information we can get from ascientist as to the likely consequences of this or that course of action, social policy questions remain. What course of action should be taken? (84).

She also cited Foshay's (1962) admonition that learning the structure of a discipline alone was insufficient. Rather, any discipline also has a history or tradition that enters into

decisions on domains and rules of that discipline. Therefore, learning the structure must be accompanied by the study of how it was formulated and what constituted its structure of inquiry (Miel, 1963).

Neither did Miel become deeply involved in the "new social studies" movements of the 1960s, particularly because they often resulted in written courses of study that she eschewed. For example, Miel travelled to Harvard University to hear about the new curriculum, *Man: A Course of Study*, which she "did not feel very good about ... Its focus on man was too narrow, without enough emphasis on modern man and his problems...I didn't feel that any of this (course of study) was going to lessen the need for attention to social learning" (Miel, 1994). Her interpretation of the role and function of the social studies in the school curriculum still diverged from the "conventional wisdom" that social studies meant the study of discrete subjects - history, geography, civics - at particular grade levels.

A confluence of factors, then, circumscribed Miel's contributions to the social studies discourse and contributed to her remaining a lesser-known figure in this field. These important factors included, certainly, the historical context learning at the expense of deliberate attention to - and even criticism of - the common social studies disciplines. Although many of Miel's ideas and criticisms were well-founded and well-articulated, her voice sounded one of only a few discordant notes in the increasingly loud chorus of approval for a more traditional academic, subject-centered curriculum.

FINAL ASSESSMENTS

Alice Miel seemed to understand that both the spirit and practice of the progressive education movement were rooted in democratic ideals. Throughout her career, Miel's teaching, leadership, and participation in group activities revealed her strong commitment to democracy. By all accounts, her behavior consistently modeled democratic values.

Dewey and his intellectual heirs believed that organized, experimentally- oriented education was essential to "individual achievement of a rich and meaningful life, to the development of social values and good citizenship, the achievement of democratic ideals, and the improvement of conditions of living" (Franklin, 1986, 134). Certainly, Miel held these same views. She likely belongs to the generation of curriculum workers described by Franklin that, in shaping the school curriculum, tried to reconcile the liberal democratic values on which they believed the nation was founded with the realities of a "transformed American society ... This was what they sought when they spoke of a search for an American community" (1986, 11). Indeed, according to Franklin, the search to remake America in the "image of a cooperative community" is one that has "absorbed the attention of American intellectuals throughout this century" (11).

Zilversmit (1993) concluded that one of the positive legacies of progressive education was its emphasis on democratic processes of change, deliberation, and continuous renewal. Indeed, throughout her career, Miel urged that such processes are essential in order for schools to remain vital. Her work also illustrates another of Zilversmit's most striking points about the progressive legacy: that when society recognizes these democratic processes as valuable, then the implausibility of standardized, permanent curriculum goals becomes obvious. Certain questions, including those centered on what knowledge should be taught in schools, simply cannot be solved once and for all and, according to Reinhold Neibuhr (1953), must be continually solved within the framework of the democratic process. Clearly, Miel's career in education exemplified these propositions.

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