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Race, culture, and pluralism: The evolution of Dewey's vision for a democratic curriculum

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Race, culture, and pluralism: The evolution of Dewey's vision for a democratic curriculum

THOMAS FALLACE

In this historical study, the author traces the evolution of Dewey's vision for a democratic curriculum. Prior to 1916, Dewey was a linear historicist, meaning that he conceptualized culture as moving linearly through three distinct stages—savagery, barbarianism, civilization—that corresponded with stages of child development. Dewey's suggested and enacted curriculum had students retrace the social occupations of the history of the human race. However, in 1916–1923, Dewey updated his views into a cultural pluralist perspective that viewed cultures as different ways of approaching the world that could not necessarily be placed on a single continuum of human development. While retaining elements of his linear historicism, he nevertheless began emphasizing the necessity of cultural diversity and interaction for a healthy deliberative democracy. Based on his updated views of culture and his travels abroad, Dewey revised his suggested curriculum to include the discussion and critical analysis of current issues and problems in the classroom.

Keywords: John Dewey; race; culture; curriculum history; deliberation

Introduction

Numerous scholars (Gutman 1987, Gutman and Thompson 1996, Englund 2000, 2006, Carpenter 2006, Waks 2007) have outlined Dewey's vision for democratic education based on pluralistic deliberation about public issues. For example, Englund (2006: 508) writes, for Dewey 'the central task of education is to develop the capacity of every individual for intelligent deliberation and balanced consideration of alternatives through mutual communication'. While accurate, these theoretical accounts of Dewey's vision for a democratic curriculum generally contain three limitations. First, they tend to abstract a curriculum from Dewey's theoretical writings, rather than looking specifically at the curriculum he enacted at the University of Chicago laboratory school and the later suggestions he made addressing classroom practice. Second, they tend to focus on Dewey's vision for pluralistic interaction among groups and individuals, but never really identify how Dewey defined the social worth of these

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individuals and groups. To understand how Dewey defined social groups, one must appreciate how he defined race, community, and culture in the intellectual context of the early 20th century. Third, these studies tend to depict Dewey's views on a democratic curriculum as static and fixed. In contrast, in this article, I argue that Dewey's vision for a democratic curriculum evolved significantly over the course of his career as he expanded and updated his views on culture and race. In particular a major shift occurred between 1915–1923, as Dewey expanded his views from linear historicism to a cultural pluralism. Dewey's pre-1916 allegiance to linear historicism prevented him from arriving at the vision of classroom-based deliberation for which he is best known until the 1920s. As Dewey expanded his views on society, culture, and race, he also updated his vision for democratic education and curriculum. While some scholars have noted a shift in Dewey's thinking around the First World War (Prawat 2000), none have linked this change specifically to his evolving view of democratic education and curriculum.

In this intellectual history I outline how, prior to 1916, when Dewey authored his major works such as School and Society (1956a), How We Think (1997a), and much of Democracy and Education (1997b), he was a linear historicist. This means that Dewey, like most of his contemporaries, conceptualized culture as moving linearly through three distinct stages savagery, barbarianism, civilization-that corresponded with stages of child development. Democracy as a form of government and living was the third and highest stage of social/cultural development. The curriculum he helped administer at the University of Chicago laboratory school and that he espoused up to 1916 was based upon an ethnocentric, linear reenactment of the stages of cultural development. Dewey's linear historicism conceptualized non-Western European cultures such as African, African American, Native American, aboriginal Australian, Asian, and to a degree Eastern and Southern European, as previous steps towards the more advanced societies of Western Europe and the US. Dewey's suggested and enacted curriculum had students retrace the history of the human race. However, in 1916–1923, Dewey updated his views into a cultural pluralist perspective that viewed cultures as different ways of approaching the world that could not necessarily be placed on a single continuum of human development. While retaining elements of his linear historicism, he nevertheless began emphasizing the necessity of cultural diversity and interaction for a healthy deliberative democracy. Based on his updated views of culture and his travels abroad, Dewey revised his suggested curriculum to include the discussion and critical analysis of current issues and problems in the classroom. That is, the cultural pluralist, issue-based curriculum with which Dewey is often aligned did not emerge until 1923, after his most cited texts such as School and Society (1956a), How We Think (1997a), and Democracy and Education (1997b) were published.

What exactly do I mean by cultural pluralist? Philosophical pluralism, according to Menand (2001: 377), is the belief that 'The universe is plural; it hangs together, but in more ways than one'. Pluralism is a rejection of an all-encompassing, grand narrative approach of linear

historicism. Cultural pluralism prior to the First World War reflected two major beliefs as professed by its first practitioners, W. E. B. Du Bois and Franz Boas. First, these scholars challenged the idea that all of the communities of the world could be placed upon a single, linear scale of cultural development leading from savagery to barbarianism to civilization. Instead, Du Bois and Boas suggested that all cultures were to be studied and appreciated on their own terms, as unique socially-mediated ways of looking at the world. Second, they suggested that non-Western European groups actually had contributions to make to modern societies and, thereby, these societies should preserve, rather than develop or destroy, their cultural differences. For example, in 1897, Du Bois (1986: 825, 822) asserted: 'We believe that the Negro people, as a race, have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make ... it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals'. In 1904, Boas (1974: 36), a cultural anthropologist, insisted that studying foreign and primitive cultures could,

impress us with the relative value of all forms of culture, and thus serve as a check to an exaggerated validation of the standpoint of our own period, which we are only too liable to consider the ultimate goal of human evolution, and thus depriving ourselves of the benefits to be gained from the teachings of other cultures.

While Du Bois and Boas were still racialist—meaning they believed that racial groups shared certain biologically-based social traits—they believed that cultural identity was relational and dynamic, not linear and progressive. For Du Bois and Boas, cultural difference was to be preserved and appreciated, not something to be destroyed and/or developed, because it could potentially provide Westerners with 'benefits' and 'contributions'. By the turn of the century, Dewey had all the philosophical tools at his disposal to express the cultural pluralist view of Du Bois and Boas. However, he was prevented from fully articulating a pluralist view and, consequently, outlining the significance of deliberative democracy by his linear historicism. As a result, Dewey did not fully express a culturally pluralist view, nor did he directly espouse the teaching of social issues until the 1920s.

Linear historicism

Prior to 1916, for Dewey, the selection and arrangement of subject matter was directed by the conceptual framework of linear historicism. Linear historicism was the belief that all the communities and cultures of the world could be placed on a single continuum of social progress leading through the stages of savagery to barbarianism to civilization. Nearly every scholar at the turn of the 20th century subscribed to the view that the stages of sociological growth corresponded with the psychological stages of child development, and that these communities still existed in the world in the form of primitive, savage, and barbarian groups (Gossett 1963, Stocking 1968, Cravens and Burnham 1971, Gould 1977, Richards

1987, McKee 1993, Jacobson 2000). As a historian of anthropology, Stocking (1968: 112) writes, 'Turn-of the-century social scientists were evolutionists almost to a man'. That is, with the exception of Du Bois and Boas, social scientists believed that the psychological growth of the individual could be coordinated with the social and cultural growth of the human race, each passing linearly through the stages of savagery, barbarianism, and civilization or their equivalents. Anthropologists and sociologists studied primitive and/or savage communities for insight into how modern society had developed in its earlier stages. Dewey and his collaborators clearly subscribed to this approach. 'To understand the origin and growth of moral life, it is essential to understand primitive society', Tufts explained in the *Ethics* textbook he co-authored with Dewey (Dewey and Tufts 1908: 23), 'It is beyond question that the ancestors of modern civilized races lived under the general types of group life which will be outlined, and these types of their survivals are found among the great mass of peoples today'. In the introduction to *Ethics*, the authors confirmed that the collaboration of the chapters were 'in sufficient degree to make the book throughout a joint work' (p. 6)—confirming that Dewey shared the ethnocentric cultural beliefs expressed by Tufts. Thus, according to Dewey and Tufts, certain cultural groups represented earlier, more primitive stages of modern life that revealed the steps the civilized world had gone through to arrive at the present. The earlier groups representing included Africans, African-Americans, Native these early stages Americans, aboriginal Australians, and even, to a degree, Southern and Eastern Europeans. While Dewey never explicitly identified African-American as representative of an early sociological stage, other leading scholars of the period did. For example, in his textbook An American History (1911)—by far the most widely adopted text in the US in the 1910s and 1920s—Muzzey (1911) suggested that Native Americans 'had generally reached a stage of development called 'lower barbarianism,' a stage of pottery making and rude agricultural science ... like the Mississippi negro of today' (p. 23). With few exceptions, educational materials authored by leading social scientists of the period reinforced such linear historicist views (Gossett 1963, McKee 1993).

Accordingly, Dewey conceived of the social world as a series of developmental linear steps leading from the primitive to the civilized. Dewey (1978: 399) argued that the social occupations of past cultures 'absolutely must be transmitted to the succeeding and immature generation if social life itself is not to relapse into barbarism and then into savagery'. The stages of sociological development corresponded with the stages of psychological development. For example, in a letter Dewey wrote to Clara Mitchell in 1895 outlining his plan for his laboratory school at the University of Chicago, Dewey (29 November 1895: rec. 00272) confirmed how a 'child's interest in present forms of living' should 'lead him back to social groups organized in that way [for example]—hunting and fishing to the Indians'. As Dewey (2005a) explained further, 'This is geography as well as history because practically all stages of civilization are *now* presented somewhere on earth's surface' [emphasis in original]. In this passage Dewey suggested that indigenous, native, and aboriginal societies represented earlier steps in social and cultural development. Like most leading social scientists of the period, Dewey believed that these stages could be coordinated with the linear psychological development of the child. For example, in School and Society, Dewey (1956a: 48) wrote, 'Many anthropologists have told us there are certain identities in the child's interests with those of primitive life ... There is a sort of natural recurrence of the child mind to the typical activities of primitive peoples'. The development of the child relived the social and cultural history of the race and, therefore, the curriculum needed to be arranged to reflect this. Dewey addressed the universal stages of child development in numerous papers, books, and syllabi (see Fallace 2010b). In 1900, in 'Some Stages of Logical Thought', Dewey outlined the universal stages of sociological growth. First, Dewey (1976a) argued, communities established fixed beliefs, customs, and laws (stage one), then they incorporated these beliefs through discussions, dialogues, and judgements (stage two), then they incorporated these discussions into a positivistic science of induction and deduction (stage three), then they incorporated positivistic science into differentiated sciences based on contingency and inference (stage four). The final contingency stage produced the modern disciplines and the sub-disciplines within them, and each discipline had its own sociallyconstructed symbolic forms of knowledge and communication. The modernist stage was not only the level of democracy, but also the level of the modern, scientific specialist. So Dewey identified specific stages of growth for both the child and the culture and sought to align these developmental schemes with one another. Democratic thinking represented the highest psychological/sociological stage.

Dewey school teacher, Laura Runyon, confirmed how Dewey's linear historicist approach was employed in the curriculum at the famous school. As Runyon (1906: 16) explained, rather than basing the elementary curriculum upon the biographies of famous people, as many schools were doing at the time, the subject matter of the Dewey school curriculum was based upon 'new problems ... through whom [the student] is living out, in the sense of through race development. Progress, a new discovery, a new invention, something which helps on, is the constant revelation'. The early years at the Dewey school, she continued, were devoted to 'the discovery of one thing after another which makes life comfortable and which the child dimly realizes he is the inheritor of' (p. 16). In this manner students did not take the intellectual and physical inventions of the present for granted. Learning took place, she insisted, when students repeated the race experience, 'for [the student] is primitive man, striving to find out by tracing how he may control nature, and in this experimentation discover nature's laws' (p. 27). Even reading, writing, and arithmetic were not introduced to the Dewey school students until they learned about how and why their historical counterparts (i.e. the Phoenicians) had invented them.

Again, in *School and Society*, Dewey (1956a) explained the pedagogical significance of his repeating the race experience approach he had worked out at his laboratory school. 'We can trace and follow the progress of mankind in history, getting an insight also into the materials used and the

mechanical principles involves', Dewey (1956a: 20) reasoned, 'In connection with these occupations the historic development of man is recapitulated'. Through the reenactment of the social occupations of the past, he wrote, 'children shall be led out into a realization of the historic development of man' (p. 19). Dewey argued that his historicist approach aligned with the latest psychological and anthropological research on primitive communities. Like the developing communities of the present, Dewey related how the laboratory school students 'go on through imagination through the hunting to the semi-agricultural stage, through the nomadic to the settled agricultural stage' (p. 50). In this manner, the bodies of subject matter were 'seen in their relationship to human activity, so that they are not simply external fact, but are fused and welded with the social conceptions regarding the life and progress of humanity' (p. 54). In other words, specific content was transmitted to students, but it was transmitted in the context of progressive discovery in relationship to a new, more complex form of reflective thinking represented by the higher sociological/ psychological stage.

Two significant points need to be made about Dewey's approach to democratic education in the early years. First, Dewey's curriculum reflected an inherently ethnocentric approach to culture (Seigfried 1998, Sullivan 2003, Fallace 2010b, Fallace 2009, Kim 2009) that prevented him from outlining a vision of democratic deliberation based on pluralistic interaction. Dewey's curriculum highlighted the contributions and progress of the most advanced cultures, which all happened to be Western European. Those communities that were non-white, Eastern European, or Southern European were considered culturally deficient on his linear scale of progress. According to Dewey, they no longer had anything positive to contribute to modern society, other than being studied for insight into how the modern mind had evolved. That is, their cultural contributions were historic, but not in any way useful to the present. In fact, in his influential essay, 'The School as a Social Centre', Dewey specifically addressed how to approach the curriculum for immigrant students who may resist the acculturative function of US schools. Dewey (1976b: 85–6) proposed that schools could recognize the cultural elements of students' countries of origin by celebrating the 'historic meaning in the industrial habits of the older generations-modes of spinning, weaving, metal working, etc... [that were] disregarded in this country because there was no place for them in our industrial system' (pp. 85-6). When these abandoned occupations were appreciated in their own context as 'historic', Dewey argued, the immigrant families would be more likely to adopt modern ways of progress. Thus, we can see how Dewey considered the lifestyles of immigrant families as psychically equivalent, but socially deficient. The immigrant cultures were to be appreciated as prior steps towards the more advanced modern, scientific, democratic world of the US, but not as culturally unique perspectives to be valued, celebrated, and maintained.

Second, Dewey's early curricular vision did not in any way suggest the discussion of public issues and current problems. He espoused the application of cooperative learning and problem-solving to historic and geographic content, but present day issues were not addressed. Dewey designed his curriculum to prepare students to think critically about and to transform their evolving democratic society, but the students at the Dewey school never engaged in open-ended discussions about public life. In fact, a reader of Runyon's (1906) account of the Dewey school history curriculum for the intermediate years (as well as Mayhew and Edwards' (1936) account of the Dewey school) would likely be struck by how much specific content was transmitted to students, yet none of it was related to deliberation about public issues or problems. Runyon (1906: 19) even admitted that, beyond the third grade, 'topics studied do not differ greatly from the usual selection of topics in United States History'. The terms 'social issue', 'controversial issue', and/or 'social problem' do not appear anywhere in School and Society (1956a), The Child and the Curriculum (1956b), How We Think (1997a), and Democracy and Education (1997b), works based on his work at the University of Chicago laboratory school. Although Dewey (1997b: 318) made passing references to students being 'in touch with the problems of the day and the various methods proposed for its improvement', he did not clearly state that this content should be addressed through student-centred pluralistic deliberation. As I will demonstrate in the next section, with the exception of chapter 7, Dewey continued to espouse a linear historicist approach to curriculum and culture throughout his most popular and influential text, Democracy and Education.

Democracy and education

Like his previous works, in *Democracy and Education* Dewey made repeated references to his linear historicist approach to cultural development. Accordingly, Dewey's conception of the socially deficient savage played a central role in the book. As early as page 2, the savage was introduced as the antithesis of all things 'democratic' and 'scientific', terms that Dewey essentially used as synonyms for the civilized world. Accordingly, the savage was used as an example of all that was undemocratic, unscientific, and uncivilized, and as a symbol of the distant 'undeveloped' past of Western ideas and institutions. In other words, savagery represented everything that needed to be overcome in democratic society. Thus, for Dewey, savage communities were not merely different; they represented a less developed form of living. Savages had more in common with children than they did with civilized man. Among other things, like children the savage lacked the use of socially-mediated symbols. The idea of the school as a means of this formal education, Dewey (1997b: 7) reasoned, would 'seem preposterous ... to savages', because such 'undeveloped groups' did not store their knowledge in the form of symbols like civilized cultures did. Symbols permeated the environment of civilized societies that mediated all action and communication, something that was missing, Dewey stated explicitly, 'in savage and barbarian communities' (17).

Dewey argued how, despite the contingent inferiority of primitives, the difference between savage and civilized communities was not a result of their biological inheritance or their psychic potential, but rather was an outcome of their deficient social environment. This distinguished him from many of his contemporaries who still argued on behalf of the biological/inherent inferiority of certain racial groups (see Fallace 2010b). Dewey (1997b: 36), on the other hand, argued, 'The mind of savage peoples is an effect rather than a cause of its backward institutions ... the savage deals largely with crude stimuli; we have heightened stimuli' [emphasis in original]. In another contrast, Dewey explained how a savage adapts himself to the environment, but a civilized man subordinates the environment, therefore, 'A savage is merely habituated; the civilized man has habits which transform the environment' (p. 48). That is, civilized society was a positive outcome of its social inheritance, specifically in how it used its advanced scientific knowledge and advanced culture to subordinate the environment further and more effectively than the savage culture had. The same actions and stimuli for the savage and civilized man had hierarchically different meanings based on the efficiency of its meanings and outcomes. 'Yet in meaning what has been accomplished', Dewey explained, 'measures just the difference of civilization from savagery' (p. 207). Savage communities were not inherently inferior, but rather they were contingently inferior, the result of a socially deficient environment over which they had no control. Specifically, Dewey argued that savage communities were held back by superstition, ancestor worship, animism, and magic. Dewey outlined the differences between the savage and civilized man succinctly with the following: 'One who is ignorant of the history of science is ignorant of the struggles by which mankind has passed from routine to caprice, from superstitious subjection to nature, from efforts to use it magically, to intellectual self-possession' (p. 229). During this time many of the leading social scientists believed that African and Native Americans were culturally stuck in the 'savage' sociological stage and would have read Dewey's remarks as having confirmed this conviction. In fact, this view of the non-white communities as socially backward informed the US educational policies in the Philippines in the 1890s during which Filipinos were routinely compared to 'savage' African and Native Americans (Paulet 2007, Coloma 2009). As demonstrated above, Dewey, too, believed that primitive cultures had survived into the present world.

Dewey's position on primitive communities was subtle. He awarded the savage with all the potentials of the civilized man and considered his lack of culture as a contingent outcome of his isolation from technology and his exposure to a deficient social environment. However, he considered savage communities as 'undeveloped', 'backward', 'ignorant', 'simple', and 'limited'. Dewey did not consider the discrepancies among the world's communities as mere stylistic, artistic, or cultural differences, as Du Bois and Boas suggested, but rather they were undeveloped when compared against the standard of Western European civilization. 'With increased culture', Dewey (1997b: 224) argued clearly using the term in a linear, quantitative sense, '... progress takes place'. Dewey equated social progress directly with science and democracy. 'Civilization is the mastery of [science's] varied energies', he explained, '... Science is experience becoming rational ... past experiences are purified and rendered into tools for discovery and advance' (pp. 211, 225). Science, in Dewey's sense of the word, was not a body of accumulated skills and knowledge, but rather was an intellectual disposition necessary for democratic, civilized living. Certain 'undeveloped' cultural groups did not have these traits and were, therefore, not ready to contribute to a democratic society.

Dewey in transition

Over the course of the first two decades of the 20th century, Dewey gradually reconstructed his views of culture and race. That is, he subtly but significantly revised his cultural views from a linear, hierarchical one that subsumed all societies past and present within single narrative of progress (as expressed by the Dewey School curriculum) to a pluralist view that recognized the necessity of interaction among diverse, but equivalent ways of living. Dewey's transformation was the result of both internal and external developments. The gradual acceptance of the research challenging neo-Lamarckianism, the theory that traits acquired during the lifetime of an organism were transmitted to its offspring, led most social scientists to reject any recapitulation theories. Dewey was never a neo-Lamarckian, and he never believed in the biological differentiation of racial and ethnic groups. However, he still arranged his laboratory school curriculum as a linear historical re-enactment of the activities representing the stages of race history that he attempted to coordinate with the emerging native capacities and interests of the child, which were biologically based. Thus, the complete abandonment of the recapitulation theory by biologists and psychologists must have cast some doubt on the appropriateness of the curriculum he enacted in Chicago. Furthermore, the positive reception of the behavioural psychology of John Watson underscored the significance of observable, immediate reinforcements in the lifetime of the individual and shifted attention away from long-term biological and cultural-institutional explanations of mind and behaviour. Specifically, most psychologists abandoned attempts to link the biologically inherited instincts of individuals with the social inheritance of cultures and instead focused on immediate environmental factors and stimuli (Cravens and Burnham 1971). Overall, as evolutionary biology became less of a pressing issue for educators, the more immediate conditions outlined by social psychology, behavioral psychology, and cultural anthropology grew in significance. As a result of this important paradigm shift, Dewey reconsidered his philosophical views on the necessity of a diverse, pluralistic environment for actualizing potentials.

Dewey rejected the idea that one's skin colour and/or biological makeup reflected a latent potential to achieve or not achieve a certain level of culture. All humans had the potential to achieve the level of civilization, if given the opportunity. This position was consistent with his definition of culture, which he defined specifically for an entry to the

Cyclopedia of Education in 1911. He defined culture as 'the habit of mind which perceives and estimates all matters with reference to their bearing on social values and aims' (1978: 406). Dewey suggested that culture was a way of approaching the world thoughtfully and reflectively by creating products and ideas that were valued by the entire society, not merely the elites. However, these products and ideas also had to contribute to the growth of the social environment. 'In other words', Dewey asserted, 'manual and industrial activities at once acquire a cultural value in education when they are appreciated in light of their social context, in their bearing upon social order and progress' (p. 406). For Dewey, culture did not venerate the old; it had to contribute to the progress of 'the new'. Dewey insisted that his definition of culture appreciated the contingent nature of knowledge and denied that culture was the unraveling of a latent potential. He criticized Herbert Spencer's philosophical system that 'discounted ... all individual contingencies, all accidents of time and place, personal surroundings and personal intercourse, new ideas from new contacts and new expansions of life' (Dewey 1976b: 196). Dewey's linear historicism, in contrast, recognized that there was no predetermined path towards an idealized culture; instead all cultural knowledge was the result of contingent new ideas that furthered the social occupations of the human race. While Dewey's definition of progress recognized the open-ended nature of emerging knowledge, it was entirely based upon the interaction of 'new contacts' and 'new expansions of life'. For Dewey, culture was not a variety of all contingent outcomes, but only those outcomes on the vanguard that contributed to the progress of the entire human race. He expanded these ideas further in chapter 7 of Democracy and Education.

Most of Democracy and Education expressed and expanded upon ideas and essays Dewey had worked out previously at the University of Chicago in the 1890s. As a result, his linear historicism was supported throughout. Chapter 7, however, was a significant exception. Written specifically for the book to address its title directly, chapter 7 offered Dewey's most innovative and pluralistic views to date. The US opposition to Germany in the Great War led Dewey to distinguish it from its enemy and, in the process, define US exceptionality as cosmopolitan, post-European, and inter-racial. It was specifically in the context of his critique of the German education system that Dewey (1997b: 87) issued one of his most popular, influential, and enduring passages: 'A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoined communicated experience'. Thus, Dewey clarified his own definition of democracy and education in relation to what it was not-imperialist Germany. In Democracy and Education, he outlined the necessity of diversity to democracy and progress. 'The realization of a form of life in which interests are mutually interpenetrating, and where progress, or readjustment, is an important consideration', Dewey explained, 'makes a democratic community more interested ... in deliberate and systematic education' (p. 87). Because democratic citizens ultimately had to rule themselves instead of depending upon the traditional ruling elites such as German bureaucrats, democratic citizens not only had to be informed about the present situation, but they needed the tools to envision a better future. According to Dewey, such a vision was dependent upon the ability for ideas and attributes to be 'mutually interpenetrating', and an educational system that fostered and modelled these ideals. The curriculum Dewey had helped administer at the University of Chicago laboratory school had not done this. Although the Dewey school was set up as an embryonic community reflective of the larger social world, its focus was on social occupations based upon Dewey's old linear view of culture, whereas the vision he outlined in chapter 7 of *Democracy and Education* was based upon his expanded pluralistic view. In theory, the vision outlined by Dewey would require a diverse student population within the school and classroom. An education that broke down 'barriers of class, race and national territory', Dewey insisted, 'would lead to the liberation of a greater diversity of personal capacities which characterize a democracy' (p. 87).

Dewey addressed the role of cultural groups in a democracy more directly in a series of essays on culture and immigrants during the First World War. He was doing so in the context of gradual adoption of the pluralistic cultural ideas of Boas, and the re-conceptualization of US culture described by US philosophers Horace Kallen and Randolph Bourne (Menand 2001, Zimmerman 2002). Like these scholars, Dewey rejected the idea of the inherent exceptionality of certain racial or national groups, but still insisted on US exceptionality because the US had contingently arrived at the highest and most developed social stage represented by pluralism. Dewey's definition of culture was contingent and transcended specific races and nations, but he still placed US-Western European intellectual culture at the forefront of progress and cultural growth. This idea was based on the three assumptions; that American intellectual history had moved beyond its German roots; that the voluntary and slow cultural assimilation of immigrants was necessary; and that US culture should be grounded in its transracial and international exceptionality.

In German Philosophy and Politics, published in 1915, Dewey (1980a) criticized the Germans' excessive emphasis upon veneration of the state, and he considered German imperialism as a natural outgrowth of its idealistic philosophy and bureaucratic efficiency. As Dewey (1997b: 93) explained the next year in Democracy and Education,

Under the influence of German thought, in particular, education became a civic function and the civic function was identified with the realization of the ideal of the national state. The state was substituted for humanity; cosmopolitanism gave way to nationalism. To form the citizen, not the 'man' became the aim of education.

US democracy, Dewey insisted, would have to move beyond these outdated philosophical ideas. In a 1916 essay Dewey (1980b: 203) argued that democracy would 'fall to pieces' if schools did not do their part to assuage inherited 'divisions of interests, class, and sectional ideas'. Dewey outlined the form of nationalism he thought should be fostered in the US, by carefully distinguishing his US brand of nationalism from the Germanic/European one. The US form, Dewey (1980b: 204) explained, 'was interracial and international in its makeup' and constituted a 'unity created by drawing out and composing into a harmonious whole the best, the most characteristic which each contributing race and people has to offer'. This was fully consistent with Dewey's definition of culture as those attributes that contributed to the new and progressive growth of mankind. He encouraged the mixing of cultures, but only so that the best traits from each could contribute to the greater, transracial fund of progress. 'The way to deal with hyphenism [German-American, Jewish-American, and so on]', Dewey explained,

... is to welcome it, but, to welcome it in the sense of extracting from each people its special good, so that it shall surrender into a common fund of wisdom and experience what it especially has to contribute. All of these surrenders and contributions taken together create the national spirit of America. (p. 205)

Pragmatic philosopher, Horace Kallen, put forth a similar view to Dewey in his 1915 essay 'Democracy Versus the Melting Pot'. Like his contemporaries, Kallen contrasted his views against the cultural aggressive imperialism of Russia and Germany. He did not want to see the US go down the same course of forced assimilation. Instead, Kallen (quoted in Menand 2001: 393) suggested,

American civilization may come to mean the perfection of European civilization, the waste, the squalor, and the distress of Europe being eliminated—a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind... so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and the discords of them all make the symphony of civilization.

Kallen's vision did not necessarily support social mobility, instead it suggested that all Americans accept and celebrate their role, to play the metaphorical instrument they were given to the best of their ability. The acceptance of all types, instead of the movement towards a single type, is what made the US exceptional.

Kallen's view accepted that the characteristics of racial types were fixed, but he wanted to remove these groups from a limited hierarchical view. In other words, Kallen did not go as far as Boas and Du Bois had in arguing that all cultures had something to teach one another. Instead they each contributed to a larger transracial US culture, which no single culture owned. In a letter to Kallen, Dewey expressed his approval of his 'Melting Pot' essay. 'I quite agree with your orchestration idea', Dewey (2005b) explained, 'but upon condition we really get a symphony and not a lot of different instruments playing simultaneously. I never did care for the melting pot metaphor, but genuine assimilation to one another-not Anglo-saxondom-seems to be essential to an America'. Again, to although Dewey rejected the idea of the white protestant as the archetype of culture, like Kallen he did not fully commit to the pluralist view (even though he did move beyond Kallen in recommending cultural 'assimilation to one another'). Instead, Dewey confirmed his linear historicism of open-ended inquiry towards progress, a democratic, assimilating process that would lead society towards a transracial view. However, Dewey

denied the necessity of maintaining cultural diversity, as Du Bois had suggested. Any antisocial or self-serving clique was counterproductive to this evolutionary process, Dewey (1997b: 86) explained in *Democracy and Education*, because 'its prevailing purpose is the protection of what [the clique] has got, instead of reorganizations and progress through wider relationships'. Dewey argued that such a tendency could be seen in 'savage tribes' who have 'identified their experience with rigid adherence to their past customs' (p. 86). Because Dewey and Tufts had elucidated in their co-authored *Ethics* text that he considered Native American and African American cultures as 'savage', many readers of time would likely have read the term as if Dewey were referring to these groups.

In Dewey's (1980c) Schools of To-morrow, in a passage likely written by his daughter Evelyn, the co-authors enthusiastically described the civics programme implemented in the schools of Gary, Indiana—a system that, according to Dewey, had successfully found the right balance between respecting native limitations and developing thoughtful citizens. Instead of using textbooks, the Gary students engaged in mock political campaigns and built furniture from scratch. The effects of the functional civics curriculum in the industrial town were believed to have a double value, because not only were immigrant students informed about practical citizenship, but their parents were also educated. In a somewhat condescending tone, Dewey (1980c: 336) explained,

[immigrant] parents, learn nothing of the laws until they break them, of public health until they endanger it, nor of social resources until they need something ... it is very important that their children have some real knowledge on which to base a sounder judgement.

Immigrants, the Deweys believed, were naturally suspicious of government and authority until their children taught them otherwise. This rather dismissive view of immigrant attitudes and culture—likely written by Evelyn—does not exactly reinforce the orchestra metaphor Dewey endorsed above. Instead they reflected the liberal prejudices and beliefs of the time.

Dewey's cultural pluralism emerges

Dewey came face-to-face with cultural diversity and modernization between 1917 and 1925 when he travelled to Japan, China, and Turkey. His experiences in these countries reinforced the pluralistic views he had expressed in chapter 7 of *Democracy and Education*. Nevertheless, Dewey initially approached the people of Japan and China through a lens of cultural deficiency and largely viewed his job as enabling the foreign educational reformers to bring about Western style reforms. The Japanese, Dewey (2005c) dismissively wrote his friend Albert Barnes, 'have a childlike and almost touching eagerness to be thought of well—especially as they are still new to their membership in western civilization to be sure'. Psychologically the Japanese were 'communistic ... or marked by social solidarity'. Intellectually they were 'not an individualistic people—they like to conform, and are very sensitive, as said, to disapproval by others'. Morally, they were 'more individualistic than we are'. Dewey concluded, the Japanese lacked 'social glue', and so he sardonically commented, 'In spite of our 50 races we are in many ways a more unified people than these with their single homogenous race'. What the Japanese were lacking, although Dewey did not directly identify it, was an appreciation for a democratic and associated form of living outlined in chapter 7 of Democracy an Education. Dewey essentially dismissed Japanese culture as not far enough developed, as clutching too tightly to their traditional, conformist forms of living. That is, like the US and Western Europe, Dewey believed that the Japanese had to first develop Western-style institutions and dispositions before they could create the kind of international and inter-racial worldview he envisioned for the US and the rest of the world. At the same time he identified a 'clash of cultures' as a notable aspect of his experience. His old linear ethnocentric and newer pluralistic definitions of culture co-mingled as he tried unsuccessfully to wrap his mind around the Japanese experience.

Upon arrival in China, Dewey observed similar communal behaviours. However, by the end of the transformative trip, he had gained a greater respect for the cultural difference of the Chinese people, a difference he could simply not describe in terms of his ethnocentric linear historicism. That is, Dewey could not simply place a country so vast, populous, and ancient on a single continuum of cultural development with Western Europe and the US as the final cultural destination. Chinese politics had to be 'understood in terms of itself', Dewey insisted in a position that would have been unthinkable 20 years earlier, 'not translated over into classifications of an alien political morphology ... China can be understood only in terms of the institutions and ideas which have been worked out in its own historical evolution' (quoted in Wang 2007: 76). Dewey translated his more nuanced cultural perspective directly to his recommendations for educational reform. Dewey (1983a: 230) continued,

In wanting a transformation of their country, the Young Chinese have no thought of a Westernized China, a China which repeats and imitates Europe or America. They want Western knowledge and Western methods which they themselves can independently employ and sustain in a China which is itself and not a copy of something else.

Although Dewey recognized and respected the cultural norms of the Chinese, he was not proposing a cultural exchange of ideas. In other words, Dewey (1997b: 87) was not arguing on behalf of 'mutually interpenetrating' cultural ideas as he did for American immigrant groups. Instead he suggested a one-way transaction. Nevertheless, Dewey approached the Chinese with a degree of humility and cultural sensitivity because Chinese educational reformers, Dewey recognized, are 'profoundly resentful of all efforts which condescendingly hold up Western institutions, political, religious, educational, as models to be humbly accepted and submissively repeated' (p. 232). Dewey recognized that the Chinese did not necessarily see the West as inherently superior, and they actually resented such a suggestion. He realized that the rich, complex history of China could not simply be ignored when adjusting to Western ways; Euro-American methods, ideas, and institutions would have to undergo some kind of a transformation to meet the needs of the Chinese people. However, despite his nuanced and semi-pluralistic take on cultural transmission, for Dewey the future of China still resided in the adoption of western ideas.

Invited by the Minister of Public Instruction of Turkey, Dewey spent 2 months touring the nation and issued a specific set of prescriptions for establishing a national education system for the emerging democracy. Dewey's vision for Turkey was comprehensive and ambitious, and he demonstrated a newfound respect for local conditions and for encouraging a plurality of educational approaches to meet these conditions. Dewey's (1983b: 276) ambitious goal for the nation was 'the development of Turkey as a vital, free, independent, and lay republic in the full membership of civilized states'. To develop properly, Dewey insisted, the Turkish citizens must 'develop traits and dispositions of character intellectual and moral, which fit men and women for self-government, economic self-support and industrial progress' (p. 276). Dewey outlined specifically what democratic traits he had in mind, 'namely, initiative and inventiveness, independence of judgement, ability to think scientifically and to cooperate for common purposes socially' (p. 276). With the development of these traits the benefits of learning would be spread to all Turkish citizens, not just its intellectual and ruling classes. Dewey emphasized the importance of a flexible educational system that could adapt to local conditions and economies. He warned the Ministry against producing 'too uniform a system of education, not flexibly adapted to the varying needs of different localities, urban, rural, maritime, and to different types of rural communities, different environments and different industries, such as pastoral, grain-growing, cotton, fruit, etc.' (p. 280). He insisted that the central ministry not only allow for diversification, 'but promote it, and even insist on it' (p. 281). Dewey's expanded pluralistic view of culture was on full display. 'The central Ministry should stand for unity, but against uniformity and in favour of diversity', he exclaimed, 'Only by diversification of materials can schools be adapted to local conditions and needs and the interests of different localities be enlisted' (p. 289). Accordingly, Dewey recommended that the teaching of Turkish history and geography should be connected with local conditions and histories.

When Dewey engaged foreign cultures first hand, he discovered that they did not wish to develop in the same linear manner historically outlined by Western Europe and the US. Instead they envisioned their own unique paths to modernization. Dewey was philosophically equipped to recommend a culturally relevant programme for these nations because of the ideas he had expressed during the war on assimilating immigrants, cultural interaction, and post-European cosmopolitanism. By 1922, Dewey had made pluralistic interaction among different cultural groups a central concern. However, his suggested curriculum had not yet caught up to his philosophical ideas.

Cultural pluralism and the teaching of social issues

Dewey's interest in pluralistic interaction was a central concern in his 1924 book Human Nature and Conduct and his discussion of the concept represented the most original ideas he presented in the book. 'The problem of social psychology is not how either the individual or collective mind forms social groups and customs', Dewey (1983c: 67) argued, 'but how different customs, established interacting arrangements, form and nurture different minds'. Because the native stock of instincts 'is practically the same everywhere'. Dewey insisted, the native differences between the communities of the world had been exaggerated. Dewey listed the Patagonians, Greeks, Sioux Indians, and Hindoos [sic], Bushmen and Chinese as evidence of the strength of acquired habits, 'not the growth of customs in terms of instincts'. Another important contribution of Human Nature and Conduct was Dewey's discussion of deliberation. By deliberation, Dewey did not yet mean discussion among several individuals, but rather the analogous internal process wherein the individual discussed and explored competing options within his/her own mind. Deliberation, he explained, was a 'tentative trying out of various courses of action ... It flies toward and settles upon objective situations not upon feelings' (p. 141). Deliberations were sparked by 'confusion and uncertainty in present activities' (p. 144). Dewey portrayed interaction as a spark to deliberation and as a critical component of his cultural pluralism. We are not caught in a circle; we traverse a spiral in which social customs generate some consciousness of interdependencies, and this consciousness is embodied in acts which in improving the environment generate new perceptions of social ties, and so on for forever', he explained, 'the interactions are forever there as fact but they acquire meaning only in the desires, judgements and purposes they awaken' (p. 225). That is, the constant recombination of individuals with different experiences and ideas interacting with one another led to continual reflection, deliberation, and social growth. This was the very idea that would lead Dewey to reconsider his views on the social studies curriculum and make classroom discussion a central concern.

While at the University of Chicago, Dewey identified the significance of history and geography throughout his writings on education and the cultural history of the human race played a central role in organizing the curriculum at his laboratory school. In *Democracy and Education* Dewey addressed history and geography in separate chapters, in which he outlined how these subjects fit into his linear historicist curriculum. However, prior to the war, Dewey never mentioned anything about addressing political issues or current events in the classroom. In fact, Dewey's failure to endorse current events in the classroom prior to 1923 put him somewhat at odds with the proponents of the social studies.

The social studies as a coherent educational reform movement began with the publication of the report of the Committee on Social Studies in 1916. The report cited Dewey's work repeatedly in justification of the new scope and sequence of history and social sciences courses it recommended. While Dewey had no direct relationship to the Committee (or to the larger Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of which it was part), his colleague and friend, historian James Harvey Robinson was an influential member of the social studies group (Fallace 2008). One major suggestion that the Committee issued was the creation of an interdisciplinary senior capstone course called 'Problems of Democracy'. As its title suggested, the class was designed to centre on enduring public issues and current events, topics Dewey had never explicitly endorsed. However, in a significant, overlooked essay Dewey published in 1923, 'The School as a Means of Developing a Social Consciousness and Social Ideals in Children', Dewey fundamentally revised his views on how to teach history, geography, and social studies in relation to citizenship. In particular, he seemed to have finally thrown his weight behind the social studies movement by outlining the significance of addressing current events and politics in the classroom.

In the essay, Dewey recognized that social and educational conditions had changed. First Dewey (1983d: 151) praised schools for the excellent work they had done in 'uniting and bringing together the exceedingly heterogeneous elements of our population', specifically, for 'bringing children of different religions, of different traditions, of different races, and of different languages together, and for a certain number of hours a day having them in contact with each other in common play, study and work'. As a result of such schooling, Dewey asserted, children of different ethnic and religious backgrounds, had 'grown more like each other' (p. 151). However, such interaction naturally led to suspicion, intolerance, and distrust. To combat this, Dewey proposed two specific educational objectives. First he argued that students would need to develop an 'inter-racial and international' mind based in 'international friendship, amity and good will' (p. 154). Specifically, Dewey argued that we

need a curriculum in history, literature and geography which will make the different racial elements in this country aware of what each has contributed and will create a mental attitude towards other people which will make it more difficult for the fames of hatred and suspicion to sweep over this country. (p. 154)

Second, Dewey suggested that social class divisions and conflicts be discussed openly with students. This was Dewey's first and most overt endorsement of the discussion of social issues in the classroom. Overall, Dewey insisted, 'our instruction in history and geography and our social studies should be intellectually more honest, they should bring students into gradual contact with the actual realties of contemporary life' (p. 156). This was the first time Dewey had ever used the term 'social studies'. The students at the Dewey school had studied the social conditions of the present in a broad sense, but they had not studied current events or specific social conditions. Dewey was now stating that students should indeed study the present.

To be 'good citizens in the broadest sense', Dewey (1983e: 159) explained in another essay published that year, politics should be addressed directly in the classroom and teachers should have the courage to do so. 'The political aspect is an important one, and one that is

increasingly important for the public schools of the country to emphasize'. He implored teachers to move beyond the mere mechanics of how government worked and to address the specifics of the larger social problems facing the nation. Dewey recognized that there would be resistance to evaluating American society critically with students, but, he insisted, teachers were not taking on their full responsibility if they failed to do so. Teachers should not take sides on political and social issues, but rather they should provide a forum in which the facts could be explored and considered. He even suggested that teachers would gain greater respect in their local communities if they became more engaged with the social realties surrounding them. 'We need to develop in the coming generation a much more discriminating judgement about political problem and plans', he reasoned, 'if our public schools are going to train our people so that they will really make our democratic experiment a complete and adequate success' (p. 159).

Dewey's new emphasis on specific current events and issues was a logical outgrowth of the sense that he and many intellectuals had after the First World War that US citizens had been duped into supporting the war effort. Many believed that had the US citizens been more informed, reflective, and critical about entering the alleged 'war to end all wars', then they could have approached the conflict and its aftermath with greater insight and reserve. Perhaps no text captured the tension between an increasingly complex world and an apathetic and ignorant citizenry than journalist Walter Lippman's Public Opinion, published in 1922. Lippman's provocative book argued that most Americans did not have the knowledge or inclination to distinguish the comprehensive and objective facts from subjective opinions. As a result, the American citizenry largely made their political decisions on limited knowledge, stereotypes, short-term irrationalism, and emotion. To remedy the issue, Lippman argued that experts should be organized to collect objective data and provide it for administrators and executives. Guided by science, these experts would rise above the subjectivity and irrationalism of local and emotional politics. Lippman's emphasis on the expert over the average citizen struck many as undemocratic, but his view was fully in line with progressive administrative thought.

Dewey had great respect of Lippman and was somewhat sympathetic to his argument. However, Dewey clung to his belief in democratic means and reiterated his faith in education as a means of creating an informed, responsible citizenry. 'The enlightenment of public opinion, still seems to have priority over the enlightenment of officials and directors', Dewey (1983f: 334) rebutted in a review of Lippman's book, 'Democracy demands a more thoroughgoing education than the education of officials, administrators, and directors of industry'. Dewey believed that the citizenry should be made aware of the objective facts, particularly in relating news events 'to continuing study and record of underlying conditions' (p. 333). True democracy was extremely difficult, Dewey admitted, because 'this fundamental general education is at once so necessary and so difficult of achievement' (p. 334). What Dewey learned from Lippman and the aftermath of the First World War was that learning the long-term social-industrial history of the race was indeed significant, but that these trends need to be linked explicitly with present issues and events. This essentially was the position of social studies educators like Harold Rugg, who had broken ranks with many professional historians over the role of chronological history in the schools (Evans 2007). While not exactly endorsing the theme or issue-based approach to social studies instruction professed by Rugg, Dewey, nevertheless, threw his support behind a progressive curriculum that celebrated cultural difference and explicitly examined contemporary political events. This constituted a significant addition, if not revision, to his earlier writings on education.

Dewey's new educational vision came to fruition in *The Public and Its Problems*, a book which elaborated on his critique of what he called Lippman's 'oligarchical' view of democracy. 'The world has suffered more from leaders and authorities than from the masses', Dewey (1954: 208) insisted, 'The essential need [of democracy], ... is the improvement of the methods and conditions of debate, discussion and persuasion'. Dewey argued that improving democracy primarily involved 'freeing and perfecting the processes of inquiry and of dissemination of their conclusions' (p. 208). The burden of creating inquisitive citizens skilled in deliberation and debate naturally rested on the schools. He again endorsed a curriculum that directly addressed emerging social problems as they occurred, so students could be taught how to approach them with reflection and insight. As Dewey explained:

... inquiry must be as nearly contemporaneous as possible; otherwise it is only of antiquarian interest. Knowledge of history is evidently necessary for connectedness of knowledge. But history which is not brought down close to the actual scene of events leaves a gap and exercises influence upon the formation of judgements about public interest only by guesswork about intervening events. Here, only too conspicuously, is a limitation of the existing social sciences. Their material comes too late, too far after the event, to enter effectively into the formation of public opinion about the immediate public concern and what is to be done about it. (p. 179)

Throughout his career, Dewey had emphasized the need for the subject of history to speak to present conditions. However, he was mostly referring to the general conditions of the development of modernity, science, and democracy. Not until the 1920s did he begin to speak specifically about the need for the history/social studies curriculum to address current political issues and conditions directly. In addition he asked school teachers to do what most social scientists were reluctant to do: apply the knowledge of the past directly to current issues as they unravelled and to encourage open discussion about how to solve them.

In later years Dewey's calls for a curriculum grounded in the social and economic realities of the present became more forceful and direct. The events of the Great Depression pushed Dewey to place even greater focus on the issues of the present. In 1933 in the essay 'Education and Our Social Problems', Dewey (2008a: 128) explicitly endorsed the 'newly aroused interest of teachers in basic social problems'. The next year in his essay 'Education for a Changing Social Order', Dewey (2008b: 164) issued perhaps his most direct and specific appeal for curriculum reform of his entire career:

What is required is something fundamental by way of a pretty complete overhauling of the curriculum from the fifth grade onwards through high school. The whole course of study should be oriented toward the world of the present, not toward the past, and its great aim should be to make those who go out from the school conscious of the forces that are changing the condition of life for everybody.

Again, this new curriculum vision based on the world of the present and basic social problems was quite different from how history and social studies was taught at the Dewey school. His renewed focus on a relevant curriculum and the deliberative skills of students was a direct outgrowth of his expanded views on cultural interaction and pluralism.

Conclusion: A qualified conversion

Although Dewey never fully abandoned his linear historicist approach to culture, nor did he abandon his low esteem for the 'savage', after the First World War he made fewer references to the sociological and psychological stages of social development. This suggests that he de-emphasized his linear approach to culture to allow for his expanded, pluralistic view. After the First World War, he also consistently began using the term 'cultures' in the more relational, relativistic way of Du Bois and Boas. In general, Dewey suggested an approach to curriculum that placed less emphasis on retracing the cultural history of the human race and more emphasis on cultural interaction and on the need for students to understand and discuss current social issues in the present. Dewey updated his views as a result of internal developments in his philosophical views, as well as external conditions that pushed him to apply his ideas to changing conditions. Specifically, when Dewey considered the need to assimilate immigrant groups during the First World War, he outlined his innovative theoretical vision for pluralistic interaction in chapter 7 of Democracy and Education. His travels abroad to Japan, China, and Turkey allowed him to put his pluralistic views to work. Dewey reconsidered his vision for an appropriate democratic curriculum further in light of Lippman's Public Opinion and, more significantly, in response to the dire economic conditions brought on by the Great Depression. As a result, he explicitly called for a curriculum reform that allowed for the discussion of public issues in the classroom.

We must be careful, however, not to give too much to credit to Dewey for his vision for a democratic curriculum. On a theoretical level Dewey developed a philosophy based on cultural-exchange of ideas and pluralistic interaction among different communities that extended beyond the linear historicism he outlined before the war. In an essay on individuality, equality, and superiority, Dewey (1983g) even remarked, 'Inferior races are inferior because their successes lie in different directions, though possibly more artistic and civilized than our own' (p. 295), suggesting a major revision to his depiction of non-Western European groups as socially deficient. However, it is unclear exactly what Dewey meant by races. Did he mean the different white immigrant groups he discussed during the First World War, or did he also mean those groups across what Du Bois called the 'colour line' such as Native and African Americans. Both Du Bois and Boas supported educational programmes aimed at prejudice reduction and the social uplift of African-Americans (see Alridge 2008, Selig 2008, Burkholder 2010). Dewey would certainly not have been opposed to such programmes, but his vision for democratic education did not explicitly target the 'colour line' as an impediment to democratic deliberation, nor did he ever specifically suggest racial segregation as the kind of social/political problem to be discussed in US classrooms. The failure to recognize segregation explicitly has led many scholars to question whether Dewey's democratic vision was only for white students (Seigfried 1998, Sullivan 2003). Nevertheless, the objective of this essay was not to judge the adequacy of Dewey's racial views but rather to demonstrate that his vision for a democratic curriculum evolved and that it did so in relation to his changing views on culture and race. The Dewey of democratic, pluralistic deliberation in the classroom did not appear until 1923.

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