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A History of the Amherst Project: Revising the Teaching of American History 1959 to 1972

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A HISTORY OF THE AMHERST PROJECT: REVISING
THE TEACHING OF AMERICAN HISTORY
1959 to 1972

by
Charles Edward Samec

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
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Dr. Richard H. Brown, the Director of the Amherst Project and presently a member of the staff of the Newberry Library in Chicago, graciously allowed the writer access to the Amherst Project's files. Without his aid, this dissertation would have been impossible.
VITA

The author, Charles Edward Samec, is the son of Henry Samec, Jr., and Stella (Janovsky) Samec. He was born October 7, 1936, in Berwyn, Illinois.

His elementary education was obtained in the public schools of Berwyn, Illinois, and secondary education at the J. Sterling Morton High School, Cicero, Illinois, where he graduated in 1954.

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He has taught courses at Morton College, Cicero, Illinois; Triton College, River Grove, Illinois; Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois; and De Paul University, Chicago, Illinois. At present he is a history teacher at Morton West High School, Berwyn, Illinois. He is a member of numerous professional organizations, including the National Council for the Social Studies and Phi Delta Kappa. In 1962 he was ordained as a minister by the American Baptist Churches USA.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the 1950s there were a great number of curriculum reform attempts, especially in the sciences and mathematics. The events that precipitated this reform activity are not as yet clear. Perhaps Americans were concerned over certain Russian accomplishments in science, such as the launching of Sputnik in 1957, or the sudden proliferation of knowledge that occurred during the 1950s in all subject matter fields.\(^1\) A third possibility is that persons at the university and college level were dissatisfied with the level of knowledge possessed by in-coming students. Whatever might be the reasons, by 1959 major curriculum reform attempts had already started in mathematics, biology and physics. The federal government played a major role in financing these projects by creating the National Science Foundation in 1950 and enacting the National Defense Education Act of 1958.\(^2\)

In September, 1959, thirty-five scientists, scholars and educators met at Wood Hole, Massachusetts to discuss the status of science education in the nation's schools. The chairman of the conference, Dr.

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 302.

Dr. Bruner presented four main hypotheses: (1) all disciplines contain fundamental ideas, which he called "structure;" (2) these basic ideas could be taught to almost all individuals at any level of ability in some intellectually honest manner—a concept he called "readiness;" (3) all learners could develop a type of "intuitive grasp" of the structure of the disciplines; and (4) intellectual curiosity would motivate students if they were given the opportunity to discover for themselves the discipline's structure. For those who sought to reform the secondary school social education curriculum during the 1960s, the ideas of structure of a discipline and learning by discovery proved to be a vexing one.

Structure was not clearly defined although Dr. Bruner said that its purpose was "... to give a student as quickly as possible a sense of the fundamental ideas of a discipline." He also stated that "... grasping the structure of a subject is understanding it in a way that permits many other things to be related to it meaningfully." Thus structure simplified the process of learning by making the subject easier to comprehend, by allowing for easier memorization of its major concepts and generalizations, by contributing to the transfer of learning from one learning experience to a new one, by facilitating intuitive thinking and

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4 Ibid., p. 347.
by allowing the learner to acquire new information and to change existing concepts at a later date. Along with the idea of structure was the notion that structure could be best learned through "discovery." Apparently discovery learning was some form of induction and Dr. Bruner's main idea was that a student could best learn a discipline like physics if he performed in a fashion that in some way resembled the activities of the physicist. Likewise, mathematics could best be learned if the student's behavior was similar to that of the mathematician.

The Process of Education posed a number of problems for curriculum specialists. First of all, such major ideas as structure, discovery and intuitive thinking were vague. Secondly, there was very little psychological evidence to document many of Dr. Bruner's assertions. Thirdly, the book did not clarify whether the idea of structure was valid for such subject areas as history, geography, music and home economics. Fourthly, although it was obvious that a learner could not discover all of the concepts and generalizations that existed in a particular discipline, nothing was said about how it would be decided which concepts and generalizations would be discovered by the learner and which would be imparted to him by an instructor. Thus Dr. Bruner's ideas of structure and discovery did not resolve the problem of content selection. Lastly, it

5Ibid., pp. 23-25.

led some subject area specialists to become defensive in their attitudes toward curriculum change. What if geography or history did not have a discernable structure? Would it lose its place in the curriculum if a structure could not be found? There was also a philosophical question that perplexed many, namely, was it possible that history or geography, for example, had structures of which professional historians and geographers were unaware?

During the 1960s there was a great deal of concern to revise social education in the secondary school curriculum. The activities of the mathematics and science curriculum reform projects, the ideas contained in The Process of Education and the availability of funding, primarily from the federal government all contributed toward attempts at social education curriculum reform. A large number of books and journal articles appeared between 1960 and 1975, each expressing a point of view about one or more of the concerns over curriculum reform.

The following section describes the various positions social educators took on the ideas of structure of a discipline and discovery learning. Examples for each position are discussed, but no attempt has been made to catalogue all of the views that were expressed.

Jerome S. Bruner's idea of structure stimulated a debate over the content of social education courses. Two positions were taken on the issue: (1) each of the social sciences possessed its own structure of concepts and generalizations and (2) the social sciences shared a common
set of concepts and, perhaps, even generalizations. Those who took the first position insisted that each of the social sciences was unique and they felt that their discipline deserved a place in the curriculum. Lawrence Senesh, for example, wanted Economics included in both the Elementary and High School curriculum. Dr. Senesh organized Economics around five basic concepts: scarcity, specialization, interdependence, market and public policy. Students were to be exposed repeatedly to the concepts during their twelve years of schooling, each time with increasing depth and complexity.\(^7\)

The second point of view on structure that social educators expressed during the 1960s stressed that the social sciences shared a common set of concepts and, perhaps, even generalizations. Some who took this position argued that pertinent concepts and generalizations from the social sciences ought to be included in existing courses.\(^8\) Thus Stuart C.


Miller urged that American History focus on the concept of social change; Thomas C. Mendenhall argued that Anthropological concepts ought to be infused in history and Robert Pearson wanted American History taught chronologically but with special topics taught in greater depth using social science generalizations.  

A second group of social educators who accepted the idea that the social sciences shared a common set of concepts and generalizations were those who advocated an interdisciplinary approach to the curriculum. Bernard Berelson and Gary A. Steiner, for example, selected eleven concepts from Anthropology, Sociology and Psychology, and designed a course called "Human Behavior." The students were told in the opening chapter of Steiner's and Berelson's textbook, which was called Human Behavior, that "This book is about the most interesting subject in the world; ourselves. It attempts to set down some of the important findings about human behavior that have been established by scientific study." The course dealt with three questions: "How do different kinds of people act? What do they believe? Why do they behave as they do?" The students

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studied the concepts in order to develop insight into the questions.

Many of the writers who favored an interdisciplinary approach placed the focus upon major issues in American society.\(^{11}\) Maurice P. Hunt and Lawrence E. Metcalf, for example, desired a curriculum built around such problem areas as power and the law; economics; nationalism and patriotism; social class; religion and morality; race and minority-group relations; and sex, courtship and marriage.\(^{12}\) Those who emphasized the problems approach also stressed the development of values.\(^{13}\) Students were to be placed in problem situations where they had to examine their beliefs.

A popular form of the problems approach during the 1960s was the


case-study technique. In this approach the student was confronted by a problem that involved some unresolved question of fact, definition and policy judgments, and he was either to analyze the various positions or take a position and justify it rationally.

There were several social educators, however, who were bothered by the conceptual approach to social education. Richard F. Newton, for example, stated that the term "concept" had been misused by educators "... to the point of absurdity;" and he called for its clarification. A second writer, Alan Griffin, approved of the idea of organizing courses according to a conceptual structure but insisted that those who were en-


gaged in the various disciplines used the same concepts in many ways, thus making the idea, for the time being at least, impractical. Dr. Griffin was confident that each discipline would eventually develop a set of concepts.

Thus the social educators of the 1960s obviously disagreed as to whether or not the social sciences had distinct concepts, whether or not all of the social sciences shared a common body of concepts and how concepts could be used in social education. Dr. Jerome S. Bruner's idea of discovery learning was equally controversial.

Dr. Bruner had said that a student ought to discover insights for himself in the subject he was studying; in learning physics he ought to act in some fashion like a physicist, and in mathematics like a mathematician. Those who dealt with the problems of social education attempted to define discovery learning and determine its use in the curriculum. Everyone seemed to assume that discovery learning was some form of inductive reasoning, but its value in the curriculum was a moot question.

There were some who argued that the social sciences possessed many methods of inquiry. For example, Stanley P. Wronski and Gerald A. Danzer examined the way the historian reconstructed the past, concluding that the historian utilized a variety of methods in his research. Dr.


C. Benjamin Cox requested his students, who were social studies teachers taking his course at the University of Illinois, to search the social science literature in order to define the distinct mode of inquiry used by the scholars. Dr. Cox reported that the students failed to identify a particular mode of inquiry that distinguished political scientists, economists and sociologists from each other. Other writers also felt that the social sciences had many modes of inquiry that were used interchangeably by scholars, and they saw little value in organizing the curriculum around these modes of inquiry.

The inability to explicate a distinctive mode of inquiry meant that social educators stressed a general inductive reasoning methodology. Byron G. Massialas and Jack Zevin cited research indicating that students were capable of using inductive reasoning and were highly motivated to learn when confronted by problems involving inquiry skills. Paul L. Ward urged that the study of history include the development of inductive reasoning skills.

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If most social educators were united in urging the inclusion of problems in the curriculum that would allow learners to use inductive reasoning skills, there was disagreement over the wisdom of using primary sources, such as diaries, letters, various government documents and newspaper accounts. Some writers argued that scholars used primary sources in their research and urged that such sources be introduced to high school students.  

John R. Steinkamp outlined how he had successfully used primary sources in his American History classes. There were other social educators, however, like Walter Rundell, Jr., John R. Palmer, Richard Warren and Albert S. Anthony who doubted the wisdom of having students spend a good deal of time working with primary sources, arguing that less material was covered, the contributions of scholars was being ignored and primary sources were too difficult for students to interpret.

At the present time there is no history of the development of the

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social studies curriculum of the 1960s; nor has there been an attempt to
tell the story of the "New Social Studies." The term "New Social Studies"
was used during the 1960s and early 1970s to refer to a cluster of pro-
jects that attempted to alter the teaching and learning of social educa-
tion. The reformers had a number of common attributes: (1) they were
connected to one or more universities; (2) they employed a number of pro-
fessionals in the task of curriculum construction, namely, social scien-
tists, historians, psychologists, experienced classroom teachers and mem-
bers from university and college schools or education; (3) they sought to
shorten the time-lag between their research and its implementation in the
curriculum; (4) they tried to implement Jerome S. Bruner's ideas on struc-
ture of a discipline; (5) they desired to have students learn by induc-
tion; (6) they emphasized the integrity of the social science disciplines;
(7) they tended to produce materials that varied from the standard text-
book format; (8) they organized attempts to evaluate their curriculum;
(9) they sought to distribute their materials through commercial pub-
lishers, thereby reaching as many teachers as possible; and (10) they were
funded either by private philanthropic organizations or by the Department
of Health, Education and Welfare and the National Science Foundation.26
Although there is no history as yet of this movement, there are a number

26 Edwin Fenton and John M. Good, "Project Social Studies: A
of catalogues, descriptions and progress reports that have been published of the more than seventy social science projects. Also of help is the attempt by Mark M. Krug and others to develop an analytic approach to the study of the "New Social Studies." The authors investigated five curriculum projects, stressing seven areas of concern, namely, the curriculum's rationale, materials, structure, appropriateness, effectiveness, conditions and practicality. The object of this approach was to aid teachers and curriculum workers in the selection of materials for instruction.

The Amherst Project was one of the "New Social Studies" curriculum projects. The endeavor was called the Amherst Project because it originated with a group of college instructors and high school teachers who taught in the Amherst, Massachusetts area and because all of the summer writing sessions were held at Amherst College. As with the "New


Social Studies," there is no history of the Amherst Project. There are, however, a number of articles that were written by individuals connected with the Project. Van R. Halsey, Jr., who was Chairman of the Committee on the Study of History, wrote two articles that explain the purposes of the Project and described some of the curriculum units in the Project's early days. Allan O. Kownslar described the junior high school units that he helped produce under the auspices of the Project and have been published commercially. Richard H. Brown, who became Director of the Amherst Project after 1964, wrote a number of important articles that reveal the Project's hopes, goals, problems and accomplishments, as well as the problems Dr. Brown felt were important in the area of education.


This study seeks to establish the main developments in the history of the Amherst Project. It will explain the Amherst Project's organization, learning theory, philosophy of history, curriculum and attempts to educate teachers and aid them in using its curriculum and learning theory. The Amherst Project, being a product of the 1950s, dealt with the same concerns that social educators had regarded as important. The Amherst Project developed a curriculum and then, finding that teachers had trouble teaching its units, sought ways to influence changes in teachers' behaviors. Like some of their colleagues in the area of social education the Amherst Project struggled with the problem of content and with the idea of discovery learning. The Project was pragmatic in its outlook, thereby creating a research problem, for it seemed to be creating its objectives, goals, and strategies as it went along. To date, a history has been written of only one other of the "New Social Studies" projects, the High School Geography Project. It is hoped that histories will be written of some of the other projects, for in this way a clearer picture will emerge of the social studies curriculum of the 1960s and 1970s and answers may be possible to such questions as the wisdom of national curriculum reform, the role of scholars in the development of the secondary education curriculum and the problems of educating teachers in accepting change.

At the time this study was made, the Amherst Project materials were being stored at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois but were not part of the Library's collection. The materials were being kept in a store-room packed in cartons. Without the aid of Dr. Richard H. Brown this study would have been impossible, for Dr. Brown assisted the writer in retrieving the material requested.

There were a number of printed sources that were helpful in preparing this dissertation. Van R. Halsey, Jr., and Richard H. Brown wrote a number of journal and magazine articles that explained the goals, philosophy and materials of the Project for the period before 1966. Dr. Brown's ideas on history and education of teachers appear in two articles that were published in 1970. Dr. Brown and Edmund Traverso, who was one of the Project's three Assistant Directors, wrote a guide for teachers who would be using the thirteen units that the Addison-Wesley Publishing Company either had published or soon would publish. This pamphlet explains the various curriculum units that either have been or will


soon be published and provides some suggestions on how the units might be taught. Also the pamphlet states the Project's learning theory, and is the most recent statement of the Amherst Project's position.

Also of help were the numerous proposals and reports that the Amherst Project filed with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare of the United States Office of Education (USOE). First of all, there were three proposals and the appendix to a fourth proposal that stated the Amherst Project's objectives and activities for the period, 1964-1967. Secondly, the Project filed a total of fourteen financial reports, providing information about the Project's financial status between 1964 and 1968. Thirdly, the Project submitted a final report that summarized its objectives and accomplishments. The final report does not bear either an author or the date when it was submitted, but the report was probably compiled by several members of the Project staff and submitted by Dr. Brown and Dr. Halsey, Jr., some time in late 1970 or early 1971. Each of the documents submitted to the government contained a number of appendixes that provided such information as a summary of workshops, a list of units prepared by the Project, the directions given to cooperating teachers, a list of members of the Committee on the Study of History, a list of staff members, and an analysis of reports submitted by cooperating teachers to the Project. Lastly, the Project submitted reports

36 The Amherst Project was usually prompt in submitting reports, and, therefore, the date of the final report is probably late 1970 or early 1971. The report was actually submitted to USOE by Dr. Brown and Dr. Halsey, Jr., on behalf of Hampshire College.
to USOE stating the accomplishments of the National Defense Education Act Institute Workshops that were held under the Project's auspices. These reports relate the goals, activities and accomplishments of the workshops. They were also helpful in determining the format of the Amherst workshops.

The Amherst Project issued four different kinds of newsletters. Dr. Richard H. Brown edited a newsletter that was circulated among the members of the Committee on the Study of History, informing the members of coming meetings and their agenda and reporting on various activities. The Assistant Director of the Project edited two newsletters, one for staff members and one for those who were participating in the Education Development Team program. These three types of newsletters furnished such information as dates and places of workshops and Education Development Teams, the results of summer writing programs, staff changes, the publication schedule of units, anxieties over inadequate funding, frustrations in working with teachers who were trying out new units in their classrooms, the travel schedules of staff members, and various other matters that were important to the staff. The Project also issued a fourth newsletter, the Bulletin of the Amherst Project, which was sent to several thousands of persons across the country, informing them of the Project's activities and ideas. Just as the proposals and reports filed with USOE furnished information on the objectives, financial status and some of the Project's accomplishments, so the various newsletters provided a chronological outline of events and provided a great deal of in-
sight into the Project's activities.

Thirty of the Amherst Project's units have been published by two publishers and others are available through the Educational Resources Informational Center (ERIC). It was standard procedure for cooperating teachers to keep a record of what happened each day when they used one of the units. These reports, which were called logs, were sent to the Assistant Director who then prepared a report summarizing the experiences of the teachers. One copy of the report was sent to the author of the unit and one copy was given to Dr. Brown who then made recommendations to the author for the revision of the unit. For each of the thirteen units published by the Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, there is a file that contains both the Assistant Director's report and Dr. Brown's recommendations along with a manuscript copy of the unit and of the teacher's manual, correspondence between Dr. Brown and the author, and other related materials. These records provided insight into both the problems writers had in composing their units and the problems teachers had in teaching the units. Unfortunately, similar materials do not exist for the earlier units. All of the logs submitted by the teachers are located apart from these unit files. Copies of pre- and post-tests for several of the units are available, but their results could not be found. The tests, however, are important for they reveal the learning outcomes anticipated by the Project for the unit. It was also not possible to tell if the proposed evaluation that was to be conducted by David Tyack
and Charles Keller ever occurred.

The best sources for understanding the various workshops conducted by the Project are the various proposals and reports filed with USOE and Dr. Brown's speech to the conference of NDEA Institute Directors, "The Amherst Project Workshop in Discovery Learning: An Institute 'On the Road.'" These sources provided information about objectives, format and achievements of the various workshops. Also of value were the individual files that exist for each of the workshops; consisting of correspondence between participating institutions and the Project, a list of participants, information for participants, a list of the workshop staff, estimated expenses, the schedule for the week and various memoranda to the Project staff.

Information about the proposed Center and Magazine was obtained from various unpublished memoranda and publicity statements that were provided by Dr. Brown from his personal files. Dr. Brown remains hopeful that the idea of a Center and Magazine will eventually be realized.

There is no written rationale of the Amherst Project's learning theory and philosophy of history. Information pertaining to the learning theory was obtained from three sources: (1) Dr. Brown's magazine and journal articles; (2) a speech delivered before the Convention of the Organization of American Historians in Chicago, Illinois on April 12, 1971.

In the second chapter the origins and early development of the Amherst Project will be presented, indicating how the Committee on the Study of History and the Project staff operated and some of the financial problems of the Project. In the third chapter the Project's learning theory, view of history and how its learning theory and view of history affected its ideas on how history ought to be taught are explained. In chapter four the Amherst curriculum will be analyzed, indicating how the curriculum was written, the nature of its units, and how the Project sought to evaluate the curriculum. Chapter five deals with the attempts the Project made in helping teachers understand its learning theory and view of history and its curriculum; the various types of workshops and the proposed Center for Educational Change and Magazine will be explained. The dissertation is summarized and concluded in chapter six.


39Brown and Traverso, "Guide to Amherst Approach to Inquiry Learning."
CHAPTER II

THE AMHERST PROJECT, AN OVERVIEW

In 1959 a group of high school teachers and college instructors from institutions in the vicinity of Amherst, Massachusetts, felt that something should be done to improve the teaching of American history in the secondary schools. These teachers were dissatisfied with the way their students were reacting toward their efforts. The university people were concerned because incoming freshmen were ignorant of historical generalizations, and more importantly, they lacked a critical spirit of inquiry. The outcome of this concern was the establishment of the Secondary School History Committee and a determination to remedy the situation. Under the leadership of Dr. Van Halsey, Jr., then director of admissions at Amherst College, this group focussed their attention on the development of curriculum materials. People, chiefly from the Amherst area, met during the summer and wrote units. Three high school units were written in 1961, seven in 1962, ten in 1963 and six in 1964. In addition, an entire American history course to be used at the junior high school level was developed.

During the summer of 1964, the Secondary School History Committee was succeeded by the Committee on the Study of History. The new committee was composed of nine people: Wayne Altree, Chairman of the History Department.

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ment at Newton (Massachusetts) High School, Lee Benson, Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, Lawrence Chisolm, Professor of American Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo, New York, Alice Rice Cook, Director of the Human Relations Center of the New School for Social Research, William Dietel, an associate of the Rockefeller Fund, Saul Padover, Professor of Political Science at the New School for Social Research, Peter Schrag, Editor-at-large for Saturday Review, George R. Taylor, Professor-emeritus of History at Amherst College, and the committee's chairman, Van R. Halsey, Jr. The committee generally met twice a year, usually in the spring and fall. The primary purpose of the Committee on the Study of History was to advise, to generate ideas, and to assess progress.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} The Committee members served without compensation.

The Committee on the Study of History established a staff composed of a Director, Assistant Director and a number of other assistants, some of whom were full-time and others who were part-time. The Director who supervised all operations, was responsible to and reported directly to the Committee. The Director, also, kept educators and the public informed of the Committee's progress. He made policy; supervised the writing program; and hired writers, workshop participants, and other staff personnel. The Assistant Director aided the Director, performing those duties that were determined by the Director and the Committee on the Study of History, such as, supervision of those teachers who were experimenting with units in their classrooms and editing a newsletter to
keep members informed. The only Director the Committee on the Study of History ever chose was Dr. Richard H. Brown, an educator and historian, and who was interested in the problems of teaching history. Between 1966 and 1971, Gary Baker, Baxter Richardson and Tom Newman, all of whom had taught history at the secondary school level, served as Assistant Directors. The Director and the Assistant Director shared the task of editing all of the units.  

The staff operated out of two centers, Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, and the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois. In 1968, Van R. Halsey, Jr., left Amherst College and accepted a position at Hampshire College. As a result, Hampshire College replaced Amherst College as a center of operation. All of the summer writing sessions, however, continued to be held at Amherst College.

One of the major emphases of the Amherst Project was the production of curriculum units that could be used by American History teachers in their classrooms. In 1965 thirteen units were created, in 1966 twelve units, in 1967 nine units, in 1969 six units and in 1970 two units.

After 1964, during each fall the Project experimented with units that had been written during the summer. Cooperating teachers used the units in their classrooms, wrote detailed reports, indicating their experi-

riences with the unit, and were observed by Project staff members as they taught their classes. The Project soon realized that teachers were having difficulty using the experimental units. The Amherst Project, therefore, moved from a concentration upon the writing of curriculum units to devising ways of helping teachers to understand and use inquiry learning.

During 1966 and 1967 the Project conducted eight workshops for teachers at Amherst College, Chicago, San Francisco and Berkeley, California, Rochester, New York, and Dade County, Florida. One-hundred and fifty-five teachers were taught the meaning and use of inquiry learning.

During 1968 and 1969 the Project sought to expand its influence. In 1968 the Project was hired by the United States Office of Education (USOE) to conduct workshops for those who operated summer NDEA institutes for teachers. Three workshops were held for institute directors: Amherst College, Berkeley and Oakland, California, and Racine, Wisconsin. In 1969 a workshop was held at Indiana University for those who were involved in the History Education Project. The one-hundred people who attended the workshops were exposed to the Amherst Project's ideas about curriculum and learning theory. Since these institute directors dealt with thousands of teachers during the summer institutes, the Project felt it had increased its impact on the world of education.

In 1969 the Amherst Project sought to stimulate curriculum innovation in local schools. A new program, consisting of two phases, was instituted. The Project first proposed that a local school or cluster of schools conduct an intensive one-week workshop under the auspices of the
Project so that teachers, administrators and school board members would become acquainted with the Project's ideas on curriculum and learning. After the workshop, during the second phase, the school or schools would be committed to a program of curriculum development, which would be supervised by the Project. Such a program was referred to as an Education Development Team. During 1969 and 1970, seven Education Development Teams were established in Dallas, Boston, Port Washington, New York, northern California, Vancouver, Washington, Delaware, and Tulsa, Oklahoma. A total of 209 persons participated in the Education Development Team program. In addition to Education Development Teams, the Project staff was also involved in a special workshop for school principals, conducted in Columbus, Ohio, and in scattered one-day workshops that were held in various schools.

The Tulsa, Oklahoma, Education Development Team did, however, mark the end of the Project's experiment with workshops. A major reason for the termination of the program was its expense. After 1971 the Amherst Project did not have government funding and did not acquire any other major source of income. Throughout its entire history the Amherst Project had problems financing its activities.

The Secondary School History Committee was originally funded by four $200 grants, one from each of four colleges in the Amherst area. Later funds were received from two private sources; the Merrill Trust and Wemyss Foundation. Also the committee received some funds from the D. C. Heath publishing company for the units the company intended to publish.
These funds allowed the Amherst Project to create curriculum units during the summers of 1961, 1962 and 1963. The Project, however, did not have enough money to hire a full-time staff, and at no time was there a director who could coordinate the Project's activities. 4

The Secondary School History Committee ceased to exist in 1964, being replaced by the newly created Committee on the Study of History. Also in 1964 the Amherst Project received a three-year contract from the Bureau of Research of the United States Office of Education (USOE) for a reported $246,226. 5 The contract, which had been negotiated by Van R. Halsey, Jr., and Richard H. Brown, had actually been made with Amherst College. The college, in turn, hired the Amherst Project to fulfill the conditions of the grant. The government grant allowed the Amherst Project to hire a full-time staff, including a director, Richard H. Brown, and operate two centers, Amherst College and the Newberry Library. New curriculum units were produced under the contract during three summers.

On August 31, 1967, the Cooperative Research grant was due to expire, and the Amherst Project sought a new grant. The Project desired, among other things, to increase its staff, expand production of units and


5 Amherst (Massachusetts) Journal Record, 8 October 1964.
experiment with audio-visual aids. On March 9, 1967, the Project submitted its proposal to USOE—a three year contract, totalling over $900,000. The Amherst Project's proposal was rejected by USOE primarily because Congress delayed in passing USOE appropriations, and, therefore, the amount requested by the Project was not available in the spring of 1967. The failure to obtain a new contract from USOE posed a problem for the Project. Writers had been hired to create units during the summer of 1967; and $57,000 was budgeted under the 1964 contract to be spent for this purpose. In order to complete the task, the units would have to be tested in classrooms in the fall. How could the Project comply with the terms of the 1964 contract if the Project ceased to exist after August 31st? The Project asked USOE for and received a ten-month extension of the present contract. The Project was now funded through June 30, 1968.

The United States Office of Education was becoming more interested in teacher education and less in curriculum research and materials. By


1968 the Amherst Project became convinced that teachers needed to be educated in the use of the units that it had created. Thus USOE interest in teacher education occurred at the same time that the Amherst Project had become aware of the needs of teachers. In March, 1968, Richard H. Brown submitted a request for funds for the fiscal year, 1969-1970, to train teachers in new curriculum innovations. The new proposal was submitted to the Bureau of Educational Development instead of the Bureau of Research. The funding came too late and no new units were produced during the summer of 1968.\textsuperscript{10}

In December, 1968, Hampshire College received a new contract with USOE that funded the Project through June 30, 1970. The Bureau of Educational Personnel Development announced that hereafter contracts would be granted on an annual basis. In 1969, however, the Bureau granted the Project $200,000 for the fiscal year, 1969-1970 and an additional $50,000 for the following year in order to create Education Development Teams. The Bureau of Educational Personnel Development announced that the Amherst Project would not receive any additional funds after September 30, 1971.\textsuperscript{11}

The Amherst Project continued to operate, however, until July 30, 1972, with $19,800 of federal funds, money that had remained from the USOE contract. By July, 1971, the Amherst office had been closed and no


one was being paid a salary. Operating out of the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, the Amherst Project fulfilled its last task, putting the remainder of the units promised the Addison-Wesley publishing company into shape for publication.  

Between 1964 and 1972, the Amherst Project spent $730,092 under five government grants. These funds enabled the Project to establish a full-time staff, hire curriculum writers, hold workshops and establish Education Development Teams. These achievements would have been difficult, and, perhaps, even impossible without government funding. But USOE funding created numerous problems for the Project. First of all, for much of this period the Project did not know if it would have sufficient funds to remain in existence. Secondly, the Project staff, especially after 1967, spent a great deal of its time negotiating contracts and writing proposals and reports. Thirdly, in 1968 a government contract was signed too late to allow the Project to hire writers and create new units that summer. Finally some of the government contracts were signed after the old one had lapsed, creating much hardship. For example, in September, 1968, a government grant expired and a new one was not obtained until November 19th. As a result, Dr. Brown went two months without a salary, implementation of some programs had been delayed by six months, and the Project


accumulated nearly $10,000 in unpaid bills.  

The Amherst Project considered other sources of income. One proposal, which was eventually realized, was to incorporate the Project. In this way the Project would earn royalties on the published curriculum units, which would provide money for future purposes. A second proposal involved linking the Project with some institution or consortium of institutions. The institution or institutions would fund the Project and provide its staff.

As has been mentioned above, the Project did receive some funds from publishers. Prior to 1966 the Amherst Project signed a contract with the D. C. Heath Publishing Company to print seventeen of the Amherst units. From 1964 through 1966, eleven units were issued as part of a series called "New Dimensions in American History." The Project had two problems with the way D. C. Heath was dealing with the Project's curriculum. First of all, the Project did not like the format of the units. The Project advocated that each classroom teacher had to construct his own curriculum, and it, therefore, wanted the units printed in a loose-leaf format so that

15 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 7 July 1971, p. 2.
the teacher could select both the documents that he wanted to use and the order in which he would present the documents to his class. In contrast, the publisher insisted that the units be issued in a bound, paperback form. The books that were published resembled a collection of source readings on a particular topic. The publisher probably felt that the bound, paperback format made the books more appealing to school districts. The way in which the books were being marketed constituted the second problem between the Project and the publisher. Already on the market was a very popular college problems series that was published by the D. C. Heath publishing company, and the company's salesmen were advertising the "New Dimensions in American History" series as a high school version of the college series. The Amherst Project viewed its materials as a radical departure from other curricular efforts and rejected the connection with the college problems series.

Unhappy with the D. C. Heath publishing company, the Project sought a new publisher. Late in 1966, the Project signed a contract with Addison-Wesley publishing house to print twelve or thirteen units. Under the terms of the contract with the D. C. Heath Publishing Company, the Project still owed the company six units, two of which were to be the unit on

17 "Problems in American Civilization."
Manifest Destiny and the one on the Spanish-American War. The Project had two goals; to terminate the contract and to reserve what it considered to be the best units for the Addison-Wesley publishing company. Therefore, a list of four units was given the D. C. Heath company early in 1967 and an attempt was made to substitute a unit on United States-Russian relations for the unit on Manifest Destiny. The D. C. Heath publishing company refused to relinquish the Manifest Destiny unit, publishing it in 1967. The company also refused to accept the four proposed units and negotiated an agreement determining which four units it would publish. The Project gave the D. C. Heath company the right to make arrangements with other Amherst writers and publish their units separately.


23 The D. C. Heath Company series contained three books that were not written as part of the Amherst writing sessions: Melva Ellingsen, The Settlement House: A Study in Urban Reform; George Goldberg, The Supreme Court in American Life: The Uses and Abuses of Judicial Review; and Ralph K. Beebe, The Worker and Social Change: The Pullman Strike of 1894. It is possible that these units were started during one of the writing sessions and then completed by the author after the session ended.
With the old publishing contract terminated, the Amherst Project began to prepare new units for its new publisher, Addison-Wesley. The Addison-Wesley company was already publishing materials from some of the other curriculum projects and seemed receptive to the ideas of the Amherst Project, even agreeing to issue the units in a loose-leaf format. In October, 1967, two units were sent to Addison-Wesley for publication, but neither was issued until 1970. Numerous problems arose which delayed publication of the units. For one thing, extensive revisions had to be made before the units could be published. For example, it took over a year to make all of the necessary changes in the Korean War unit before it could be published. It is not clear how many of the changes were dictated by the publisher and how many were desired by the Project, since experimentation with the units were continuing.

Each of the units was made up of documents, mostly from published sources. The second problem that complicated publication was the securing


27 The publisher hoped to have the units ready for the National Council for the Social Studies Convention, which was to be held in November 1969. Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 11 March 1969, p. 2.
of permission to include the documents in the printed unit, and the publisher even solicited aid from the Project to accomplish this task.  

Originally Addison-Wesley had agreed to issue the units in a loose-leaf format. The publisher, soon after the contract had been signed, desired to print the units in a bound form instead, perhaps because bound copies of the units could be better marketed. The Project and Addison-Wesley reached a compromise, whereby the units would be issued in a loose-leaf form and in a bound form, but the latter would have perforated pages that could be easily removed.

In 1970 the first six units were issued by Addison-Wesley. Evidently the publisher was pleased with the units because Richard H. Brown was given a tentative contract for eleven more units. The Project staff drew up a list of eleven units for the publisher's consideration, and contracts were sent to the authors. The head of the publisher's Marketing Division was sufficiently impressed with the response toward the printed units that he asked the Project to prepare a two-hour presenta-

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28 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 19 December 1968, p. 1; Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 11 June 1969, p. 3.

29 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 22 October 1969, p. 3.


31 Amherst Project "Newsletter," 27 February 1970, p. 2; Amherst Project "Newsletter," 31 March 1970, p. 4. The units proposed were: H. Mark Johnson, "God's Providence in Puritan New England;" Leon Hellerman, "Polk and Mexico;" Alfred Jamieson, "Ideals and Reality in Foreign Policy;"
tion to be given at regional sales meetings during the first quarter of 1971. The Amherst Project held meetings with salesmen, demonstrating the materials and providing a list of persons in various areas of the country who had been involved in one or more of the Project's activities and who would volunteer to meet with prospective buyers in similar meetings. By July, 1971, the publisher informed the Project that the units were selling well and that it intended to issue anywhere from three to five new units a year after the original thirteen had been marketed.

Actually, relations between the Project and Addison-Wesley were becoming strained during the years 1970 and 1971. First of all, the publisher experienced personnel changes, and the change in editors caused the Project to experience a feeling of anxiety. Mr. Thomas Collins had been the editor who had taken an interest in the Project's activities and had negotiated the contract between the Project and the publisher. Early in 1970 Mr. Collins resigned his post and joined the staff of another publishing company, Houghton Mifflin. Since a new editor would have to be


34 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 7 July 1971, pp. 2-3.
35 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 11 June 1969, p. 3.
trained, the Project's publication schedule was uncertain. Actually, the four units scheduled for publication in 1971 were not published until the following year, and two of the three remaining units were not put on the market until 1973. The thirteenth and last unit was not published until after 1974. 37

A second problem that occurred in 1970 involved the marketing of the units. While the Project was pleased with the aggressive behavior of the Addison-Wesley salesmen, it disliked certain other things that were being done. The salesmen, it seems, were promoting the units as college textbooks and were ignoring the loose-leaf editions. 38 While the Project could do little to stop the first, it did secure an addendum to their contract with the publisher that prohibited the publisher from discontinuing the loose-leaf version of the units. 39

37 In 1972 the units that were published were: Allen Guttmann, God and Government: The Uneasy Separation of Church and State; Ralph K. Beebe, Thomas Jefferson, The Embargo, and the Decision for Peace; Lawrence Minear, Lincoln and Slavery: Ideals and the Politics of Change; and Dayle A. Casey, The Rights of Americans: The Changing Balance of Liberty, Law and Order. In 1973 two units were published: Muriel Moulton, Conscience and the Law: The Uses and Limits of Civil Disobedience; and W. Allan Wilbur, The Western Hero: A Study in Myth and American Values. The last unit, which was issued in 1975, was Thomas H. Buffinton, Imperialism and the Dilemma of Power.


In June, 1967, a series of units were published by the Holt, Rinehart and Winston publishing company. The units had been created during two summer workshop sessions in 1964 and 1965 under the auspices of the Project, but the authors of the units had been allowed to negotiate with publishers to have the units printed.\(^{40}\) Now, in 1970, the Project speculated as to the wisdom of having all future units published in this fashion.\(^{41}\) In any case, for reasons that are unclear, the proposal to publish eleven additional units never materialized and only thirteen were to be published. However, thirty-one of the units that had been written between 1965 and 1969 were made available to the public through the Educational Resources Informational Center (ERIC).

By 1972, then, the Amherst Project experiment had virtually ended. The Project no longer had a staff and its director was employed by the Newberry Library; it no longer had government funding; its workshop activities had ended. Amherst units continued to be published after that date, primarily because of production delays. Yet in spite of its failure to continue operations past 1972, the Amherst Project was a demonstration of

\(^{40}\) Allan O. Kowkler and Donald B. Frizzle, Discovering American History (New York, 1967). The publisher did not state that the book was a product of the Amherst Project. However, Dr. Richard H. Brown wrote a short essay on the nature of history which appeared as "A Note to the Teacher" in the book's introduction. Also the authors acknowledged that Dr. Brown, Dr. Van R. Halsey, Jr., and Mr. Edmund Traverso had provided interest and encouragement to the authors. In the 1974 edition of the book, however, Dr. Brown's essay and the acknowledgments have been deleted.

an unusual approach in curriculum development. The heart of the Project's activities were its concepts of learning and of history, which are described in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III

THE AMHERST PROJECT:

PHILOSOPHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The Amherst Project developed a learning theory that was based on a set of philosophical and psychological assumptions. The function of this chapter is to explain these assumptions. The first part of the chapter discusses the method of learning that was accepted by the Amherst Project. The second part of the chapter deals with the Project's definition of history, and the last part of the chapter demonstrates how the Amherst Project's idea of learning theory and of history were merged in classroom practice.

In its assumptions about learning theory, the Amherst Project assumes that learning occurs: (1) when the learner encounters some new phenomena, (2) within the learner, and (3) as a consequence of something the learner does. Dr. Richard H. Brown uses the term "inquiry" to describe the learner's activity. Addressing the Organization of American Historians, Dr. Brown said that "... the inquiry hypothesis holds that learning is most effective when students perform in some fashion as inquirers, rather than when they are asked merely to master passively the conclusions of others."1 In an earlier writing he uses the term "discov-

In its simplest form (discovery learning) rests on the hypothesis that the student learns best as an active inquirer--by asking questions and pursuing their answers--rather than when he is asked, as an end in itself, to master the answers of others to questions which may be quite irrelevant to him or which he may only dimly understand. Discovery learning rests, in short, on the idea that the way the scholar learns may be a useful model for all learning, including that which goes on in a classroom. Its application to the schools rests on the a priori assumption that the schools are intended to be institutions where students (1) learn and (2) learn how to learn in order that they may go on learning through life.2

Inquiry according to Dr. Brown has four characteristics, namely, curiosity, motivation, focus and the total experience that the learner brings to the encounter. Curiosity, the first element, is "... whatever it is that impels the prospective learner's encounter with any new fact, phenomenon or experience."3 The learner is surrounded by a countless number of stimuli, each one vying for his attention. Somehow the learner senses that if he deals with one of these stimuli it will somehow be relevant to him. Perhaps the encounter with the stimulus will teach him something that he needs to know, or, perhaps, it will be a highly satisfying experience that he will treasure. Curiosity, then, is a highly personal matter. Dr. Brown illustrates:

The things I am curious about ... include Martin Van Buren, the Chicago Cubs, and the question of how people learn. Knowing something about these subjects, it satisfied me for a variety of reasons to learn more--and in addition I have a conceptual apparatus that makes it easy for me to learn more. I am a sucker for anybody who

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comes along with something to tell me about any of them. I am also potentially curious about a number of other things about which I know nothing, if but only if I apprehend them in suitable fashion: if the medium is one that I can use and if the conceptual tools that I already possess are in some way applicable to the new subject so that I have some way of getting a handle on it.4

Motivation, the second essential ingredient in inquiry, is the feeling that the learner has to employ his curiosity is a particular encounter. The learner is curious enough about a problem to want to know more about it. The learner can learn from an encounter providing that no impediment is present. Dr. Brown explains:

I may be enormously curious about the Cubs . . . but if new information about them is offered to me in Russian, which I do not understand, I will not be motivated to learn. If it comes to me in some form of English which sounds foreign to my ears, I may hear it, but imperfectly. In like manner if the information comes from a source which has provided faulty information about the Cubs in the past, my motivation to learn will be lessened. And, if the information comes to me in surroundings that I innately distrust, I am likely to distrust the information itself or to be less interested in it.5

Thus, if the learner feels frustrated, baffled or distrustful, he will not feel motivated to be curious about the encounter.

The way in which the learner organizes his impressions of the encounter comprises his focus, the third part of inquiry.6 Focus determines what the learner sees and what he chooses not to see, and it is usually expressed through words in the form of a question, or, more usually, an hypothesis.

The fourth and last element in inquiry is the total experience that the learner brings to the encounter. Experience is defined as ". . .

4Ibid., p. 3.
5Ibid.
6Ibid., pp. 3-4.
the sum of all that has happened to (the learner) and is happening to him up to the moment of encounter, including what he knows and feels, what his concerns are, what he is aware of and sensitive to, and how he communicates." Each person's total experience is different and each person's total experience determines his reaction to an encounter. Dr. Brown elaborates this point:

Each of you in this room is at this moment tuning in and out what I say according to your experience. You hear some sentences and not others, and each person is hearing different sentences. While everything I say has meaning for me, your varied experiences enable each of you to hear some things and not others. Some words I use have meaning to you, while others do not. Some ideas square sufficiently with your own experiences that you hear them whether you agree or not, while with others the disjuncture between our two experiences is so great that you fail to hear them entirely. So it is, constantly, in our communication with each other, whether one-to-one or in large groups. So it is in our encounters with any new fact, phenomena, or experience from which potentially we might learn.

Inquiry learning is an individual act, resulting from something the learner does rather than from something that is done to him. Also, learning is viewed as the product of a learning experience. Learning is controlled by the learner's background, the medium of the learning situation, and the total environment in which the encounter takes place as well as the phenomenon that is encountered.

For example, an adolescent, Polish-American girl may be taking a

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8 Brown, "History Teaching/Learning," p. 5.
course in American history. In a unit on the American labor movement, she becomes curious about the role Polish-American women played in the organization and operation of American labor unions. Since she cannot read Polish, she is unable to analyze many relevant primary sources, such as letters, diaries and Polish-language newspaper accounts. This blunts her motivation to be curious about the subject. She discovers, however, that there are several women in her community who once were members of labor unions and who are able to converse in English. This discovery increases her motivation to become curious about the role Polish-American women played in labor unions. Using a tape recorder she obtains evidence that allows her to generalize that Polish-American women played a major role in several industrial unions in Chicago, Illinois, during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The young woman in the illustration has been an active inquirer, that is, the elements of curiosity, motivation, focus and experience have resulted in learning. What has been learned has been an individual matter, resulting from something the learner has done rather than from something that was done to her. Also what was learned was controlled by the learner's background, the medium of the learning situation, and the total environment in which the encounter took place, as well as the phenomenon that was encountered.

The definition of inquiry formulated by Dr. Brown became the basis of the Amherst Project's ideas on education. The Project was concerned about the way youngsters learn and about what sort of teaching strategies
could help them to become more efficient learners. The Project was interested in knowing what adolescents are like, what they think about, what they read, what their likes and dislikes are and what ideas they have on the world around them. The learner's environment—his home, school and community life—become important. For the Amherst Project, then, the learner was extremely important, because whatever curriculum was to be developed had to meet his needs. As a result, the teacher and his students were the only ones who could determine the curriculum.

Inquiry is a way of learning, and anything that promotes inquiry is useful. Teaching strategies that have generally been considered traditional, such as lecturing and textbooks may be used in ways that will foster inquiry. Dr. Brown says that:

... planning a lecture involves recognition of the fact that what the learner gains from the situation will be a product of the inquiry he brings to it, rather than of what the lecturer says. What the learner hears will be a result of what he is curious about, how and in what ways he is and is not motivated in the situation, what focus he brings to the scene, and his own experience.9

Also, a textbook is useful if the learner "... needs to find out the facts of some particular sequence of events in order to cope with a problem he is dealing with..."10

The teacher has to plan his methods and materials from the point of view of what the learner is expected to be doing in the learning situation. The teacher's thought "... involves planning materials as things

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10 Ibid.
an inquirer goes to, and thinking of them in terms of why he goes to them, for what, and under what circumstances."11

A scholar asks questions about a problem, makes a hypothesis, tests the hypothesis with evidence, draws conclusions based on his study and thus creates for himself a body of knowledge and a set of attitudes. The learner is to act like a scholar, that is, he is to become curious about something, ask questions, hypothesize about the problem, test his hypothesis with evidence, and, finally, develop some insight into the problem. As this happens, the learner’s total experience is expanded. The teacher is an aid in the inquiry process: he presents a problem that will cause the learner to be curious. He then provides for motivation and focus by enabling the learner to understand the problem. This might mean, for example, that the learner will be directed toward readable sources or toward artifacts that relate to the problem. It might also mean that the learner will have to be taught the techniques of oral interviewing and how to use a tape recorder.

All of this raises the question of content, and with it, the question of what is history.

The Amherst Project assumed that the major purpose for studying history is the personal and moral development of persons. Thus the subjects chosen for the units in the Amherst Project were those that posed universal questions of human relationship. Thus "... a study of the impact of the New World’s discoveries on the European imagination can be a study of the processes and implications of discovery itself, a study

11 Ibid.
of the Missouri Compromise can be a study of the nature, process and limits of political compromise, and a study of immigration can be a study in the making and change of social values."12

Prior to 1964 there had been some talk of designing materials that could be used in a conventional history course that had been chronologically organized. After that date, however, the Amherst Project took a different approach. Dr. Brown explains:

The way to understand chronology is not necessarily to take up things in chronological fashion, but to take them up in a fashion that makes clear the significance of the fact that one thing happened before another, while another thing followed. It may be ... that a student will learn more about chronology and come to appreciate better the fact that the Revolution preceded the Civil War if he spends three weeks piecing together for himself the steps that led to war with Mexico in 1845, perceiving in so doing how critical order-in-time is for understanding.13

The Amherst Project was interested that a student start somewhere and then move backward and forward in time as his inquiry led him. The important thing is that the learner discover for himself some perplexing problem or dilemma. In dealing with the problem he may be interested in studying how James Polk, Abraham Lincoln and Woodrow Wilson struggled to


13 Ibid., p. 447.
find an answer. In doing this the learner may realize that all problems are not capable of solution, and thus discover what it is to be human. The learner, in short, "... comes to appreciate man's necessity to act in the midst of uncertainty, grapples with the moral dimensions of man's behavior, and comprehends more fully the nobility and frailty of the human condition." 14

Along with this humanistic emphasis, history is also inquiry. Dr. Richard H. Brown writes that:

... students should learn not so much a set of facts... as what a fact is, how one comes by it, and how one uses it--that they should learn not so much what historians have held out past to be as how and why one engages in the study of history anyway, and how and in what way one can expect to learn from it. 15

This does not mean either that the learner had to deal exclusively with primary sources or that he has to recreate all of the knowledge that men have arrived at in the past. Dr. Brown states that:

The key thing is simply the notion that he will not really be learning--or will not be learning anything worthwhile--unless he is asking. The model of the scholar learning is thus held to be a proper and usable model for what goes on in the classroom. 16

The past is but a collection of data, and sense has to be made of this data by means of questions. Questions help the learner to focus on some data and exclude others. Dr. Brown states "It is the question we ask that charges the data with meaning and provides us with an intellect-


16 Ibid., p. 75.
tual construct without which the data itself would be formless and point-
less." 17 Since each generation is confronted with problems that are dif-
ferent from previous ones, history is constantly being written.

The generalizations that appear in any of the standard American
History textbooks are the answers to questions posed of the past by nu-
merous historians. It makes little sense to have students master these
statements. "It makes far more sense," argues Dr. Brown, "that that
structure come from the learner's own question than that it come from
the unseen question of the textbook writer, or of the historian before
him." 18

The question that the learner asks has to be a genuine one. That
is, it has to be one that is open-ended; one to which no one knows the
answer. Since all learning begins with something that elicits a curiosity
in the learner, the student has to be confronted with issues that are real
to him. "In coping (with the issue)," writes Dr. Brown, "the student goes
to situations from which he can infer something universally significant
about the human condition which is responsive to the question he is
asking." 19

In teaching history, the teacher's task is to identify those ques-
tions asked by students which may be profitably pursued in history and to

17 Ibid., p. 76; see also, Brown, "Richard H. Brown Replies," p.
586.

18 Brown, "Historian and New Approaches," p. 76.

19 Ibid., p. 77.
help students find answers to them. The learner has to be shown that history relates to him in some way. Dr. Brown explains:

Our experience (in the Amherst Project) thus far seems to suggest that there is no such thing as a 'natural curiosity.' Students are not naturally fascinated by history until they discover that in it they can find the answer to something they want to know. They will not be fundamentally interested in pursuing a historical question unless they see—and this rather quickly—that there is something in it for them.20

The units published by the Amherst Project provides a model for teachers. Each unit is organized for the pursuit of some open-ended, universal question of human behavior, for example, "... the nature of reality, the role of values, the role of social myths, the relation between liberty and authority, the uses and limits of power, decision making, the motivation of private and political behavior, and the dynamics of change."21 One of these forms the content question of a particular unit and all of the evidence focuses upon it. The learner reconstructs the subject matter of a particular unit from the evidence. However, the set of answers or insights the learner receives as he grapples with the universal question of the unit constitute the content of the unit. For example, in the unit, What Happened on Lexington Green?22, the subject matter is the skirmish between British and Colonial troops in

20 Ibid.


1775. The universal question in the unit deals with how people know anything about an event, past or present. As the learner grapples with the question, the insight he receives into the problem constitutes the content of the unit. The content of a unit is always more important than its subject matter.

The teacher's chief job is not to pass on a fixed body of knowledge, but to facilitate and encourage inquiry. His concern is to organize historical evidence and relate it to his students so that they might ask important questions which they might pursue with the materials. The teacher, in short, has to be aware of his student's frame of references and their experiences. Along with this, the teacher has to create an atmosphere where he is as much an active learner as is the student. Dr. Brown explains:

With (inquiry learning) the teacher can level with the student that the pursuit of truth is tough, that the process of education is lifelong, that at best we who are teachers can only invite him to join us. With it we discover over and over again, despite ourselves, what we all know intellectually to be true but forget too often as educators: That all of us alike are students, all of us alike asking the same question— who and what we are, what the world around us is and how it works, how we relate to it. 23

In other words, the teacher provides the student with a model of the good learner.

The printed units serve as models for the teacher. Each begins with materials designed to generate the universal question of the unit. These materials attract the student's interest in the question, helps them

to relate the question to their own frame of reference, and encourages them to identify other materials they might need to explore their interest. The various sections of the unit are comprised of evidence relating to the universal question. As the student makes his way through the material, content is continuously being modified, primarily because the sections are arranged so that each requires the student to use more complex learning skills than the previous one. The only evidence the student confronts is that which enables him to deal with the set of questions he has developed from the universal question of the unit.

The Amherst Project's learning theory, which Dr. Richard H. Brown called inquiry, was based on three assumptions: learning occurs when the learner encounters new phenomena; learning occurs inside the learner and learning occurs as a consequence of what the learner does. Inquiry is made up of four components, namely, curiosity, motivation, focus and experience. A learner enters a learning situation having a background of experiences, habits, attitudes and skills that he has acquired in the past. The learner becomes interested in a problem, forms a hypothesis, tests that hypothesis with evidence and generalizes about the problem.

History, as viewed by the Amherst Project, has two purposes. First of all, history enables the learner to become a better person. By grappling with problems that are universal, for example, how preconceived notions affect what a person sees, the learner comes to understand what it means to be human. Secondly, history is a method of inquiry—a way of thinking about a problem. The historian's way of thinking is identical
to that of the average person. Historical generalizations are conclusions historians have made about a problem.

The Amherst Project does not argue that history has some sort of structure that can be described and taught to learners. History is not a collection of concepts, generalizations or questions. Also history does not have a mode of thinking that distinguishes it from other disciplines. Rather, history is an appreciation of the past. The learner is aware as he studies history that if he studies the way Lincoln dealt with the problem of slavery or the dilemma that the creation of an atomic bomb posed for Harry S. Truman he will somehow have a better understanding of himself and his society.

The teacher's function is to help the student as he deals with some important problem. The first task, then, for the teacher, is to identify the problems adolescents have that can be studied historically. Secondly, the teacher has to help the student become interested in some aspect of the problem and direct him to sources that will help the student come to some sort of conclusion about his problem.

The Amherst Project has developed sixty-eight curriculum units. These units serve as a model for the teacher, showing him how a universal problem can be dealt with in a historical way. A teacher could have his class deal with a problem posed by one of the Amherst units, or, preferably, he may design a unit of his own based on some problem of interest to his students. The written units, therefore, are an important expression of the Amherst Project's learning theory and philosophy of history. Chapter IV deals with the creation of the Amherst units.
CHAPTER IV

THE AMHERST CURRICULUM

The Amherst Project's first concern was with the production of a curriculum that could be used in the schools. Prior to 1964, the Project sought to create a new, comprehensive American History course. After that date, however, the Project shifted its emphasis toward the development of individual units that could be used independently or with other units in a course. This chapter will examine the manner in which the Amherst Project selected writers, produced units and sought to evaluate its efforts.

From 1961 to 1969, with the exception of 1968, the Amherst Project solicited secondary school history teachers to create curriculum materials. Each aspiring writer was asked to complete a detailed prospectus as to the main theme or focus of his proposed unit and the type and availability of necessary materials. Usually those who developed history courses were concerned primarily with those generalizations that historians had considered to be important. The Amherst Project, however, desired to obtain writers who were interested in relating history to the needs and desires of students, and, therefore, each writer was asked to explain what significant learning experiences students would receive when they encountered the units.¹

Classroom teachers were sought as writers for two reasons. First of all, it was less expensive to use teachers than it would have been if they had hired scholars, and, secondly, teachers were in the best position to know the needs and problems of high school students. Over ninety percent of the curriculum writers were full-time secondary school teachers.  

The method of selecting unit authors, however, did create problems for the Project staff. For example, the number of aspiring writers that applied was large. Each year several hundred applications had to be processed in order to determine the dozen or so who would be selected to write curriculum units. More important, it was difficult to find the type of curriculum proposals that were appropriate to the Project goals. Some prospective authors had promising topics but it was obvious that they would not be able to accomplish their goals. Others indicated that they had talents that the Project could use, but their proposals were poor. Perhaps the biggest problem facing the Project, however, was an obvious imbalance in the writing. A very large number of the

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writers were concerned about high school students who were aiming toward higher education. Very few writers were interested in the terminal high school student, the junior-high school student or the student with learning problems whatever his age or grade. 5

Each summer, usually in July and August, at Amherst College, in Amherst, Massachusetts, the writers labored for six weeks as each attempted to shape a unit that could be used in a high school American History course. During their stay, they had full access to college libraries and to the resources provided by the Amherst Project staff, headed by Dr. Richard H. Brown. For the first three weeks or so the writers put together those materials needed for their unit. During the last half of the session the Project staff helped the writer shape the unit for classroom instruction. Of major concern to the Project staff was the unevenness of the writing. Often units were not completed or had to be thoroughly revised. Occasionally a unit had to be drastically edited so that it could be used in a classroom. 6

Although most were classroom teachers, it did not take long before the writers began to forget what their students were like. Therefore, as of the summer of 1967, several high school students were hired during each session. Their chief function was to serve as constant reminders to


the writers that those who would be exposed to their units were adolescents.7

Once the writing was completed, the units had to be prepared for use by other teachers. Permissions from publishers to use the sources had to be obtained. Then, from five-hundred to one-thousand copies of each unit had to be duplicated. These were sent to teachers across the country who would test the units in their classrooms. Usually all of the units were completed and in the hands of classroom teachers by March first of the following year, some six months after they had been written.8

The Amherst Project attempted to resolve these difficulties of writing and preparation of units by altering the way in which the curriculum would be written. In 1967, it was proposed that three teachers be hired from each of fifteen workshops that were to be held across the country. Each of their schools would be asked to release the teacher for one-half of a day for one semester or one-quarter time for two semesters. The released time was to be devoted to writing curriculum. Each school was to receive one-thousand dollars as compensation. Amherst Project staff members would supervise the writing by mail and by periodic visits. As the curriculum was being completed, it would be tested in the teacher's own classes and in the classes of his colleagues. When finished, the completed unit would be reproduced by the Project and made avail-


able for use by other teachers. Thus the summer workshop program would
be reduced in importance, but not eliminated, and the bulk of the unit
writing accomplished elsewhere. The summer workshop would undergo one
further change. An extra week would be attached devoted to a workshop in
inquiry learning. In this way the Project hoped that it could recruit
people and produce the type of units it wanted. And, since the unit
writers would be teachers who were actively engaged in teaching responsi-
bilities, it was felt that the new units would take into greater consid-
eration the needs of adolescents—especially those who were not going to
college. 9

In spite of all of the difficulties, the summer writing programs
were generally successful. Sixty-eight secondary school American History
units were completed by September, 1970, and a series of junior-high
school units was begun under the auspices of the Project and completed
privately. All of the units were tried out in numerous schools across
the country. In addition, published copies of the units have presented
to countless numbers of teachers a novel way of teaching American His-
tory. Also, all of the unit authors benefited from their writing expe-
rience in that they had to reflect on their view of history and on their
ideas of what constitutes teaching and learning. Perhaps the most impor-
tant outcome, however, was the model of curriculum design that emerged.

9[Committee on the Study of History], "In-Service Teacher Train-
ing and Curriculum Materials for Discovery Learning in History, Grades
7-12, Various Ability Levels," proposal submitted to the Bureau of Re-
The summer writing sessions at Amherst, Massachusetts developed a distinctive way of organizing the curriculum. Prior to 1964, the intent had been to design a series of units that might be assembled in such a way as to create a new course in American History, stretching from the time of the Explorers until the present time. After 1964, this approach was abandoned in favor of one stressing the development of independent, self-sustaining units that could be used alone or in combination with any other units. It was felt that only the individual teacher and his students could create a curriculum.

The intent of a unit is to explore something that is of interest to the student. Each unit contains some open-ended question of human behavior which the student is asked to examine and to interpret in a subjective and personal way.\textsuperscript{10} The universal question of human behavior becomes the focus of the unit. All of the evidence presented in the unit relates to this large question, and helps the student answer his own subjective questions. If necessary, additional evidence may be added and, obviously, some of the evidence in the unit may be regarded as superfluous if it does not relate to the students' questions. Thus, the student is the one who is actually determining the direction of the unit since it is the student who asks the questions and then tries to find answers to them in the evidence.

In order to create a learning situation wherein a student might

pursue relevant questions, the Amherst Project set up units composed of four distinctive features.

The first, and probably most critical, feature of the unit is its introduction. The function of the unit introduction is to confront the student with a problem. The student makes the problem personal by asking questions about it. The difficulty in the unit introduction is to avoid being abstract or giving the idea that there is a single, acceptable answer to the dilemma. The rest of the unit is made up of sections, each one dealing with some complexity of the problem posed in the introduction. An introduction to each section tries to connect it in some way with the unit's universal question and to provide a context for the documents it contains.

Documents, in fact, compose the second feature of the Amherst unit. Each section contains sources of evidence relating to some facet of the unit's universal question. The documents may be primary or secondary sources, personal or official, published or unpublished. They may be excerpts from diaries, speeches, letters, novels, poems, songs, committee reports and legal decisions. Any or all may be relevant to the questions students are asking. Thus, while there is a reason why a document exists and why documents appear in the order that they do, documents may be studied in any order—or not studied at all.

The third feature of the unit is the teacher's manual which explains the purpose of the unit, its organization, the universal question or questions it raises and some strategies that might be useful in teaching the unit. Many of the earlier units explain what a teacher is to do
each day while he teaches the unit. Later units give a sectional analysis and some suggestions for teaching that section. The reason for the change is that many teachers followed the first approach too closely and thus disregarded many fruitful questions posed by students.  

All of the teacher's manuals also point out and explain key documents that appear in a section. They also indicate difficulties within sections, or they may warn a teacher that an entire section is difficult and should be considered by only very able students.

The fourth and last feature of the Amherst unit is the "Suggestions for Further Reading." This appears at the end of the unit and is useful if a student wishes to pursue some aspect of a topic raised in the unit. The books are not graded as to reading difficulty and there is no explanation as to which books are most useful in studying particular topics.

In addition to these four features, each unit contains numerous additional study aids to help the student. Periodically, footnotes appear to define a word, identify a person or explain an idea. Each document has a brief introduction giving the student whatever information is necessary for understanding its content. None of the documents, however, is prefaced by one or more analytical questions. It is felt that the student will bring his own questions to the document and that analytical questions would interfere with that process.

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A good illustration of the Amherst method of unit construction is the unit, *What Happened on Lexington Green? An Inquiry Into the Nature and Methods of History*.\(^\text{12}\) This unit was selected because it is one of the best units produced by the Amherst Project, and because it was used by the Project as a model for other writers to follow.

The unit which poses the question, how do we know reality?, asks in the introduction,

> Why is it that different people see things differently? How can we know what just happened or reconstruct the past when people's observations differ? What is the past, what is reality, and what is it to know. What are the implications of the answers we give these questions—or the difficulty we may have answering them—for the larger questions of how we identify and understand ourselves?\(^\text{13}\)

In the introduction, the student reads eyewitness accounts of the incident that started the Watts riot of 1965, including the police report. In reconstructing the event, the student confronts the main issue, how do we know anything about a past event?

Section One presents evidence about the skirmish at Lexington between the Colonials and the British troops. In the first part of the section, the student learns who was involved and when and where the skirmish took place, but he learns that there is some contradictory evidence. The second part of the section contains ten eye-witness accounts, including the public statements of the two opposing commanders. Two factors


play a role in these accounts, the physical location of the eye-witness and his frame of reference.

In the last part of Section One, the student is confronted with the problem of knowing the effect time has on evidence. Nine documents make up this part of the section, each of which is not an eye-witness of what happened. Now the student has to consider such things as the effect that time has on memory. Thus by the time the student concludes Section One, he reconstructs a past event and thereby learns how facts are derived from evidence. The student never resolves the problem of "who fired the first shot?", but he sees some of the problems involved in handling evidence and writing history. The teacher's task, therefore, is to make sure that the student does not become obsessed with the problem of trying to find out who fired the first shot. He has to be moved from this question to that of the nature of evidence.

In the Second Section, the unit deals with the nature of history and the historian's task. The main problem is why individuals differ so greatly in their interpretation of a past event. In the first part of the section, the views of nine British and American writers are presented. The nationality of the writer does not totally determine his point of view. The student has to conclude as to why these writers differ. Then, in the second part of the section, readings are taken from six American textbooks and the student confronts the problem of history as it is viewed by a textbook.

Section Three is highly philosophical. The basic question is,
what is reality, and how can a historian hope to discover it?\textsuperscript{14} In the first part of the section the student confronts the nature of facts, stereotypes and the impact facts have on a person's frame of reference. In the second part of the section, the student is presented with some alternative ways of knowing reality—-that of the sociologist, the novelist and the poet. The main question is

\ldots do each of these fields contribute something distinctively its own to man’s search for reality or do they offer merely different ways of finding out the same thing? Do they actually deal with different segments of the totality of reality, with each providing a different piece of the puzzle?\textsuperscript{15}

In the last part of the section, the student considers the writings of three historians and Plato. The three historians do not agree on how an event should be studied and how history ought to be written. Plato discusses the relationship of knowledge to perception. This last section is extremely difficult, and the teacher is warned not to use it with any but above average students.\textsuperscript{16}

This unit is an excellent example of a good unit. It deals with a universal problem, the nature of reality. Each of the sections relates to the main, universal problem and each examines some complexity of that theme. The documents are well-chosen and are arranged in a way that is highly useful to a student. The teacher's manual is well-written, stress-

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 9.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.
ing the unit's main topic of concern and providing ample help to the teacher who wishes to teach this unit.

Once the units were written and copies made, they were distributed to teachers for trial use. Teachers usually received copies of units produced during the summer prior to the school year. Before 1964, about a half dozen teachers in Amherst, South Hadley, Lexington and Newton, Massachusetts, tested units in their classes.17

Having received the Cooperative Research grant from the federal government, the Amherst Project was able to create a larger network of cooperating teachers. The number of cooperating teachers varied from year to year: seventy-two in 1965, ninety-four in 1966, "just under a hundred" in 1967, sixty-five in 1968 and about one-hundred in 1969.18

The selection of cooperating teachers seemed to be done at random. A conscious effort was made, however, to group teachers in three areas of the country: southern New England and New York, Chicago and the San Francisco Bay area. This grouping facilitated the administration of the program. A conscious effort was also made to recruit inner-city teachers. This seems to have failed and most of the teachers came from suburban areas. These teachers were able to introduce novel materials more easily than the inner-city teachers.19 In addition, occasionally,

17 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 30 November 1967, p. 3.
teachers from Minnesota, St. Louis, northern Virginia and Greenville, South Carolina, participated in the try-out program.

The cooperating teacher informed the Amherst Project staff of those units he desired to use in his classes. He received mimeographed copies of the units free of charge. The teacher notified the Project staff when he intended to use a particular unit in his class. A member of the staff, usually the Assistant Director, would visit the class while the unit was being taught. Classroom visitations gave the Project staff valuable information about the type of class that was using the materials and the way the teacher was relating to the class. Mr. Robin McKeown, a graduate student at the University of California, did the supervising on the West Coast while the Assistant Director handled the rest.

Each cooperating teacher evaluated each unit that was used in the classroom. First of all, he had to state how he was using the unit and keep a detailed account of each day's activities, including any suggestions for the revision of any sections of the unit. Secondly, he had to write a general evaluation of the unit, stating its difficulty and the level of student interest. Thirdly, he had to evaluate the teacher's manual as to its clarity and usefulness, including suggestions for making the manual more effective. Lastly, the teacher had to share with the Project major student papers pertaining to the unit.

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The Assistant Director read all of the cooperating teacher's comments pertaining to a particular unit and made two summary statements. One statement was circulated among the other members of the Project staff while the other was given to the unit's author for his consideration in revising the unit. The teacher's statements gave both the Project staff and the unit author valuable information as to the success and failure of the material.

The teacher's reports revealed a number of weaknesses in the units. The success or failure of all of the units depended upon their introductions. If the introduction did not interest the student in asking questions and finding answers to those questions, he became disinterested in what was happening. Often introductions were abstract and did not interest the student. Gary Baker, one of the Project's Assistant Directors, states that "Invariably the concrete, concise description of believable human beings acting in realistic and sometimes dramatic situations seems to catch the interests of students..."21 Thus, the best introductions were those that included narrative accounts of events.

Some units reflected another problem of concern. The essence of these units involved moral or value problems. Teachers found that students became so involved in the moral or value problem stated in the introduction that they did not want to pursue any other matter. In the unit on Hiroshima, for example, Dr. Richard H. Brown complains that:

The problem is that it appears nearly impossible, as the unit is set

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up, for teachers to prevent their students from rushing to judgments from the beginning instead of figuring out first what happened and why, and then moving to the 'should' questions only at the end. The result is that students have a field day of arguing moral questions from beginning to end of the unit, but only in rare cases do they ever really make use of the riches and subtleties of the unit, or get to the subsidiary questions.²²

Premature judgments posed problems for many of the other units, for example, those dealing with such controversial subjects as Communism, civil rights and Abraham Lincoln.

A second problem in the units involves the presence of abstractions. In introductions and elsewhere, authors expect students to know the meaning of greatness, imperialism, manifest destiny and civil disobedience. Also authors expect students to be empathetic toward people whose experiences were remote from those of the students. The world of Puritan New England, for example, seemed distant from that of many students who would much rather talk about Twentieth Century subjects and could see little value in discussing a problem that occurred over two-hundred years ago.

A third problem revealed by the teacher's reports relates to the type of documents that exist in the units, and the way in which those documents are organized. Whenever generalizations appeared, as they invariably did when secondary sources were used, students tend to accept them unquestionably. For example, students readily accept the interpretations of historians as to Jefferson's wisdom in his embargo policy of 1807.²³


Also some of the documents were organized around an author's bias. This problem, which is inevitable whenever one selects some materials and excludes others, posed a particular problem, however, in certain units. For example, in the unit, *The Rights of Americans*, some persons objected that a minority point of view was presented in such a way that students would think that most Americans would accept it. Also, in the unit, *Liberty and Security*, the anti-Communist movement was presented in such a way that students developed negative feelings toward it. "The anti-Communists," Allan Guttmann complains, "appear in this unit to be a bunch of bums. At best they are hysterical and worst they are simply insane. The students are not likely to feel that anti-Communists have any arguments at all." This problem could not be easily resolved. Presenting documents reflecting all points of view was not always the answer. Some people had valid positions but expressed them badly and students would reject them in favor of those that were highly articulate and of interest.

In fact students had a great deal of difficulty with the documents. Court decisions proved to be too difficult for most students to read. Where it was necessary for students to understand a court decision, a newspaper or newsmagazine account of the decision was more palatable. The most serious impediment to a student's understanding of a document, however, was his lack of a sufficient background for understanding what

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the document was talking about. How much information should an author provide? Dr. Brown counseled that "Generally a student needs to know most of the following about each document: who, what, where, when, why--their importance will vary. To say only 'from the writing of X' tells him only who, and doesn't give him much chance to practice criticism." The idea was that the student would be able to read the document in order to get answers to the questions he had in mind. But even this information was not always adequate. For example, in the unit on the Korean War the students were ignorant as to who Alexis de Tocqueville was and thus could not understand his relevance. In the unit, Lincoln and Slavery, students did not know either what the Whig Party was and what Lincoln's connection was to it or what the relationship was between the Democratic Party and the South. Thus an entire section was difficult for students to read. The student's problem in understanding the problem Lincoln faced in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation is discussed by Dr. Brown who states that:

... students have no way of understanding the importance of the diplomatic situation, especially the significance of a possible British recognition of the Confederacy. Back of this is that they don't have any way of really understanding the larger military situation, especially the significance for the North of the blockade. ... Had Great Britain recognized the Confederacy the possibility existed that the British navy might have been used to raise the blockade--as well as the possibility that British shipping and ship-building facilities might have been available. Unless kids understand this they are

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26 Brown, "Recommendations for Revision ['The Rights of Americans'], p. 2.

likely to get much too provincial a view of the Emancipation decision. In fact it had a lot to do with American diplomacy vis à vis England. . . .

Also Dr. Brown argues that Lincoln's relationship to the Abolitionists is misunderstood by students. "The documents," writes Dr. Brown, "make the Abolitionist pressure appear to be merely that of a few gadflies, whereas in fact what makes it important was the need to hold together a strong majority of political support for the war in the north—a need which waxed stronger and was more difficult to satisfy with every northern defeat." Unit writers were thus faced with the dilemma of providing adequate information so that a student would be able to comprehend a document but at the same time, refrain from making the exposition sound like a textbook narrative. This proved to be impossible to accomplish and they either provided extensive information about the subject or left students and teachers with meager accounts of background details.

The detailed reports filed by teachers who experimented with completed units were the single most important evaluative instrument devised by the Amherst Project. These reports cited weaknesses, inconsistencies and biases in the units. They revealed that students had a great deal of difficulty handling the documents. They also revealed that the teacher's manuals were considered to be inadequate. The teacher's manual was supposed to indicate what the unit was all about, what difficulties a teacher

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28 Richard H. Brown, "Recommended Revisions of the Lincoln Unit," n.d., p. 5A.

29 Ibid.
would incur as he used the unit, and some teaching strategies that would be useful in the classroom. Many teachers, it seems, wanted something that would give them a series of questions that they could ask students and elicit answers.

In 1968, the Amherst Project attempted a second type of evaluation. Since no new units had been written that summer, the Project sought to develop tests with some of the already existing units. It was decided that eight of the units would be reproduced and distributed to cooperating teachers. The Project would attempt to develop tests that would "measure the extent and nature of change in individual students as a consequence of using the unit." 30 Actually, pre- and post-tests were devised for five of the units: What Happened at Lexington Green?, Liberty and Law, Liberty and Security, The Embargo of 1807 and Hiroshima.

The concern for a more formal type of evaluative instrument surfaced in 1965. The Committee on the Study of History considered the matter and decided to defer it until a later date. 31 For some reason, in October of 1967, members of the Amherst Project began to plan a formal testing program. One reason for this was pressure exerted by the federal government. The Project was negotiating a new contract and the federal government made a formal testing program a prerequisite for federal funds.

By December, 1968, pre- and post-tests had been developed for three units: What Happened at Lexington Green?, The Embargo of 1807, and

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Liberty and Law. Tests for the other two units were not completed until a later date. During 1968 and 1969 members of the Project coded the results of the pre- and post-tests as they came in from cooperating teachers.

In 1969 and 1970, the unit tests were revised and plans were made for a third type of evaluation. It was decided to make a detailed study of five schools, three in the Chicago, Illinois, area and two in the Amherst, Massachusetts, area. In Chicago, teachers would be paid for cooperating. The Project's Assistant Director would video-tape the classes in session while another member of the Project would interview both students and teachers before and after testing. The unit pre- and post-tests would be used to measure learning outcomes. In Amherst, Massachusetts, students would only be given pre- and post-tests over the unit. 32

In 1968, plans were made for a fourth type of evaluation. David Tyack of the University of Illinois and Charles Keller were to be hired as full-time evaluators. Each would travel around the country, observing the way the Amherst Project materials were being utilized. For sixty days each would travel, observe and then write separate reports. 33

One last attempt at evaluation was made in 1970. It was decided to send out questionnaires to everyone who had been involved in any way

32 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 22 October 1969, pp. 3-4.

33 Committee on the Study of History "Newsletter," 28 October 1968, p. 1. There is no evidence that these evaluations were ever made, or, if they were made, that they had any effect upon the Amherst curriculum.
with the Project over the past ten years. This was an inclusive task, involving not only writers and cooperating teachers but also all of those who participated in any of the numerous conferences and workshops. The questionnaire sought to measure the impact that the Amherst Project had made upon the respondent. Since the response was poor, with only a little better than nineteen percent of the random sample of cooperating teachers bothering to reply, the results are inconclusive.

It was possible to obtain copies of the pre- and post-tests for all of the units where such tests had been made. Regretably, however, it was not possible to find the results of these tests. Also it was not possible to discover the results of the experiment in Chicago and Amherst, or to ascertain whether David Tyack and Charles Keller ever conducted their examination let alone know what they discovered. It is possible to say, however, that these methods of evaluation did not make an observable impact on the Project's curriculum.

With the exception of 1968, during each year between 1961 and 1969 the Amherst Project sought writers who would create units that could be used by teachers. The writers met at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts, for six weeks during the summer. During this summer writing session, each writer hoped to produce one unit.

Each unit produced follows a common curriculum design. Typically, a unit has an introduction that poses the major problem of the unit. The problem is one that involves some important concern of people in general. The rest of the unit is comprised of sections. Each section is a breakdown of the unit's main problem, exploring some complexity of that problem.
Each section of the unit is made up of documents. An introduction to the section serves as a transition between the documents, the main theme of the unit and the introduction or, as the case may be, a preceding section. Each document has an introduction giving the reader any information that is necessary that he may understand the document.

Each unit has a teacher's manual that helps a teacher understand the purpose of a unit and reach its goals. Also each unit has a list of suggested readings, enabling students to pursue questions of concern to them in other sources.

The Amherst Project attempted to evaluate its efforts in four ways. The first, and most important, was the creation of a network of cooperative teachers who received copies of units and tried them out in their classes. From 1961 until 1970 teachers wrote detailed accounts of what happened when they used the units in their classrooms. Changes were made in the units reflecting suggestions made by these teachers.

A second attempt was made at evaluation by developing pre- and post-tests for the units. In this way any change in pupil behavior could be discerned. Tests, however, were only made for five of the units.

A third experiment at evaluation elaborated on the second idea. New pre- and post-tests were made for some of the units. But five schools were selected for a comprehensive experiment. At three of the schools, teachers and students were to be subjected to an intensive interview and the new pre- and post-tests were to be used to evaluate achievement. Also the classes at these schools were to be video-taped periodically while the unit was being taught. Students at the other two schools were only
to be given the pre- and post-tests.

The fourth and last evaluative instrument used by the Amherst Project was a detailed questionnaire. The questionnaire sought to explore the impact, if any, that the Project had upon the participant. A random sample of everyone who had any connection at all with the Project over the past ten years was made. Thus, writers, cooperating teachers and workshop participants were included.

By 1970, sixty-eight units had been written and many of these had been published. The writing phase of the Amherst Project had ended and a new one had begun. The Project now turned to a new concern, finding ways to reeducate teachers. The story of this new phase will be described in the next chapter.
CHAPTER V

THE AMHERST PROJECT AND TEACHERS

When the Amherst Project obtained a contract with the United States Office of Education (USOE) in September of 1964, it was able to establish the system of curriculum evaluation described in Chapter IV. Teachers of history in high schools located in various sections of the United States received duplicated copies of units that had been created the summer of 1964. These teachers were to experiment with the units in their classrooms. Periodically members of the Amherst Project would visit the classes of cooperating teachers in order to evaluate the units.

Classroom visitations by the Amherst Project staff members revealed that many teachers did not understand the Project's philosophical, psychological and pedagogical assumptions. As a result, numerous problems developed in implementing the Project. Teachers simply did not know what to do with the units. A student was often told to begin with the first document in the unit, extrapolate from it all of the details possible and then proceed to perform the same operation with each succeeding reading. Class discussions tended to focus on details and on the problems of reading primary sources. Students were not being encouraged to develop questions that concerned them. ¹

During 1965, the Amherst Project staff sought to find a solution to this problem. Some of the Project's units were being published by the D. C. Heath Company. The publisher desired to issue two booklets to aid teachers who would use the units. The first booklet would provide help for teachers who wanted to use primary sources while the other would be an introduction to the use of sources for students.

The Amherst Project was not receptive to the Heath proposal. The reasons for this disagreement between the Project staff and the publisher are not clear. The publisher had issued the units in bound form rather than in the loose-leaf form desired by the Project. Perhaps relations between the publisher and the Project had been so badly strained that the Project did not want to become associated with the proposed booklets. Or, perhaps, the idea of telling people in a booklet how to use primary sources seemed to be an inadequate mode of explanation. In any case the publisher's proposal never materialized.

Although the Amherst Project rejected the offer made by the D. C. Heath Company to issue the booklets, the Project attempted to help the cooperating teachers by holding two one-week workshops at Amherst College during the summer of 1965. During these workshops, the Project developed a workshop format that, with slight modifications, was used in one-week workshops thereafter. During each morning the workshop participants and staff observed a class of high school or junior high school students being taught an Amherst Project unit by one of the staff members. After the class session, which usually lasted an hour, was over, the teacher
explained what he had tried to do and the students reacted to what had happened. The remainder of the staff and the workshop participants then directed questions to the teacher and students. In the afternoons, the workshop participants assumed the role of students and either a staff member or a workshop participant taught part of an Amherst unit. After the class session, the teacher, students, and staff analyzed what had happened and why it had happened. Several of the evenings were reserved for special discussions. Always there was a lecture on the nature of learning and of inquiry by a specialist on learning theory and on the nature of history by an historian.  

The Amherst Project considered the summer experiment to be successful. They had accomplished their goal of making teachers more informed of the Project's objectives. However only seventeen teachers had experienced the workshops. The Project staff desired to apply what

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2Richard H. Brown, "The Amherst Project Workshops in Discovery Learning: An Institute 'On the Road,'" speech prepared for the Conference of NDEA Institute Directors, Washington, D. C., 12 December 1965, reprinted as Appendix F in Committee on the Study of History, "Final Report," submitted to the Bureau of Research, United States Office of Education, [1971?], pp. 2-3. The specialist on learning theory was Rose Olver of Amherst College. The Amherst Project selected an historian from a college or university that was located in proximity to the site of each workshop. Among the historians who addressed workshop participants were Arthur Mann of the University of Chicago, Richard Douglas of The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, George Stocking of the University of California, John William Ward of Amherst College and Hayden White of the University of Rochester.

it had learned during the summer of 1965 and reach many more teachers. During the fall of 1965, the Amherst Project negotiated a new contract with USOE that allowed it to hold five workshops in four locations during 1966. The goal of each workshop was to make teachers aware of the nature and implication of inquiry education. Under the special USOE grant, three of the five workshops were conducted in less than a month. The first workshop was held at the Jefferson County Outdoor Laboratory School in Jefferson County, Colorado, from March 11 until March 18; the second was hosted by the Laboratory School of the University of Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, during the week of March 21st; and the third was conducted by Berkeley High School in Berkeley, California from April 4 through April 8. In each case the workshop was held during the host school's spring vacation. The final two workshops were held in Amherst, Massachusetts, during the summer of 1966.

In October, 1966, a one-week workshop was held in Rochester, New York, and, from April 24 to April 27, 1967, a similar workshop was conducted in Dade County, Florida. Both of these workshops were arranged locally and the Amherst Project was asked to satisfy specific local requirements. In the case of Rochester, New York, the College of Education of the University of Rochester wanted to train twenty-five persons who would handle the University's teacher training program. The University wanted these people to be exposed to the ideas of inquiry learning being propagated by the Amherst Project. The Dade County, Florida school sys-

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ern designed a special workshop for administrators. The Amherst Project was asked to present its ideas.\(^5\)

The one-week workshops were generally successful. Participants left the workshops knowing more about inquiry learning than before, and they generally were more enthusiastic about its possibilities. Some of the participants became cooperating teachers, experimenting with newly written units in their classes.

However, in assessing the outcome of the workshops, the Amherst Project acknowledged that several problems existed. First of all, the USOE contract had not been signed until late November of 1965. This left the Amherst Project with less than ten weeks to plan the first workshop, and it placed a great deal of pressure upon the staff. Secondly, the Project staff also found it difficult to conduct three workshops in less than a month. Since the staff was small, virtually the same group of people had to discuss publicly the same problems. Staff members soon felt that they were offering cliches as answers to important problems. An expansion in the size of the staff would only be possible if additional funding could be found. Thirdly, there was no definite plan for evaluating what workshop participants did when they returned to their respective schools. The Amherst Project felt that such evaluation was necessary. Fourthly, a one-week workshop was expensive. The host school district had to contribute $4,000 toward the operation of the workshop. The Project

wondered if the workshops were worth the cost. Lastly, the Amherst Project continued to wonder if it was not possible to reach more people in a more efficient way than by means of one-week workshops. This line of thought led the Project into a new venture, workshops for those who were attempting to work with teachers.

During the 1960s the federal government conducted numerous institutes each year for teachers. The United States Office of Education decided that special workshops for institute directors were highly desirable. The workshops were held in various parts of the country so that directors could attend the one in their area. The USOE was interested that each Institute have a greater impact upon the behavior of teachers in the classrooms. Thus, the Institute Director's Workshops for 1968 were concerned with three objectives: (1) forcing the participants to confront new ideas in learning theory, (2) discussing the general problems involved in running institutes, and (3) examining the problems teachers were facing in their classrooms. The USOE asked the Amherst Project to accomplish these three goals by holding Institute Director's Workshops. Three one-week Workshops were held for Institute Directors in Amherst, Massachusetts, Berkeley and Oakland, California, and Racine, Wisconsin, during the months of January, February and March of 1968.  

The format for the Institute Director's Workshops was the product of past experience. In the mornings, workshop participants observed

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an experimental class of high school students being taught a unit by either a member of the Amherst Project staff or by one of the workshop participants. After the class ended, the teacher, students, staff and workshop participants analyzed what had happened. In the afternoon, participants conducted classes for their fellow participants.

In addition to these experiences, four special sessions were held to accomplish other workshop goals. In the first, information was disseminated about new materials in the social studies curriculum projects. A second session dealt with the problems of running institutes, and a third dealt with the application of learning theory to the teaching of history. The last session was comprised of a panel of local school teachers who gave their ideas on educational problems.

In conducting the Institute Director's Workshops, the Amherst Project faced three problems. First of all, some of the participants had trouble understanding high school students. The Amherst Project attempted to remedy this problem by providing opportunities for the participants to observe high school classes in session and by holding lectures and discussions on such topics as learning theory and the problems teachers face in the classroom. Secondly, many of the workshop participants felt that the Amherst Project sought to promote its own curriculum materials and theory of learning. The Project sought to alleviate this situation by conducting discussions on the purposes and status of all of the major social studies projects and by allowing the workshop participants to examine the curriculum units produced by the various projects. Lastly, some of the work-
shop participants assumed that the teachers who attended their summer institutes had rejected the ideas and suggestions made by the institute staff because the teachers lacked a knowledge of history and teaching methods. The Project endeavored to resolve this problem by having the workshop participants teach experimental classes. By teaching the experimental classes, it was hoped that the workshop participants would be more receptive to the Amherst Project's ideas on the teaching of history.

The Institute Director's Workshops, however, did achieve some success in attaining the major USOE goals. Information had been provided concerning new developments in social education and an interest had been demonstrated in curriculum reform. The problems of running institutes had been discussed and there had developed considerable interest in the problems of teachers. More important, some persons had confronted the problems of learning. 7

But probably the greatest beneficiary of the Institute Director's Workshops was the Amherst Project. The workshop participants were mainly college teachers of history. During the summer of 1968 these individuals would come in contact with about 3,000 school teachers. By conducting the one-week workshops, the Amherst Project would thus hope to influence a large number of persons. 8 Also some who attended the workshops understood


for the first time what the Project was trying to accomplish and many expressed the desire for additional information and for samples of the completed units. A number of the Institute Directors asked to use Amherst units in their summer institutes.

During the summer of 1969, the USOE and the American Historical Association held a six-week workshop for those involved in the History Education Project. The Amherst Project was asked to conduct a workshop during the fourth week. This afforded the Project another opportunity to influence those who were working with teachers.

The Amherst Project, however, did not always succeed in its attempts to influence educational leaders. In 1970, John Stanavage, Executive Secretary of the North Central Association of Schools and Colleges, arranged for four Amherst Project staff members to participate in a two-day workshop in Columbus, Ohio. Participants in the workshop were school personnel from southern Ohio, West Virginia and eastern Indiana. A student-produced slide and tape was used by Dr. Richard H. Brown and his staff to stimulate discussion. There is no record of what happened, but the members of the Project who participated in the Principal's Workshop evaluated their effort to influence administrators as unproductive.


10In 1969 the American Historical Association started the History Education Project, a secondary school history curriculum reform program. The Project was funded by USOE.
and there were no additional experiments with this type of workshop.

The experiment in conducting workshops for those who dealt with teachers was over. By late 1969, the Amherst Project had embarked on a new endeavor, Education Development Teams.

In 1969 the Amherst Project remained interested in helping teachers to understand and use their view of learning history. The five workshops for Institute Directors and the workshop for those involved in the History Education Project, gave the Amherst Project the opportunity to influence people who dealt with thousands of school teachers. In 1969, the Amherst Project received a new USOE grant from the Bureau of Educational Personnel Development. Under this grant, the Project established six Education Development Teams in various parts of the country during 1969 and 1970. The aims of the new program were (1) to foster curriculum innovation, (2) to provide in-service training for teachers interested in new approaches, (3) to encourage administrative personnel to accept experimental curriculum work, and (4) to design better materials for students who were either potential drop-outs or who would terminate their education with a high school diploma.

A typical team consisted of about thirty people, including twenty teachers, and was divided into two phases. The first phase was a five-day


12 "Education Development Teams," n.d.

inquiry workshop identical to that described in the first part of this chapter. The purpose of the workshop was to focus on questions and concerns that the participants had regarding inquiry learning.

Once the workshop ended, Phase Two began. Phase Two of the Team experience implemented what the participants had learned during the workshop about students, teaching, history and the learning process. This period usually lasted for a year or more and focused on experimental curriculum development.

It was assumed that the production of curriculum could best be done by a classroom teacher who was actively engaged in teaching and not by specialists who were not involved in classroom teaching. Furthermore, curriculum units could not be created by one person for another who was teaching in a totally different setting. As early as 1964, the Amherst Project had been convinced of these ideas. The curriculum units produced at Amherst during the summers had always been intended as only suggestive. Now, in 1969, the Project had a chance to implement these ideas.

In Phase Two, from two to four teachers were selected to work on experimental units. The teachers were partly released from their teaching duties so that they could write their units. Usually a teacher's load was reduced either half-time for a semester or quarter-time for two semesters. Each Team had a coordinator who would supervise. The teachers met frequently with other Team members, with the coordinator, with Amherst Project staff members, with students, and with college and university teachers who functioned as research personnel. The units produced by the teachers
were tried out in their own classes. All units produced by the teachers were the property of the Team, although the Amherst Project reserved the option to share the units with other Education Development Teams. One Amherst Project staff member made periodic visits to the Team and assisted the writers. 

Altogether, eight Education Development Teams were established. During the summer of 1969, a workshop was held in Boston followed by the development of special materials for inner-city youngsters. 

Also in the same summer, an Education Development Team was established in Dallas. In that Team, six teachers developed new units that were tested and shared by three local school districts. In Port Washington, New York, three teachers were released for ten weeks to develop materials that would be used as part of a Black Studies Program. The materials produced by the writers were to be shared by other schools in the area.

In January, 1970, an Education Development Team was established in the Napa, Santa Rosa, Petaluma and Novato School Districts in northern California, and in the summer of 1970 similar Teams were established in

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15 Amherst Project Staff "Newsletter," 11 June 1969, p. 3.

16 Bulletin of the Amherst Project, Summer 1969, p. 2; Bulletin of the Amherst Project, Fall 1969, p. 3.

17 Bulletin of the Amherst Project, Fall 1969, p. 3.
Vancouver, Washington and in Delaware. 18

Some 209 persons participated in eight Education Development Team projects. The experiment, however, was only partially successful. Originally, there were to have been fourteen Teams, seven created in 1969-1970 and seven in 1970-1971. However, due to inadequate funding, only eight Teams were possible. The Amherst Project evaluated the Team experiment as being enormously costly in terms of energy and money. They were looking for a better way to expend their resources.

Over the years the Amherst Project had faced a number of concerns. With a small staff, the Project was always interested in ensuring that its personnel was used effectively. The Project was also interested in having as large an impact as possible. Thus it became involved in one-week inquiry workshops, workshops for Institute Directors and Education Development Teams.

Money was also of importance to the Amherst Project, because curriculum production and workshops were expensive. Since 1964 the Amherst Project operated under five government contracts, spending a total of $730,092. 19 During this time, Dr. Richard H. Brown and his staff spent countless hours negotiating contracts and writing proposals and reports.

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From year to year they did not know if their efforts would be funded, and the Project, therefore, desired to separate from USOE.

As early as 1966 members of the Committee on the Study of History and Dr. Richard H. Brown wanted to make the Amherst Project a permanent organization. This could be accomplished if the Project became attached to some university or consortium of universities. Dr. Brown called this institutionalization, a "Center for Educational Change." He argued that such a Center afforded three advantages to the Project: (1) a pilot teacher training and retraining program would be possible, (2) it would be an umbrella for various curriculum projects like the Amherst Project, and (3) it would make available the services of people in the university or universities that comprised the Center. Being connected with one or more universities would also benefit the Center financially.

During 1967, a number of universities expressed interest in the proposal of a Center. Dr. Edwin Fenton expressed an interest in moving the Amherst Project to Carnegie-Mellon University and making it part of a new educational center. The University of Massachusetts at Boston wanted the Project as a basis of a teacher training program, as did Wesleyan University. Webster College in St. Louis, Missouri, wanted to associate the Amherst Project with a mathematics project that was already located there. All of the proposals from the universities and colleges

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were rejected. Although it is not clear why the proposals were rejected, it may be that the Amherst Project felt that it would be merged with other social science curriculum projects and thereby lose its identity. For example, Dr. Fenton and his associates at Carnegie-Mellon University had developed a four-year social studies curriculum for high school students. Perhaps Dr. Fenton wanted to incorporate the Amherst Project into this curriculum. If this occurred, the Amherst Project would be forced to conform to the goals and objectives of the dominant curriculum.

In 1968 the Amherst Project was greatly concerned with the possibilities of educating secondary school history teachers. Rumors from USOE indicated that the Amherst Project was not viewed as being interested in teacher education. The Project, it was thought, would probably lose its government funding when the current contract had expired. In the summer of 1968, therefore, the idea of a Center gained importance. The Amherst Project thought that it would be possible to put together a staff made up of people who held joint appointments with the Center and a university. The Center's program would consist of one- or two-week practicums, which would be based on the Project's workshop experience, that would be held in local schools. Materials would be created during the practicum and tested in the local, participating school. In this way school teachers would benefit from the expertise of the Project staff, and the university personnel who were active on the Project staff would learn about life in the schools. 22

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In 1969, three years after discussions of a Center had begun, little progress had been made in realizing the dream. Dr. Richard H. Brown stated that the Project staff had to admit that they were not experts on teacher education and that their whole idea on a Center might be outmoded. The Project's main strength was its pragmatism, and this was endangered by the creation of a Center. He writes that:

So varied is the contemporary education scene that more and more it seems to me that we may be putting the cart before the horse to think that we can develop any kind of meaningful ideas in our splendid isolation, and then find a place in which to work them out. At the very least this is a procedure diametrically opposed to the very pragmatic way in which we operated thus far. But who will give us a blank check, and how do we sell ourselves without a program?  

"Perhaps," he concludes, "instead of talking grandiosely about a Center we should be asking the simpler question as to what it is (if anything) that would merit our staying together after 1971, and if so, how do we go about it?"

In September 1970 an American Historical Association resolution proposed the creation of a regular periodical, sponsored by the Association, to meet the needs of teachers. Dr. Robert R. Palmer, who at the time was President of the American Historical Association, approached Dr. Richard H. Brown to serve as editor of the magazine. Dr. Brown expressed an interest providing that it could be tied to the Amherst Project's ideas of a Center. The following year Dr. Brown joined the staff of the

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Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois as Director of Education. He accepted the position with the idea of creating a Center. The Library was interested in becoming a major educational institution. In 1971 the Library had already achieved a reputation in education:

... [The Newberry Library] is intimately connected with the world of educational change through a number of its programs. For eight years it has served as headquarters of the Amherst History Project. In cooperation with the twelve Associated Colleges of the Midwest, it runs the Newberry Library Program in the Humanities, a resident program that brings scholars at four levels—undergraduates, Ph.D. candidates, college professors, and distinguished scholars—to the Library for humanities seminars ranging from four to fifteen weeks and for independent work throughout the year. In conjunction with the Committee on Institutional Cooperation of eleven major universities in the Midwest, it sponsors a Center for the History of the American Indian, a program that will be developing 'libraries' for the study of the Indian in high schools, colleges, and universities and that will work with other institutions in the Chicago area in Indian education and curriculum materials programs. The Library also publishes a national newsletter of Family History and sponsors a summer Seminar for the Study of the Family in Historical Perspective.25

The Newberry Library, in other words, had a number of programs already in operation that could be utilized by the prospective Center.26 With the appointment to the Newberry Library staff, Dr. Brown received a commitment. The Newberry Library would publish the journal and house the Center. Dr. Brown was also made Visiting Professor of History and Education at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Northwestern University was also interested in both the magazine and the Center. Other

26 Ibid.
institutions, notably the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, also expressed an interest in the two projects.

In the fall of 1971 a planning board of eighteen history teachers and educators met to discuss the proposed American Historical Association magazine. This was but the first in a series of planning meetings that were held throughout 1971, involving some two-hundred persons. Support for this activity came from both the Newberry Library and the American Historical Association. The idea of a magazine also gained the approval of the Social Studies Consortium in Boulder, Colorado and the Executive Board of the Organization of American Historians. In the discussions that took place, the American Historical Association proposal for a magazine and the Amherst Project's proposal for a Center were combined. It was now proposed that a Communication and Information Network be established with a special type of magazine.

In 1972, Dr. Richard H. Brown issued a paper outlining the new proposal. The Network and magazine would have five goals, namely, to encourage those who study and who teach, to develop professional standards, to provide a forum and communication system, to provide support to those who want to try new approaches to the teaching of history, and to provide a forum for the discussion of educational issues.  

The periodical, called "The Magazine of Access," would be published three times a year—October, January and April—and sent to every

28 Ibid., p. 3.
member of the Network. Each issue would be from 96 to 128 pages in length and would be composed of four sections. The first section, about 5 percent of the Magazine, would furnish current information about students; for example, their ideas and reading habits. The second part, making up about 20 to 30 percent of the magazine, would be comprised of short articles and detachable items that could be used in classrooms. The third part would be a series of essays on a variety of topics and would consist of no more than 20 to 30 percent of the periodical. The bulk of the magazine—consisting of 40 to 50 percent of an issue—would be a catalogue of the Access Network. This section would be a detailed description of items that the reader could procure by sending in a detachable card, marking the items he desired. 29

The Access Network would contain current information about new materials, new courses, and how various individuals dealt with certain problems and aids that were available to those who were interested in establishing new projects. One important function of the Access Network was the gathering and disseminating of various reports. Each report would be about one to three pages in length and could be duplicated on request. The reports would be created by the Access Network staff and by Network members. The Access Network could also operate a lending or

rental agency and perform whatever services Network participants deemed necessary.

The Access Network would be cosponsored by the American Historical Association and the Newberry Library, and the Library would publish the Magazine of Access. The Editor-Director would be Dr. Richard H. Brown. The Network and magazine would be controlled by an Access Advisory Board. Initially the Editor-Director would appoint members to the Board. The Board would determine how subsequent appointments would be made. The Committee on Teaching of the American Historical Association would continue and would give advice and assistance. In addition to the Editor-Director, and the Access Board, there would be an Assistant Director, one full-time and one part-time Assistant Editor and a Promotion and Advertising Manager. At least two persons would be given ten-month fellowships which would enable them to issue and collate reports and participate in any workshops that were held. Lastly, a network of agents would be created throughout the country who would support the Access Network in ways that would be determined at a later date.

Dr. Brown estimated that all of this could be accomplished with a three-year subsidy of $318,901. By the end of the third year the system would be self-supporting. In order to subscribe to the Network, a


31 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
person would have to pay ten dollars per year and an institution would have to pay thirty dollars per year. By the end of the third year, Dr. Brown anticipated that there would be 22,500 members including 4,500 institutions.

Addressing the Organization of American Historians in Chicago, Illinois, on April 12, 1973, Dr. Brown explained that the Access Network and magazine would soon be a reality if funds could be found. Funding of the project never materialized and the Access Network and Magazine of Access were put off until the future.

In conclusion, the Amherst Project's efforts to educate secondary school history teachers was its last major endeavor. By 1973 the Project's only remaining activity was the revision of curriculum units for publication. Chapter VI of this dissertation summarizes and concludes the history of the Amherst Project.


CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The Amherst Project originated with the formation of the Secondary School History Committee in 1959 by interested high school and college teachers. Under the leadership of Van R. Halsey, Jr., the Amherst Project conducted a series of writing sessions at Amherst College for the purpose of producing units that could be used in American history courses. Each unit was a collection of primary and secondary sources dealing with some historical problem or topic, and the teacher could interject a unit into a standard American History course whenever he felt the topic to be pertinent. During the period from 1959 to 1964, the Amherst Project operated with modest funds provided by four institutions of higher learning and other private sources. A total of twenty-six curriculum units had been written by September of 1964.

The Secondary School History Committee was reorganized in 1964, becoming the Committee on the Study of History, and, simultaneously, the Amherst Project received a grant from the Bureau of Research of the United


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States Office of Education. Government funding allowed the Committee on the Study of History to create a staff consisting of a full-time director, assistant director and executive secretary; along with numerous part-time staff associates. The Director of the Amherst Project, Dr. Richard H. Brown, provided three major services; he supervised all of the Project's operations; he advised the Committee on the Study of History as to the accomplishments and problems that the Project faced; he informed the public of the Project's goals, activities and successes. The other members of the staff aided Dr. Brown in planning and carrying out the program of the Project. The Committee on the Study of History, headed by Van R. Halsey, Jr., met twice a year to assess the accomplishments of the Project, discuss any problems that had developed, and provide suggestions for future goals and for the improvement of current activities. The Amherst Project staff operated from two centers: at Amherst, Massachusetts, where summer sessions were held for curriculum writers and at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, where Dr. Brown supervised the other activities of the Project, such as the editing of completed units and the dissemination of units to teachers who tested the units in their classrooms.

Between 1964 and 1972, the Amherst Project spent over $730,000 under five government contracts. These government funds permitted the Amherst Project with opportunities to expand its activities. In addition to the production of curriculum units, the Project was able to evaluate its efforts by hiring teachers to test its units in the classroom and by having
staff members observe the units being taught. Government funding also allowed the Project to conduct various workshops and institutes with the hope of changing teachers' behavior.

While funding from USOE allowed the Amherst Project to expand its operations, it also created problems for the Project. First of all, the Amherst Project staff spent a considerable amount of time writing proposals and reports, negotiating contracts and speculating about how current expenses would be defrayed. Secondly, when USOE insisted on funding the Project on a yearly basis, the Project found its program disrupted because a new contract was not always signed before the old one had expired.

The Amherst Project produced forty-two Senior High School units and nine Junior High School units between 1964 and 1971. The units were based upon a theory of learning that the Project called "inquiry." Assuming that learning occurs when the learner encounters a new phenomena, the Project's instructional orientation was that learning occurs inside the learner as a consequence of the learner's activity. In inquiry learning, the learner enters the learning situation with a background of experiences, attitudes, habits and skills that he has acquired in the past. The learner becomes interested in a problem and then exercises such problem-solving skills as the forming of a hypothesis, the testing of the hypothesis with data, and the arriving at some sort of a conclusion.

History was viewed by the Amherst Project as having humanistic values. By studying a historical topic the student would come to understand something of what it meant to be human. The Project also argued that
the learner was to imitate the historian's method of studying the past.

Dr. Brown argued that the historian used a variety of methods in his search for the truth about past events and that his methods were similar to those the average person used in solving problems. Thus, a student did not have to learn a mode of inquiry. Instead, the student was given a general problem and some materials and asked to develop an explanation of the problem.

Throughout the 1960s social educators debated the appropriate content of social education. Some accepted Dr. Jerome Bruner's idea of structure and argued that the curriculum ought to be organized around the concepts, generalizations and modes of inquiries of the social sciences, either in the form of specific social science courses or in an interdisciplinary approach consisting of two or more of the disciplines. In contrast, Dr. Richard H. Brown of the Amherst Project was skeptical that the idea of structure could be applied to history. Dr. Brown reasoned that:

In history, which partakes in part of the humanities, the meaning of structure is even more elusive. One suspects that if it exists at all it lies in the methods and purposes of the discipline rather than in the way what is known about it is organized. When the message gets to history, therefore, the emphasis is on the student's use of the scholar's mode of inquiry as the most effective way of learning, rather than on structure, or curriculum.  

Thus, for Dr. Brown, the content of history was the questions learners asked and the answers they received about past events.

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Curriculum units could be planned only by a teacher in a specific classroom situation and not by curriculum experts located in New York City, Chicago or Amherst, Massachusetts. The units developed by the Amherst Project were designed to be suggestive as to how units might be developed and to provide materials that could be used in the classroom if a teacher found them useful in attaining his goals.

By 1964, the Amherst Project had developed a format for its curriculum composed of four features. The first feature was the introduction which stated the problem of the unit—a universal question or issue such as the use of compromise in the solution of political problems. The various sections of the unit dealt with matters that were related to its main theme. Each section of the unit was composed of documents, the second feature of the unit format. By analyzing any or all of the documents of the section, the learner developed an insight into the question posed by the section and by the unit. The third feature of the unit was the teacher's manual which explained the purposes of the unit, the way it was organized, the universal question or problems it raised and some instructional strategies that a teacher might use in the classroom. The fourth and last feature of the unit format was a list of additional readings that appeared at the end of each unit.

Although the Amherst Project sought to evaluate its efforts at writing curriculum in several ways, the method of having teachers use the units in their classrooms and write detailed reports of their experiences seemed to be the most useful to the Project. The pre- and post-tests
developed for some of the units may have been of some use in the revision of those units or in the planning of future units, but there is no evidence to either substantiate or deny this. The proposed evaluation by Charles Keller and David Tyack may or may not have occurred; but if they did evaluate the curriculum, there is evidence that their findings affected the future development of curriculum.

From the point-of-view of the learner, the Amherst unit posed a number of problems. First of all, the introductions were often too abstract and the learner became frustrated. Secondly, the documents were difficult to read, containing difficult or archaic words and referring to events that were distant from the student's experiences. When the student was asked to analyze the primary sources, he probably was baffled as he attempted to discern what his instructor expected of him. The student probably sought someone to provide an easy answer that he could readily accept. Lastly, the units provided no questions that aided the student in interpreting each document since it was assumed that the student would read a particular document in order to answer questions that were important to him. True, each document had an introduction that supplied information about the document, but the units did not have any systematic approach to the development of those skills necessary for the reading of sources.

In short, the student was, first of all, expected to possess the necessary skills for reading primary and secondary sources, such as, the ability to recognize assumptions, the ability to detect logical fallacies in an argument, the ability to obtain facts from graphic materials, the
ability to perceive bias and the ability to detect propaganda techniques. Secondly, it was assumed that the student was able and willing to communicate his ideas verbally, both orally and in writing, and to discuss his conclusions with other students. Lastly, it was assumed that the student was willing to study a historical topic. The Project could have selected more recent events in order for the learner to gain some insight into a universal question or problem. For example, the skirmish at Lexington in 1775 was chosen by the Project to develop the student’s understanding of the problems involved in knowing what had happened at a specific event. However, a more recent event could have been selected or the teacher could have staged an event for the learner to study. A student might be curious about how one knows anything about an event, but might be totally disinterested in the occurrence at Lexington.

Along with creating difficulties for the student, the Amherst curriculum posed problems for the teacher. The classroom teacher had to select a unit of study that was both interesting to his students and which they could deal with effectively. The printed units contained such materials as letters, graphs, and maps that could be read only by students who possessed the necessary skills. This placed a burden upon a teacher if he decided to use a printed unit, because he either had to select only those materials his students could read or he would have to help the students develop those skills they needed in order to read the materials. The teacher’s manual provided no aids in teaching the required skills. Also, a second problem might arise for those using the printed units. A
student in studying a unit might have become interested in an aspect of
the problem that would have required him to use documentary material not
contained in the unit. This would have meant that the teacher would have
had to direct the student to books in the library. The list of supple-
mentary readings supplied with each unit was inadequate and the Amherst
Project provided no other aid for the teacher who was faced with this
problem. If the teacher was knowledgeable on the topic he would have been
able to direct the student to the necessary resources—if a local library
contained the books.

Ideally, the teacher was to construct his own unit, by, first,
observing his students and selecting a problem that was of interest to
them and, then, by securing and arranging materials that his students were
capable of reading. Unlike some of the social studies projects which
rewrote primary sources in order to simplify them, the Amherst Project
stressed that primary sources be kept in their original form but be chosen
because they were of interest to students and because students could read
them.\(^3\)

The Project attempted to aid teachers by, first, establishing work-
shops that would instruct them in the meaning of inquiry learning and then,
later, in creating Education Development Teams that would aid them in con-
structing units for their specific classes. In the various workshops,
institutes and Education Development Teams, the Amherst Project dealt with

\(^3\)The Carnegie-Mellon University Social Studies Curriculum Project,
directed by Edwin Fenton.

In its attempts to develop curriculum and aid teachers in changing their teaching strategies, the Amherst Project was a product of the 1950s and 1960s in that its main stress was upon the cognitive behavior of students. The Project did not explore how people develop attitudes and values and it did not develop strategies to teach affect. In fact, most of the social studies projects of the 1960s either ignored or minimized the teaching of affective educational outcomes or they taught attitudes and values in a cognitive way, stressing that the learner developed an attitude or value as he gained information about it. In an article entitled, "The Process of Education Revisited," Dr. Jerome S. Bruner acknowledged that the curriculum movements of the 1960s had been greatly interested in making the student become a better problem-solver. Dr. Bruner said that events, such as the Vietnam War, poverty and racism, during the 1960s produced a great deal of distrust in the minds of young people toward logic. Logical problem-solving had been used to justify what many young people had considered to be atrocities and, in their idealism, they had adopted a way of learning through direct encounter. Dr. Bruner concluded that schools and society, and not the curriculum, had to be reconstructed through the reordering of national priorities. "Reform of the school is probably not enough," Dr. Bruner argued, "The issue is one of man's capacity for creating a culture, society and technology that not only feed him but keep him caring and belonging."4

In 1969, two years prior to Dr. Bruner's article, Edmund Traverso, who had written several Amherst units and was one of the Project's staff associates, stated the same sentiments. In an article, Traverso stated that youth had "... a distrust for traditional modes of cognition, intellectualizing or 'objectifying' the situation. These modes have been used to justify the horror and absurdity we see about us." The youth, according to Mr. Traverso, had developed a vocabulary that "... suggest that there is more to a situation than its intellectual abstractions. These expressions are suggesting that there are alternative ways of perceiving the world."\(^5\) In responding to Mr. Traverso's article, Dr. Richard H. Brown stated that "... the problem is how to free students in order that they may inquire about things that genuinely concern them, and in a style compatible with the environmental world in which they live. ..."\(^6\)

In 1970 the Amherst Project had no clear idea of what changes had to be made in order to free students to become inquirers into "things that genuinely concerned them." But the Project did realize, however, that the curriculum work of the 1960s was no longer of use, and even though units continued to be published the Project felt that something more radical was needed. After 1970 the Amherst Project pushed toward the goal of estab-

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lishing a Center for Educational Change which would enable social educators to meet what was perceived to be the new demands of the 1970s.

Perhaps, someone at some future date will establish a Center for Educational Change as it was envisaged by the Amherst Project. Perhaps also the new institutions that Dr. Bruner and Dr. Brown saw as necessary will materialize, for, as Dr. Brown said:

Ultimately, the search for the experiences teachers need in the modern world is likely to lead us to new views of our own institutions, of their relationships to each other, and of their relationships to the outer world. It is likely to raise among us questions of purpose, values and style, and to bring us face to face with assumptions about the way we do things and the way we live, that have been too long unexamined. It will not hurt us if it does.7

The willingness to reassess goals and strategies in order to meet the new situations of the future is the major legacy of the Amherst Project to social educators in the 1970s.

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Kliebard, Herbert M. "In Search of Modes of Inquiry," *Social Education* 29 (December 1965): 556-558.


Sellers, Charles G. "Is History on the Way Out of the Schools and Do Historians Care?" *Social Education* 33 (May 1969): 509-516.


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UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

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Amherst Project Memoranda. Instructions, information, and statements of procedure.

Amherst Project Pre- and Post-tests for Selected Units.


"Questionnaire." n.d.
"Questions and Answers on I. The New Social Studies, II. The Amherst Project, III. The Addison-Wesley Units." n.d.

"Report on Questionnaire." n.d.

APPENDIX A
APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE STUDY OF HISTORY, 1964-1971

(Dates served are in parentheses after name)

Halsey, Van R., Jr., (Chairman, 1964- ) Director of Admissions and Associate Professor of American Studies, Hampshire College, formerly at Amherst College.

Altree, Wayne (1964- ) Chairman, Department of History, Newton (Massachusetts) High School.


Chisolm, Lawrence (1964- ) Professor of American Studies, State University of New York at Buffalo.

Cook, Alice Rice (1964- ) Formerly Director, Human Relations Center, New School for Social Research.


Jennings, Frank G. (1968- ) Director of College Relations, Teachers College, Columbia University; Editor, Teachers College Record.


Mitchell, Rowland L., Jr. (1965- ) Staff Associate, Social Science Research Council.


Schrag, Peter (1964- ) Editor-at-large, Saturday Review.

Taylor, George R. (1964- ) Professor of History, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

APPENDIX B
APPENDIX B

AMHERST PROJECT STAFF MEMBERS, 1964-1971

(The dates served by each Assistant Director are in parentheses)

Director:

Richard H. Brown

Assistant Directors:

Gary G. Baker (1966-1968)
Baxter Richardson (1968-1970)
Tom Newman (1969-1971)

Executive Secretary:

Mabel H. Lumley

Staff Associates:

Gary G. Baker
Stephen Bank, Psychologist
George Cohan
Robin McKeown
Tom Newman
Rose Olver, Psychologist
Nancy Shaw Palmer
Baxter Richardson
David Schneider, Psychologist
Edmund Traverso

APPENDIX C

UNITS PREPARED BY THE AMHERST PROJECT, 1961-1970

(Asterisk indicates unit was prepared with USOE Cooperative Research funds and available through ERIC.)

1961

Merrill, Edward H. "Response to Economic Collapse: The Great Depression of the 1930's."
Schrag, Peter. "The Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights."

1962

Brown, Richard H. "The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship or Unwise Evasion?"
Lujan, Herman D. "A Study in Jacksonian Democracy."
Good, John M. "The Aims of the American Revolution."
Traverso, Edmund. "The 1920's: Rhetoric or Reality?"

1963

Schrag, Peter. "The European Mind and the Discovery of a New World."
Patten, William C. "The Abolitionists: Democratic Reformers or Dangerous Fanatics?"
O'Meara, John. "The First Transcontinental Railroad: Was the National Interest Served?"

Gould, Joseph E. "Public Education in the United States: The School as a Reflection of American Life."
Baker, Gary G. "Reconstruction: Andrew Johnson and Congress, 1865-1869."
Squire, Marjorie J. "British Views of the American Revolution."
Kownslar, Allan O. "Manifest Destiny and Expansionism in the 1840's."

McCarthy, Michael P. "An Idea in Action: The American Revolution as a Force in History from the 18th Century to the 1960's."
Wilbur, William Allan. "The American West as Myth and Reality."
Traverso, Edmund. "Korea and the Limits of Limited War."
Kownslar, Allan O. and Frizzle, Donald. Series of Junior High School Units.

*Buffinton, Thomas F. "Imperialism and the Dilemma of Power."
*Moulton, Muriel. "Civil Disobedience, 1830-1850, and a Modern Analogy."
*Cuban, Larry. "Social Relations, Pre-Civil War."
*Caton, Jay; Garland, Gerald; and White, William. "The Civil War Soldier: Romantic and Realist."
1965 (Cont.)

Kownslar, Allan O. and Frizzle, Donald. Series of Junior High School Units.

1966

*Warren, Murray. "Liberty or License: The First Amendment in Action."
*Meister, Geraldine and Gorman, Ira. "United States Actions Toward China Since World War II: Evolution of a Policy?"
*Harris, Jonathan. "Science and the American Character."
*Kane, Frank and Baker, Gary G. "Minorities and Prejudice in America."
*Guttmann, Allen. "Who's In This With Me? The Individual and the Group."

1967

*Bennett, Peter S. "What Happened on Lexington Green? An Inquiry Into the Nature and Methods of History."
*Holman, Stephen R. "The Supreme Court and the Dynamics of American Government."
*Kline, William A. "Poverty in America: The Balance of Private Rights and Public Interest."
*LaValley, Joseph F., Jr. "The Vote as a Measure of Participation in American Society."
*Byrne, William G. "Democracy and its Servants: A Study in Allegiance and Responsibility."
1967 (Cont.)

*Jamieson, Alfred. "Ideals and Reality in Foreign Policy: American Intervention in the Caribbean."

1969

Kuklis, Robert D. "Poverty and the Quality of American Life."
Thompson, Dean C. "The Disenchanted: Youth in American Society."
Dollase, Richard H. "Strangers in the City: The Black and Immigrant Experience."
Ladenburg, Thomas; Cooper, Caroline D.; and Richardson, Baxter. "Black Freedom: Its Meaning After One Hundred Years."

1970

Holman, Stephen R. "Round Valley Indian Reservation: A Study in Ethnocentricity."
Doubleday, William A. and Wilcox, Jamison V. V. "The Limits of War-time Dissent: A Case Study of the Copperheads in the Civil War."
APPENDIX D
APPENDIX D

AMHERST PROJECT UNITS PUBLISHED, 1964-1975

Junior high school units created under the auspices of the Amherst Project.


Brown, Richard H. The Missouri Compromise: Political Statesmanship or Unwise Evasion? (1964)
Campbell, John. The Abandonment of Neutrality: America's Entry into World War I. (1968)
Kownslar, Allan O. Manifest Destiny and Expansionism in the 1840's. (1967)
Merrill, Edward H. Responses to Economic Collapse: The Great Depression of the 1930's. (1964)
Schrag, Peter. The Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. (1964)
Schrag, Peter. The European Mind and the Discovery of a New World. (1965)
Squire, Marjorie J. British Views of the American Revolution. (1966)
Traverso, Edmund. Immigration: A Study in American Values. (1964)
Traverso, Edmund. The 1920's: Rhetoric or Reality? (1964)

*The Following titles were published in the "New Dimensions in American History" series but were not produced by the Amherst Project.


Baker, Gary G. *Communism in America; Liberty and Security in America.* (1970)
Buffinton, Thomas. *Imperialism and the Dilemma of Power.* (1975)
APPENDIX E
## APPENDIX E

### AMHERST PROJECT WORKSHOPS, 1965-1970

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APPROVAL SHEET

The dissertation submitted by Charles Edward Samec has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Gerald Lee Gutek, Director
Professor, Foundations of Education, Loyola

Dr. Rosemary V. Donatelli
Associate Professor and Chairman, Foundations of Education, Loyola

Dr. John M. Wozniak
Dean and Professor, Foundations of Education, Loyola

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the dissertation is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The dissertation is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D.

May 11, 1976

Date

Gerald Lee Gutek
Director's Signature