

Social Science Docket

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Editing Is Not Censorship

by Alan Singer, editor, *Social Science Docket*

Our goal is to have every issue of *Social Science Docket* include an essay on a key social studies concept or controversy in order to stimulate responses from readers and debate in the New Jersey and New York Councils for the Social Studies. This essay focuses on the recent debate over the editing of primary source documents for classroom use. Prior to publication, the essay was circulated among social studies teachers at local meetings, through council newsletters and via e-mail. Teachers were asked to respond to the essay and discuss their views. Selected responses are included at the end of the article.

When New York State was discovered using edited versions of literary texts on its high school level state standardized test last June (2002), it unleashed a firestorm of criticism. Among the condemning voices, Diane Ravitch, a fellow of the Hoover and the Manhattan Institutes and a former Undersecretary of Education in the first Bush administration, charged that “Censorship of tests and textbooks is not merely widespread: across the nation, it has become institutionalized.” Her targets included the textbook industry, the “religious right” for censoring topics” and the “politically correct left” for “censoring language.” I am responding to Ravitch’s charges as an historian (Ph.D., Rutgers University, 1982), a teacher educator (Hofstra University), a former New York City high school social studies teacher, and also, I suspect, as a member of the amorphous “politically correct left.”

As an historian and citizen, I oppose censorship as politically dangerous in a democratic society. But I distinguish between censorship and editing. In fact, the process of researching and writing history, as it is in all intellectual endeavors, is one of organizing and editing information. The issue is not whether material is edited, but whether sources are cited, editing is noted and the material is open to evaluation by students, professional colleagues and other readers. Otherwise, the material may have polemical value, but its historical importance is compromised and usefulness in the classroom is diminished.

As a teacher and teacher educator, I strongly support editing primary source material to make it accessible to students as long as it is noted. As a co-director of the New York State Great Irish Famine Curriculum project, I helped prepare lessons using “differentiated text,” text that was minimally edited, adapted or largely rewritten. This made it possible for students reading at different grade levels to examine documents and learn how to analyze them as historians. The use of differentiated texts to reach different audiences is actually quite common in our society. Examine any news story on the same topic

in *The New York Times*, *Newsday*, or the *New York Daily News*.

I believe that Diane Ravitch’s attack on the editing of text had little to do with historical integrity or educational standards and is really part of a long term campaign by Ravitch, E.D. Hirsch, Chester Finn, Lynne Cheney and other right-wing commentators to marginalize advocates for multiculturalism.

To illustrate the pervasiveness and the necessity for the editing of historical documents, I would like to discuss an example drawn from one of Ravitch’s own books, *The Democracy Reader*, a collection of essays she edited with Abigail Thernstrom. The opening section of the book is a speech by Pericles from *The Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides. According to Thucydides, the speech was delivered to the citizens of Athens in approximately 430 BCE. Ravitch and Thernstrom argue it is a seminal discussion of democracy, introducing the idea into the western intellectual tradition.

With a document such as this speech, an editor or teacher must consider five related issues: Translation, Selection, Authenticity, Interpretation and Audience. *Translation* is a problem because the speech was delivered in another language, in this case, an Athenian dialect of ancient Greek. Thomas Hobbes, a seventeenth century English philosopher translated a particularly noted passage as “We have a form of government not fetched by imitation from the laws of our neighbouring states (nay, we are rather a pattern to others, than they to us). . . .” Ravitch and Thernstrom, who do not cite a source for their translation, offer the same passage as “Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors. It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else.” While the meaning seems similar, the language clearly is not.

Hobbes translated the entire book by Thucydides and included the historian’s view of the speech. In one passage, Thucydides charged that Pericles’ goal was to “appease the anger of the Athenians towards

himself” and that Athens “was in name a state democratical, but in fact a government of the principal man.” In other words, following news of military reversals, Pericles, a demagogue, was out to save his own skin. I think it is significant that when Ravitch and Thernstrom edited Thucydides’ text, this *Selection*, which questions the existence of a meaningful democracy in ancient Athens, was left out.

In this selection, there are also problems with historical *Authenticity* that Ravitch and Thernstrom fail to mention. Pericles’ speech was delivered in 430 BCE, but Thucydides’ book was not written until after the end of the Peloponnesian War, approximately 26 years later. There is no evidence that Thucydides was present when the speech was delivered or that there was another written version. In essence, the speech is an historical reconstruction that may better represent the views of the chronicler than the orator. This should have been noted by Ravitch and Thernstrom.

If the version of the speech provided by Thucydides is a relatively accurate account, there is still the problem of historical *Interpretation*. The fact that a term, democracy, was used in ancient Athens, does not mean it meant the same thing as today or that our ideas are descended from theirs. Athens was a slave society where only a small group of male citizens participated in debate and decision making. In addition, the “Age of Pericles” lasted for only a few decades and two thousand years of history intervened before democracy in the modern sense was discussed during the “Age of the Enlightenment” and the period of the American Revolution.

But despite problems of Translation, Selection, Authenticity and Historical Interpretation, I think the Ravitch and Thernstrom version is useful to teachers because of their sense of *Audience*. In fact, their version, which has been adapted for contemporary readers, is the one I choose to open discussion on ancient Greece with high school students and prospective teachers. While I question the quality of their work as historians, their language is accessible to readers and in this case, they capture the sense of the particular passages.

New York State made a mistake by not acknowledging on the exams that passages had been edited. But that mistake in no way justified the attack efforts to design an appropriate test for high school students. As Diane Ravitch discovered in her own work, but seems to have forgotten, if language is not accessible to readers, they will be unable to understand ideas.

Equally disturbing, Ravitch willingly distorted her own the past, condemning authors, teachers and historians whom she disagrees with for practices that she and her supporters repeatedly use in their work.

But the greatest wrong committed by Ravitch and other commentators funded by right wing benefactors is their ad hominem attack on multiculturalism in an effort to silence disagreement and dissent. Campaigning for sensitivity in use of language is a call for respect, not a form of censorship. To equate them, is to sacrifice principle for political gain, something Thucydides accused Pericles of doing as well.

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Three Translations of Thucydides: Which is the “true” text?

Below are three translations of a speech by Pericles to the citizens of Athens. It was delivered in approximately 430 BCE. The only surviving version is from *The Peloponnesian War* by Thucydides, written about 404 BCE, in an ancient Greek dialect.

Instructions:

- Examine passage 37 in all three translations. How is the language similar and different? In your view, are the meanings basically the same? Explain.
- Examine passage 43 in all three translations. How is the language similar and different? In your view, are the meanings basically the same? Explain.
- This speech was probably delivered by Pericles in 430 BCE but Thucydides did not write his book about the Peloponnesian wars until at least 26 years later. No other written record of the speech exists. In your view, how should historians view this document?

Blanco Translation	Hobbes Translation (Grene)	Ravitch and Thernstrom
<p>37. We practice politics that does not emulate the customs of our neighbors. On the contrary, we are the models, not the imitators, of others. Because we are governed for the many and not for the few, we go by the name of a democracy.</p>	<p>37. We have a form of government not fetched by imitation from the laws of our neighbouring states (nay, we are rather a pattern to others, than they to us) which, because in the administration it hath respect not a few but to the multitude, is called a democracy.</p>	<p>37. Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbors. It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people.</p>
<p>43. No one needs to harangue you, . . . but you must remember that the greatest gift to the city is not in public speeches but in daily beholding her power in action, in being like lovers to her. Thus when she is great in her glory, you will take it to heart that men knowingly, daringly, reverently built her power by doing what needed to be done, and that even when they perished in one of her enterprises, they did not think that the city was being deprived of their valor, but that they had freely made the hand-somest possible investment in her.</p>	<p>43. And for you that remain, . . . contemplating the power of the city in the actions of the same from day to day performed and thereby becoming enamoured of it. And when this power of the city shall seem great to you, consider then that the same was purchased by valiant men, and by men that knew their duty, and by men that were sensible of dishonour when they were in fight, and by such men as, though they failed of their attempt, yet would not be wanting to the city with their virtue but made unto it a most honourable contribution.</p>	<p>43. What I would prefer is that you should fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is, and should fall in love with her. When you realize her greatness, then reflect that what made her great was men with a spirit of adventure, men who knew their duty, men who were ashamed to fall below a certain standard.</p>

How did Thucydides really view Pericles and Athenian “Democracy”?

Source: Walter Blanco and Jennifer Tobert Roberts, eds., trans., Walter Blanco (1998). *The Peloponnesian War*, Thucydides. NY: Norton.

Instructions:

- Examine each section. Identify the main idea or ideas of the passage and then rewrite it in your own words.
- In your opinion, how did Thucydides really view Pericles and Athenian “Democracy”? Explain your views and provide evidence from the text.

A. “With these words, Pericles tried to deflect the Athenians’ anger from himself and to divert their minds from their fears. For their part, they took his advice as far as public policy was concerned. They no longer sent ambassadors to Sparta, and they redirected their energies to the war. Privately, they constantly felt the pain of their sufferings, the common people because they were being stripped of the little they had to begin with, and the rich and powerful because their fine country property, their houses and expensive belongings, were being destroyed. Worst of all, they were not at peace, but at war. And in fact the people did not abate their anger towards Pericles before they levied a monetary fine on him.”

B. “As the masses have a way of doing, though they not much later re-elected him general and entrusted the leadership of the government to him. They did so because everyone was by now becoming inured to his personal pain, and because they thought that Pericles was the ablest man for what the city as a whole needed. For as long as he led the city in peacetime, he governed it with moderation and unflinchingly maintained its security. Athens was at its greatest in his time.”

C. “After the war broke out, he showed himself here too be a good judge of the city’s power. He lived for another two and a half years, and after he died, his prescience about the war was even more fully understood. He had said that they would prevail by being patient, by building their navy, by not trying to expand their empire during the war, and by not putting the city in jeopardy. In every respect, however, the Athenians did just the opposite, and in matters that seemed to be unrelated to the war, they followed a policy that was advantageous to private interests and ambitions but harmful to the city and its allies. When it worked, it brought prestige and profit to private citizens; when it failed, it damaged the city and the war effort.”

D. “The reason for the change is that when Pericles was in power, his popularity, his intellect, his conspicuous imperviousness to bribes gave him free rein to bridle the majority. He was not led by it, he led it, because he was not always trying to acquire power improperly, by saying just anything to please the people; he could contradict them and even make them angry, because his prestige gave him power. Indeed, whenever he saw that they were rashly about to do something flagrantly premature, he would give a speech and whip them into a panic; but then when they were irrationally frightened, he would restore their confidence. In its rhetoric, Athens was becoming a democracy; in practice it was the domain of its foremost man.”

Teachers Respond to “Editing is Not Censorship”

Lee Burchett, Valley Stream, NY:

In a way, everything is edited. My concern is “who” is doing the editing, not whether a document is edited. Decisions about what gets included and what gets removed determine what students learn. Teachers must make choices, but thoughtfully, carefully, and with a willingness to explain their decisions.

John M. Dougherty, Coordinator of Social Studies, New Jersey Department of Education:

The author’s charge that right-wing commentators are trying to marginalize advocates for multiculturalism does not sound like scholarship to me. Isn’t he in danger of marginalizing those he perceives of as “right-wingers?”

Dean Bacigulopo, Lincoln-Orens Middle School, Island Park, NY:

I am not opposed to differentiated text. I am opposed to differentiation as a guiding principle and philosophy invading education. I find too often teachers have a preconceived notion of what students can and cannot do. Most of this information is gained from district and state assessments, word of mouth, or (unfortunately) a teacher’s own prejudice (e.g., “the inclusion class”). I believe teachers need to expose students to the ways an author’s use of language creates meaning within a text. Often in editing a text we retain the meaning but lose the value and beauty of the language. I once observed a teacher using an “abridged” version of MacBeth with an 8th grade class. Should a teacher rewrite Shakespeare so it can be easily understood by an 8th grade student? I would argue that a teacher who understands Shakespeare would also understand that Shakespeare was never meant to be “read.” Like all verse it was meant to be heard. The sound of the language in itself creates meaning. When you are taught how to listen to Shakespeare (or better, act out some scenes) suddenly the vernacular of 17th century England is as recognizable as a lunchroom conversation.

Instead of differentiating text, I search for documents that contain parallel themes. For example, recently my students read excerpts from *Black Boy* by Richard Wright to illustrate the promise of Northern cities. His prose style is vivid, imaginative, and difficult for an 8th grade class to comprehend. Instead of editing his work, I included

in the lesson a discussion of the painting “The Migration of the Negro” by Jacob Lawrence. It contains the same themes as Wright’s book. After discussing the painting, we read the prose, and the students made connections between both sources. The painting became as valuable for understanding the prose as any editing I could have done. Later that day the 8th grade ELA teacher in my team used the *Black Boy* excerpt to further illustrate figurative language. As an educator I believe editing should be a last resort, not a first. There are more creative ways to promote understanding.

Leigh McGrath, IS 171K, Brooklyn, NY:

Censorship and text editing are different with opposite purposes. Censorship is done to prohibit knowledge. Editing enhances reader accessibility and conceptual understanding. As a sixth grade teacher, I continually rely upon edited materials to present students with alternative views and perspectives on history. If I only used unedited documents, many of my students would disengage from learning. The process of discovery would not occur, and they would not learn to form opinions based upon evidence. Students would simply listen to the teacher and take on the teacher’s view as their own. That notion sounds more like censorship than editing.

Craig Thurtell, Ardsley High School, Ardsley NY:

I am surprised that Alan Singer defends the alteration of literary passages in the New York State English Regents exams. He regrets that the state did not acknowledge its revisions, but argues that such editing is essential and accuses the conservative Diane Ravitch, who criticized the state’s practices, of attempting to undermine multicultural education. I think he minimizes the seriousness of the state’s practices and the problems it creates. Moreover, I think that the use of documents in social studies classes and exams need further consideration.

The English Regents exam authors did not merely edit literary passages; they consciously altered the meaning of these passages through wholesale bowdlerization and then pretended that the passages were authentic. Alan Singer apparently defends these changes on the grounds of accessibility and “sensitivity in use of language.” Neither defense justifies the state’s actions. For example, the exam writers eliminated all references to Jews and gentiles from an Isaac Bashevis Singer excerpt and all

references to black and white people from an Annie Dillard piece about growing up in a predominantly black neighborhood. (*New York Times*, 1 June 2002 and 8 January 2003) These deletions (eviscerations is more apt) do not sensitize or clarify the readings. They seem aimed instead at preempting potential criticism from groups who might feel disparaged by references to themselves, however unlikely or unmerited such a charge might be. If anything, the excisions demonstrate an aversion to the portrayal of cultural diversity, the very motive the essay imputes to Ravitch. The changes also suggest a condescension toward adolescents, who, the state apparently believes, are incapable of dealing with the complexities of human relations.

The controversial passages came from English exams, but this piece raises questions about the use of primary documents in history classes and on state history exams. Alan Singer states that when he developed the Irish Famine project, some of the documents were “largely rewritten.” Those texts, in my view, are no longer primary documents; they are secondary sources that cannot possess the historical uniqueness or authority of the original. In revising them, he implicitly concedes that students at that grade level are not ready for the real thing while misleading them about the true nature of primary documents.

As the raw material of historiography, primary documents are often recalcitrant. Scholars must patiently tease inferences out of them. During my own research, I have spent hours rereading a letter or newspaper account as its meaning slowly and fitfully accumulated. We should be exposing our students to this challenging and rewarding process. But perhaps primary documents do not have the universal utility we once, in a flush of enthusiasm, attributed to them. Maybe younger students would find items from a period’s material culture more accessible, or maybe they simply need to wait until their intellectual development permits them to meet the demands of document analysis.

That analysis is poorly realized when we ask students writing a document-based essay to race through a series of documents and, before time expires, incorporate them into an argument. What historian works under such constraints? How can such requirements possibly encourage a love of history? And how much does the result prove about the student’s ability? We should rethink our use of documents, and, in the meantime, the state should respect the integrity of the historical and literary record.

Janet Gruner, Great Neck North HS, Great Neck, NY:

For me, more disconcerting than the issue of editing is the implication of Diane Ravitch’s statement for those who do not possess the “cultural capital” or “high status knowledge” necessary to understand and analyze primary documents in their “authentic” form. This raises the larger question of what is the purpose of our nation’s educational system. If it is to create generations of students who are able to think for themselves, evaluate different perspectives, and engage in thoughtful discussion, then editing is essential to allow *all* students the experience of critically thinking about the *ideas* presented in a document. However, if the purpose of our educational system is to promote and perpetuate stratification where only the “elite” are encouraged to develop into inquisitive, thoughtful, articulate adults, then editing should not take place, and only those who have the “ability” (or the money for a tutor, parental aid, or cultural capital and high status knowledge) should be exposed to the documents that are the foundation for a deeper and sophisticated understanding of history. The rest can just be told what to think and what to memorize.

Jeffrey Feinberg, Social Studies Coord., Jericho, NY:

As a beginning high school teacher, I used *Viewpoints In World History* (NY: American Book Co., 1973). The primary sources in it provided a wealth of opportunities to examine documents, including Pericles’ Funeral Oration. I always complemented the text with Thucydides’ questions as to whether Athens, under Pericles, was really a democracy, and Plutarch’s suggestion that Pericles bribed the people with public money. Alan Singer is correct to criticize those who equate editing with censorship. Innovative teachers are always able to raise the questions he poses: authenticity, translation, selection, and historical interpretation.

Eric Sutz, Daly Elementary School, Port Washington, NY.

As an elementary school teacher, I find that editing, when done correctly, is a wonderful tool for teachers. Editing primary source documents permits students to read and analyze historical material with success and allows them to gain confidence in their ability to act as historians. Editing also allows for greater differentiation of instruction in inclusive classrooms. This helps to break down social barriers created by tracking based on reading level.

Bobbie Robinson, John F. Kennedy High School, Plainview, NY:

In the “good old days” of social studies education, the question of editing documents would never have come up. With the exception of a few major documents such as the Magna Carta, the Declaration of Independence, or the Gettysburg Address, educators used very few documents and instead presented students with the textbook version of history, neatly summarized and packaged. The movement towards document-based teaching presents teachers with a dilemma. How do we provide students with documents to examine while at the same time ensuring that they actually have a chance at successfully reading or studying them? It seems to me that if documents are not sometimes edited to make them accessible to students, then we really end up summarizing and packaging the version that we translate for them. Instead of a printed textbook, perhaps we’ve just become a walking, talking version of the same thing.

The trouble is, every case of editing in some way involves our individual sense of what is important enough to keep, that is, our often unspoken value judgments. The controversy over the New York State Regents last spring involved editing a piece of literature in such a way that it removed almost all references to ethnicity and/or religious heritage. When I read the passage at the center of the controversy, I felt that the editing removed the descriptive words that gave the literature its essential meaning. Without the rich descriptive language, the adjectives that had been omitted, the students could only answer the questions asked with a bare scraping of the surface of meaning. The words that would have allowed them to truly plumb the depths of meaning of the passage were not there for them to consider. The test writers were so worried about potentially offensive adjectives, and so contemptuous of the intelligence of students, that they preferred to bore them to death.

I think our students deserve better than that. While we sometimes need to edit, I think we also need to provide students with rich language, to help them learn new terms, to include adjectives and adverbs that may be painful or controversial just because they do add meaning, and then be sure to help the students explore those meanings. While we may need to edit, we also need to recognize that our own values and priorities are at work each time we edit. We are not neutral when we make choices about what to leave in and what to leave out. I certainly

don’t think we should be editing to avoid controversy. Isn’t controversy what social studies is about? Sometimes that very act of editing may need to be the topic of the discussion we have with our students.

Charlie Gifford, Hoosic Valley High School, Schaghticoke, NY:

Webster’s Dictionary defines censoring as “To remove or suppress what is considered morally, politically, or otherwise objectionable.” Editing is defined as “To modify or adapt so as to make suitable or acceptable.” As a teacher, I am an editor, not a censor.

New York State tells us to teach students to read, understand, interpret and analyze documents while covering a very comprehensive curriculum. The only way I can expose students to a wide variety of primary source materials is by editing them so that they are written in language students understand. In a lesson about the Muckrakers, I have my eighth grade class read an edited version of “McClure’s Magazine” that includes excerpts from pieces written by Jacob Riis, Upton Sinclair, Ida B. Tarbell, John Spargo, Lincoln Steffens and Jane Adams. I believe they benefit from the multiple perspectives presented in this assignment. Would Diane Ravitch rather I have students read an extended unedited selection by only one of these authors? Would they really be interested in it or understand what was happening in the past?

The real problem for teachers is choosing material that is appropriate. I cannot promise that I choose the best material each time, but I know that I try to present as many sides to a situation as possible so students can form their own opinions based on a range of the information. It is my job to be as unbiased and unopinionated as possible when I make selections and edit them, and to present ideas even when they are considered unsettling or “objectionable” by some people.

Felicia Gillispie, August Martin HS, Queens, NY:

Some texts should be edited because of their length and to simplify language. It is an educator’s responsibility to determine when to use original, edited, or adapted material. My global history students are intrigued by “documents” such as a Summerian school boys tale and Hammurabi’s Code, but could never read the original translations, let alone the original text.

The Creation of Post-War “Segregurbia” in New Jersey

by Lizabeth Cohen

Lizabeth Cohen, Howard Mumford Jones Professor of American Studies in the History Department at Harvard University and a Bancroft Prize winning historian, is author of *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (NY: Knopf, 2003). This essay is edited from a presentation by Dr. Cohen at the New Jersey Historical Commission's annual meeting in 2000. Dr. Cohen, who was raised in Paramus, believes New Jersey epitomizes the quintessential post-World War II suburban experience. Despite a population growth of almost two million people between 1940 and 1960, a 50% increase over the two decades, every major city except Paterson lost population (Paterson gained a mere 4,000 residents). Moreover, as the postwar era progressed, 70 percent of the state's total land area would qualify as suburban. A longer version of this article appeared in the January 2001 issue of *New Jersey Reporter*, 30(4), 24-31, 33.

The United States came out of World War II deeply determined to prolong and enhance the economic recovery brought on by the war, lest the crippling depression of 1930s return. During wartime, a mass production war machine, operating at full throttle to produce the material for battle, had already provided many new jobs and filled many empty pockets and bank accounts. New Jersey's shipyards, petroleum refineries, and diverse manufacturing base in particular had stocked the military's warehouses with radios and radar, ships, munitions, uniforms, chemicals, food, airplane engines, and much more; by war's end, little New Jersey would rank fifth in the nation in war contracts. In New Jersey and elsewhere, insuring a prosperous peacetime would require making new kinds of products and selling them to different kinds of markets. Although military production would persist, and expand greatly with the Cold War, its critical partner in delivering prosperity was the consumer market. A wide-range of economic interests and players, including strident anti-New Deal big businessmen, moderate and liberal capitalists, and labor and its allies on the Left, came to endorse the centrality of mass consumption to a successful reconversion from war to peace. In some ways, this was the Keynesian solution that the New Dealers had seized upon to pull them out of the Great Depression in the late 1930s. But the experience of war had turned promising strategy to proven reality. Factory assembly lines newly renovated with Uncle Sam's dollars stood awaiting conversion from building tanks and munitions for battle to producing cars and appliances for sale to consumers.

If encouraging a mass consumer economy seemed to make good economic sense for the nation, it still required extensive efforts to get Americans to cooperate. Certainly, there was tremendous pent-up demand for goods, housing and almost everything

else after a decade and a half of wretched depression and war, but consumers were also cautious about spending the savings and war bonds that they had gladly accumulated while consumption was restricted on the home front. Hence, beginning during the war and with great fervor after it, businesses, labor unions, government agencies, the mass media, advertisers, and many other purveyors of the new postwar order conveyed the message that mass consumption was not a personal indulgence. Rather, it was a civic responsibility designed to improve the living standards of all Americans, a critical part of the prosperity-producing cycle of expanded consumer demand fueling greater production, thereby creating more affluent consumers capable of stroking the economy with their purchases.

Politicians and Propagandists

Politicians and propagandists never tired of tying America's political and economic superiority over the Soviet Union to its more democratic distribution of goods. In 1959, Vice-President Richard Nixon went so far as to tell the Russian people that all the homes, televisions, and radios that Americans owned brought them closer to the Marxist ideal of classless society than the Soviets. The new post war order deemed, then, that the good customer devoted to “more, newer, and better” was in fact the good citizen, responsible for making the United States a more desirable place for all its citizens.

As today, the purchase of a new single-family home generally obligated buyers to acquire new household appliances and furnishings, and if the house was in the suburbs, as more than 80 percent were, at least one car as well. The scale of new residential construction following World War II was unprecedented. And it was made possible by a mixed economy of private enterprise bolstered by government subsidy- in the form of mortgage guarantees with low interest rates and no

downpayment directly to buyers as part of the veterans benefits under the GI Bill of 1944, and indirectly to buyers through loan insurance to lenders and developers through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). The federal government assisted as well through granting mortgage interest deductions on income taxes, a mass tax since World War II, and constructing highways from cities out to the farm land that overnight was being transformed into vast suburban tract developments. In New Jersey, single-family houses mushroomed from 7 percent of the state's housing stock in 1950 to 64 percent a decade later. In the highly suburbanized Northern New Jersey area by 1960, a full quarter of the dwelling units had been built since 1950. The "Garden State" was fast becoming the "backyard garden" state, as the housing subdivision became "the New Jersey farmer's final crop" in the words of one observer.

Explosion In Housing Construction

This promotion of private market solutions to boost the mass consumption economy—even if heavily subsidized by the federal government—turned a dire social need for shelter into an economic boom. As in New Jersey, one out of every four homes standing in the United States as a whole in 1960 had gone up in the 1950's. As a result of this explosion in housing construction, by the same year, 62 percent of American's could claim that they owned their own homes, in contrast to only 44 percent as recently as 1940 (the biggest jump in homeownership rates ever recorded). Home building became so central a component of postwar prosperity, in fact, that beginning in 1959, the United States Census Bureau began calculating "housing starts" on a monthly basis as a key indicator of the economy's vitality.

The way housing entered the mass consumption marketplace favored certain kinds of metropolitan locales, as well as particular social groups, over other ones. Dependence on new single-family, privately owned, detached home construction to solve the enormous postwar housing crunch, as well as to fuel the economy, privileged suburbs over cities. As millions of Americans concluded it was cheaper and more desirable to own rather than rent, they left older, often deteriorating housing in cities like Newark, Elizabeth, and Paterson for the new suburban communities favored by the VA and FHA loan programs and reinforced by the lending policies of private banks. Between 1947 and 1953 alone, the suburban population of the United States increased

by 43 percent, in contrast to a general population increase of only 11 percent; over the course of the 1950s, in the twenty largest metropolitan areas, cities would grow by only .1 percent, their suburbs by an explosive 45 percent. By 1965, a majority of Americans would make their homes in suburbs rather than cities. Today, typical American metropolitan areas range in the proportion of their center city population from the 20 percent of Boston to the 30 percent of New York, but overwhelmingly their populations are suburban.

Middle-Class Americans

Home ownership did more than expand the numbers and enhance the status of suburbanites over urbanites. In the process, it advantaged some kinds of people over other kinds. Through their greater access to home mortgages, credit, and tax advantages, men benefited over women, whites over blacks, and middle-class Americans over working-class ones. Men, for example, secured low VA mortgages, and the additional credit that home ownership made available, as a result of their veteran status in World War II and the Korean War, while women generally did not. White American's more easily qualified for mortgages, including those dispensed through the GI Bill, and more readily found suburban houses to buy than African-Americans could. And while some working-class Americans did move to suburbs, increasingly they tended to settle in "cops and firemen" suburban towns quite distinct from where successful professionals and entrepreneurs lived. Studies of Levittown, Long Island in 1950 and 1960 documented a shift away from the mixed class suburb to a more exclusively working and lower-middle-class one, as white-collar residents moved out of Levittown to more affluent communities nearby.

As a home became a commodity to be traded up like a car, rather than an emotional investment in a neighborhood or church parish, "property values" became the new mantra. Of course, people still chose the towns they lived in, but increasingly they selected among internally homogeneous suburban communities occupying different rungs in a hierarchy of property values. Not only did house prices position a community on that ladder of prestige, but so too did its social profile. Many suburban whites leaving cities with growing African-American populations—due to white flight as well as massive black migration north and west after World War II—felt that only an all-white community would ensure the safety of their investment, often their life

savings, and they did everything within their means to restrict blacks' access to real estate. What one cynical Newark public official in 1962 labeled "segregurbia" flourished, he said, because "the free enterprise system lurking in many American hearts has provided more moves to all-white suburbs than the billion words of love have promoted the spiritual advantages of economic and integrated city living." Likewise, local zoning regulations enforcing plot and house size and prohibiting multiple dwellings in suburban towns appealed for the way they sorted out prospective buyers by social class, and implicitly by race.

Housing Discrimination

In New Jersey, house pricing served as the first level of class, and often race, sorter. Many working-class people were kept out of middle-class suburban communities by virtue of their expense. When the annual income required to buy and retain a home in the new Morris County suburb of Parsippany-Troy Hills was estimated at \$12,000 in the early 1960s, policeman and firemen in Bergen County earned about \$8,000 a year, while only 17 percent of all Newark families—and only 9 percent of non-white families—earned over \$9,000. In fact, when manufacturing plants commonly relocated from cities to outlying sites during the 1950s and 1960s, home prices often kept workers from following their jobs. When they did move to suburban communities, they tended to be the least expensive ones on the fringes of rural New Jersey, often a long ride from work. A case in point is the struggle of the United Auto Workers Union to reconnect workers' jobs and residences while at the same time providing affordable housing when a large Ford assembly plant moved to Mahwah in Bergen County in 1955. When the United Auto Workers Housing Corporation, a subsidiary of the autoworkers' union, tried to build federally assisted housing within the price range of the 5,200 decently paid, unionized workers, the town of Mahwah refused the union's request for a variance to the exclusionary zoning code, which required one- or two-acre lots. Likewise, when a large IBM installation was welcomed in the same county's Franklin Lakes as a lucrative tax-paying rateable, the garden apartments sought to house employees locally met with the response, "There is lots of empty land and cheap housing further out. There's no reason why people should feel that they have to live in Franklin Lakes just because they work there."

One of the starkest reminders of the formidable class and racial barriers dividing metropolitan New

Jersey by 1960 took place everyday in the Newark area, where 50,000 blue-collar residents, a third of the resident labor force in this increasingly working-class, poor, and black city of 400,000, left for jobs outside the city where they could not live, while 200,000 white-collar workers commuted in to corporate jobs in Newark from outlying middle- and upper-class suburbs. A closer look at Essex County reveals just how racially polarized New Jersey's postwar landscape became. In a county that was 30 percent black, only 13 percent of the residents of towns outside of the county seat of Newark were African-American in 1970, and 89 percent of those black suburbanites lived in only three municipalities, East Orange, Orange, and Montclair. Outside of this suburban "black belt," in the other eighteen suburban communities of Essex County, only 2 percent of the population was black.

This increasing segmentation of suburbia by class and race fueled even more damaging social inequality because of Americans' traditional devotion to home rule as a critical pillar of democracy, a conviction which only intensified with suburbanization in the postwar period. As a result, the quality of crucial services soon varied much more than they formerly had when more people lived within larger units of cross-class and interracial cities. Education, for example, widely recognized as the best ticket to success in postwar America, became captive to the inequalities of the new metropolitan landscape, since, in the American system generally, and in New Jersey more so than in most other states in particular, local communities substantially provided, and paid for, their own schools through local property taxes. The wealthier the community, the more it had to spend, and the greater prospect of its children receiving the kind of education that led to prestigious college and graduate degrees and well-paying jobs. Essex County again provides a clear-cut case of how school spending per pupil, a fairly reliable proxy for educational quality, varied according to the socio-economic profiles of postwar communities. A careful analysis reveals that the higher the median income, adult educational and job status, white presence in the population density, all characteristics of wealthy suburbia, the greater a community's per-pupil spending on schooling for its children, and most unfairly, the lower the local tax rate its residents were assessed to pay for it.