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I remember one occasion from my youth when I was watching my grandmother cook dinner. She was not using a recipe, but adding ingredients by memory. I asked her how she was able to make such good food without a recipe since she was certain to leave something out. She answered that she used so many quality ingredients that if she forgot one or two, the end result would still be delicious. This memory came to me as I read *Educating Democratic Citizens in Troubled Times: Qualitative Studies of Current Efforts*. Although I would have preferred a few more issues to be included in this edited work, the end result is still very tasty fare.

This book is a valuable and needed addition to the much contested dialogue on democratic citizenship education. The qualitative studies included in this edited volume focus on traditional and non-traditional settings for developing democratic citizens. Particular focus is given to students' active

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engagement of local issues, as opposed to the traditional, systemic civic duties of voting, paying taxes, and obeying laws. I appreciate that the volume includes only qualitative studies which provide more nuance and complexity than many quantitative studies on this topic. Unlike many edited volumes, each chapter of this book can serve as a stand-alone reading, while the book in its entirety satisfies the reader as a cover-to-cover volume. The chapters compliment one another, without being redundant, in describing and analyzing the multiple contexts that help the reader better understand the current status of democratic citizenship education. The eleven chapter book is divided into three sections: Inside Classrooms, Inside Schools at Large, and In the Community. The three sections are carefully delineated so that the reader is given an eclectic tour of democratic civic education efforts: from classroom instruction to school governance to textbook analysis. In the introduction, the editors succinctly justify the exigency of their volume by establishing what they mean by troubling times.

Within these four troubling conditions – the war on terror; the federal press for school accountability; concerns about civic knowledge, interest, and engagement among youth; and disenfranchisement of marginalized groups – the need to focus on education for democratic citizenship is urgent. (p. 5)

Walter Parker states in the foreword,

Six themes appear to be central to the collection: knowing about democracy and engaging in democracy, social context and identity formation, and curriculum and instruction for democracy. In each pair there is a tension; each “and” can be replaced, for a different effect, with “versus.” (p. vii)

I evaluated each of the chapters, sections, and the book as a whole on how well each addressed the themes identified by Parker. Each chapter uniquely contributes to the overall themes about educating democratic citizens. The strongest themes which emerge from the book are *knowing about democracy* and *engaging democracy*. Apart from the textbook analysis chapter which focuses exclusively on curriculum, each of the other ten chapters overtly examine the knowing and engaging democracy

aspect of democratic citizenship education, while implying the distinct differences between knowing and engaging democracy. The authors intimate that actively engaging democracy is superior to the academic knowing of democracy, although most teachers instruct the latter more successfully than the former. The *identity formation* theme is the least evident across the chapters, though Nygreen and Bixby thoroughly address identity formation in their respective chapters. Overall, this book provides the novice to citizenship education with a greater understanding of each of the interrelated themes, and provides those well versed in civic education with new layers to their thematic understanding of this challenging topic.

While the book makes strong arguments about democratic citizenship education, and is generally a valuable resource, it does not include many critical efforts of citizenship education. Citizenship education is an evolving field, one in which scholars have a great deal more work to do. I recognize that Bixby and Pace could not include every aspect of citizenship education in their volume. There are, however, many areas of civic engagement that could have been included in this book such as technology usage, global education, and extracurricular activities.

Technology usage is a non-traditional method by which students can develop democratic citizenship. Democratic education is, after all, largely concerned with access and participation. Many students have access to and are very engaged in online communities in which they voice their opinions and debate topics of merit. Through the internet, students can engage local, national, and global communities through many means. For example, students can create online documentaries about important issues and post the documentaries on a multitude of forums for world-wide distribution. Students campaign for elected officials, raise money for and donate money to charities, and get organized on online forums. All of these actions are examples of civic engagement, but there is little mention of technology in the book.

Global issues are included only once in the volume for a high school service learning project. In the introduction, the editors mention the war on terror and the disenfranchisement of marginalized groups as two of the conditions that lead them to believe we are living in troubled times. These two conditions are global. Even if all United States students are civically engaged, they could not hope to conceptualize the war on terror without

understanding their role as global citizens and engaging citizens of other countries. The marginalization of large parts of the world population is also a crippling global problem that has to be addressed beyond nation-state borders. In the defense of the editors and authors, perhaps the focus on local civic engagement is the result of the qualitative nature of these research topics, which tend to be local and contextualized. I do, however, feel that global citizenship should be included as part of a compilation of citizenship education.

Aside from a brief mention of student council, co-curricular activities are also absent from this volume. Many school organizations effectively promote civic engagement. School related clubs and teams such as Model United Nations, Democrat Club, Republican Club, the debate team, and forensics are just a few activities that promote civic engagement by embroiling participants in debatable, controversial issues. These organizations promote dialogue and engagement, hallmarks of democratic citizenship, yet were not included in the book.

To my dismay, only a few of the chapter authors suggested future research. In a field as contested as citizenship education, I anticipated that the authors would provide advice for other scholars to help fill the wide gaps in the literature on educating democratic citizens.

Although the volume is not completely comprehensive, I still place this book in the “must read” category for those interested in promoting democratic civic engagement. One of the many strengths of this book is that it is helpful for multiple audiences. Teacher educators, for example, can select the first two chapters of the book, by Pace and Marri, respectively, for their pre-service social studies teachers to explore examples of teaching citizenship education. Education scholars interested in democratic citizenship will find this book helpful in its entirety as the volume is really a discussion of multiple aspects of civic education. My wife, a high school Civics and Economics teacher is very impressed with the content I share with her from the book, for her own classroom instruction and also because her school includes a service learning component as a graduate requirement. Along those same lines, administrators and superintendents who wish to promote civic engagement at the school level will find the Billig and Root chapter on service learning and the school governance chapter by Battistoni extremely helpful for implementing, evaluating, or altering their

school-wide programs. Even community organizers will find two of the chapters on community based youth organizations to be of great assistance. Social studies curriculum developers should pay close attention to the Hess, Stoddard, and Murto chapter on textbook treatment of 9/11. I also think high school student leaders would benefit from several of the chapters, which demonstrate the tremendous power that young people can harness by becoming civically engaged. While this volume is certainly not a guidebook for the aforementioned constituents, it does serve as a helpful resource for any person interested in educating democratic citizens.

*Educating Democratic Citizens in Troubled Times* has other strengths, such as its treatment of the disenfranchisement of marginalized groups. O'Donoghue and Kirshner focus exclusively on marginalized groups in their chapter on community based youth organizations. Middaugh and Kahne's chapter on civic engagement in context is a fascinating examination of how contextual differences such as racial and ethnic diversity, socioeconomic status, and population density influence youth civic development. They state:

Regardless of social context, students expressed appreciation for a democratic system of government and many of the associated ideals. At the same time, students differed by context in their belief that the current system of government approaches these ideals. (p. 170)

Additionally, I appreciated that the authors also address other contemporary civic issues. Multiple authors mention the importance of educating immigrants about democratic citizenship education, regardless of the immigrants' citizenship status. Furthermore, the authors address gay rights and the treatment of 9/11 and its aftermath in schools and the media. By including discourse on these controversial issues, the authors model the behavior they advocate for students of citizenship education.

There are certainly other strong points of this book, but I will end my praise by saying that the volume appropriately provides the reader with both reasons for concern and reasons for optimism. Just as Middaugh and Kahne found that students are not universally satisfied with the realities of the democratic system, but held faith in the ideal; I put down the book feeling

unsatisfied with the overall implementation of civic education in American classrooms, but very optimistic about the potential to educate and engage young democratic citizens. A student in one of the community organizations highlights my point when he stated:

The most important thing I learned is that you got to participate in the democratic process. Democracy works in two-folds, it's the federal government and the people we elect and their part, you know, the law makers and the law holders, but the part that's missing in America right now is the citizen part. Citizens are supposed to be actively involved in their democracy, you know. Lobbying and petitioning, and making their voice heard so that the people who make the law and people who uphold the laws listen. (p. 270)

In summary, *Educating Democratic Citizens in Troubled Times* is a welcome addition to the literature. I highly recommend this book to teachers, administrators, teacher educators, education scholars, community organizers, and student leaders. Although a few key “ingredients” were left out of the volume, the issues raised in the book are well worth the read. Bixby and Pace and the chapter authors have made a great contribution to the scholarly conversation of educating democratic citizens.

### **About the Reviewer**

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