

## Conclusions

Paul Hanna embodied a unique blend of scholar and promoter. His scholarship provided the basis for the formulation of curriculum designs, concepts, and materials to help children and youth better understand their social, political, and economic environments. He employed his promotional abilities to spread his ideas and products around the world and to cause his design for the elementary social studies curriculum to become predominant (LeRiche 1987, 139). Hanna's affinity for the life of the scholar began early in his parents' home. Surrounded by books and learned visitors, he grew to love learning and ideas (Hanna 1982a, 11). This affinity only deepened as he studied philosophy at Hamline University and education at Teachers College. The promotional side of his personality developed as he persuaded classmates to initiate a debate team and a school yearbook, as he sold books door-to-door, and as he traveled with President Kerfoot to recruit students and donors for Hamline University. Without either quality, scholarship or promotional ability, Hanna would not have achieved the prominence he did as an educational leader.

## HANNA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO EDUCATION

Hanna's greatest contributions to education were in the field of social education. A critical analysis of modern culture formed the basis for much of Hanna's work. This analysis grew out of the influences of his father's Social Gospel orientation, his studies at Hamline University, and the influence of his social reconstructionist colleagues at Teachers College. He understood that industrialization and urbanization had changed profoundly the ways in which people relate to each other socially, politically, and economically. He interpreted the mission of the schools as that of helping children understand the changes their world had undergone and equipping them to effect change through the democratic system that would benefit them as individuals and benefit society as a whole. Out of this conviction, he rejected child interest as the sole basis for curriculum making, although he fully embraced interest as a tool of motivation. Together with like-minded colleagues at Teachers College, Hanna formed organizations to investigate the schools' role in society and search for an adequate basis for the school curriculum.

Hanna developed the basis for a curriculum design that would help children understand the nature of their social, political, and economic environment through his work on the Virginia Curriculum Study in the 1930s, and he spent the remainder of his life promoting it. The design centered around his conception of the basic human activities performed in all societies in all places and times. These activities constituted a scope of content that Hanna believed could portray for children the development and operations of the social, economic, and political institutions in which they lived with sufficient objectivity to provide them with deep understandings. He advocated his design in numerous articles, and it found its way into many state and local school curricula and several generations of textbooks published by Scott, Foresman and Company.

Once wedded to his concentric circles of home life, family life, school, et cetera, as a sequence of presentation, the structure became his *expanding communities* curriculum design.

The expanding communities model has been widely criticized over the years. One critique holds that because children today are exposed to world events through the electronic media prior to their first day in school, Hanna's sequence of slow progress from local communities to the state, national, and international communities is artificial (Rooze and Foerster 1972). Although this criticism may be valid, it should be noted that the electronic media were present in children's lives even before the inception of Hanna's concentric circles design. Media influence has never obviated the need for an orderly, logical sequence in the presentation of content.

Some critics of Hanna's design level their complaints against all integrated approaches to social science instruction. They prefer a return to instruction in the separate disciplines. A recent issue of *History Matters!*, the newsletter of the National Council for History Education, complained that expanding communities approaches were "here-and-now oriented, and history was nowhere to be found until Grade Four, or perhaps even Grade Five. Students had no chance whatsoever to learn about the world's past until Grade Six or beyond" (December 1997, 5). The provenance of history in the elementary school curriculum is a topic of ongoing debate. Hanna sought to integrate history along with other social sciences in his curriculum design. In any event, curriculum designers have little control over how their products are actually used in classrooms (SPAN 1982, 84).

Another critique holds that Hanna's integrated approach is "alive and well and nobody's learning anything" (Douglass 1998b). Again, this deficiency may be an issue of teacher recruitment and preparation rather than curriculum design. John Goodlad wrote, "Teachers are oriented to teaching particular things—the particular things they were taught in school. Relating these particular

things to some larger purpose is not something they think about very much or have been prepared to do" (Goodlad 1984, 238). Hanna's approach attempted to integrate social science instruction within a larger framework, employing the expertise of social science scholars, for the purpose of equipping children and youth to participate as citizens in a democracy.

A critique of Hanna's design that he acknowledged as valid was that teachers were not equipped to use it as effectively as he had hoped. Hollis Caswell recognized a similar weakness with the Virginia curriculum revision from which Hanna's concept sprang. Recalling the demands of the core curriculum for Virginia, he claimed, "We couldn't find teachers who could do it" (Caswell 1978). Certainly, carrying out Hanna's vision ultimately required teachers who shared his deep understanding of the social milieu and his vision for the school's role in society. In order to share his vision, Hanna spent years directing seminars for teachers and textbook salesmen to explain his program (Gill 1974). He also included a tremendous amount of explanatory text for teachers in his Hanna Series books.

Despite the criticisms of the expanding communities curriculum design, it has predominated in elementary school social studies instruction, in part because no more compelling design has been suggested (SPAN 1982, 101). However, another factor in the spread of Hanna's design was his promotional activities for Scott, Foresman. He frequently led seminars for salesmen to help them understand the unique features of the social studies textbooks (Gill 1974). The salesmen would then promote Hanna's design to school districts across the nation. In addition, Hanna wrote about his design in scholarly journals and promoted it through his consulting work with school systems. He admitted that the distinction between promoter and scholar sometimes was narrow (Hanna 1974, 114).

Hanna knew that informing children about their social world was useful, but that simply informing them would not bring about change. Consequently, he devised ways in which children could

learn about the democratic process experientially. He advocated the community school as a way for children to learn about how people provide for their needs and wants. His particular concern was that children involve themselves in community projects to improve certain aspects of life. By doing so, they would learn the practical means of change and gain confidence in their abilities to manipulate those means to advantage. He promoted his concept of the community school through numerous publications, but his most effective promotion was through his work developing community schools in the Philippines. The Philippine community schools became models for others in Southeast Asia.

Arguments similar to those Hanna advanced are used today by promoters of service learning in the schools. Fundamental to their concerns are that children develop a sense of connection to their community. Christopher Lasch articulated this concern in a description of the dilemma of today's children: "The culture at their disposal provides so little help in ordering the world that experience comes to them in [the] form of direct stimulation or deprivation" (Lasch 1989). Hanna recognized the child's need to connect to something deeper and more meaningful than the pleasures and pains of his immediate surroundings. He hoped that working as a community to build a better future would provide this connection. Late in his career, he even proposed a centralized development laboratory to provide a common curriculum for the schools. He hoped that common understandings might help develop a sense of community.

Hanna also believed that social critique was a necessary precursor of change. He developed the *Building America* series to raise children's consciousness of needs beyond the local community. Thousands of classrooms used these magazines on a monthly basis to stimulate discussion of important social, political, and economic issues facing the United States.

Both the community school movement and *Building America* were negatively affected by the post-World War II backlash against

progressive education, so Hanna turned his attention to consulting work overseas. He helped develop community schools in the Philippines and elsewhere, and he continued to argue that schools should help children understand the changing social, political, and economic worlds in which they live so that they can mold those worlds to their own needs. Hanna became a prominent figure in international education circles, and he used his prominence to promote his ideas through educational consulting in many nations. He also founded the Stanford International Development Education Center to prepare others to do similar work.

Hanna's international work came under criticism by those who saw it as an instrument of Western cultural imperialism, and the criticism is valid to an extent. Hanna was an unabashed booster of Western models of democratic development. In the early phase of his international career he joined wholeheartedly in the cold war struggle against communism, at least rhetorically. Nevertheless, he was critical of the damage Western imperialism had done to educational, political, and economic systems abroad. His educational proposals for foreign countries were directed at empowering the common people in the same way as his efforts at home had. For Hanna, using the foreign schools as a tool of economic development was a logical extension of using domestic schools for the same purpose during the Depression. He legitimately may be accused of naiveté, but not of collusion with the worst aspects of imperialism.

Despite Hanna's many and varied contributions to education in America and abroad, he is largely ignored by educational historians. Several factors stand out as possible reasons for this neglect. First, Paul Hanna moved from Teachers College, Columbia University, to Stanford at a time when leadership in American education was centered in universities and major school systems on the east coast and in the midwest. For example, the John Dewey Society, organized in 1934 to investigate the crucial role of schools in society, included in its membership many of the leaders in curriculum study

at the time, but only eleven of the 67 founding members were from institutions in places other than the East Coast or the Midwest (Harap 1970). Patricia Graham described the leadership of the Progressive Education Association in its first four decades as coming primarily from the same two regions (Graham 1967). The West had yet to mature as a leading influence in American education, and when Hanna chose to remain there rather than return to Teachers College in 1937, some of his colleagues dismissed him.

Another possible cause for the neglect of Hanna is the diversity of his interests. Although many of his contemporaries remained rather narrowly focused, teaching in universities and writing mostly for scholarly publications, Hanna's career took distinctly different paths. His textbook writing demanded time and energy, and quite likely it distracted him from purely academic publishing. Furthermore, Hanna was an entrepreneur as well as an educator. Some historians of education attribute little importance to curriculum change that comes through schools' relationships with individuals and institutions who author instructional materials. Thus, a bias exists in favor of ideas generated by theorists in universities or government agencies, a bias that discriminates against and marginalizes individuals who contribute to and profit from their contributions to routine practice. Still, through his textbooks and related consulting work, Hanna directly influenced the curriculum and the role of the school in society on as grand a scale as any of his contemporaries, and—quite likely—with more practical value.

Hanna may be neglected, too, because he focused primarily on elementary education. Paul Hanna had to fight the bias among academics that young children were incapable of understanding key concepts from the social sciences (Hanna 1973a). Only recently have major figures in elementary education such as Alice Miel (Yeager 1995) and Maycie K. Southall (Brown 1981) been accorded the prominence they deserve.

Historians of progressive education in America have encoun-

tered difficulty reconciling Hanna's early career as a *social frontiersman* with his later efforts to duplicate American models of schooling overseas. Certainly, Hanna grew more conservative over time, but attempts to categorize him in traditional political terms fail. Education is an inherently political endeavor; what and how we teach children shapes their thought about political theory and all else. Hanna developed a uniquely pragmatic approach in order to survive in the potentially hazardous arena of curriculum making.

#### INTERPRETING HANNA'S POLITICAL VIEWS

The fact that Hanna was labeled as an imperialist by critics of his work in international development education and as a radical by the critics of *Building America* illustrates the difficulty of assigning any political label to him. Those who perceive Hanna to be a political and social conservative have good reason. A lifelong Republican, he supported Richard Nixon's candidacy for Governor of California in 1962 and for President of the United States in 1968. Much of his work overseas in the 1950s and 1960s was done in conjunction with the United States Government—and, by proxy, the United Nations—in support of American cold war foreign policy. He was also an active member of several old-line conservative men's clubs, such as San Francisco's Bohemian Club, and his final academic post was as a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, an organization with a distinctly conservative reputation (Lowen 1997, 207). Taken together, these factors are evidence of Hanna's political conservatism.

On the other hand, he had been part of the network of social reconstructionists addressing education issues in the 1930s, and had espoused collectivist views. Even late in life, Hanna made no attempt to dissociate himself from those beliefs. He aligned himself with his old colleagues and their work when he proudly included



himself as being instrumental in publications that voiced social reconstructionist views. Indeed, he served on the editorial board of *The Social Frontier*, a journal for the most progressive educational thinkers, in the mid-1930s.

Hanna included himself among the *social frontiersmen* because he did not consider them to be as far left as some today assume. Responding to the charge that George Counts was a radical, Hanna declared,

If you mean by radical getting to the root of the problem, he was. . . . But I wouldn't call that a radical in the way it is used today. He was really a conservator, a conservator of the basic principles of democracy. . . . It is truly radical if you know what radical means. But it was not radical in that he was a rabble-rouser, a revolutionary. He was nothing of the sort, truly. He was going back to the fundamental principles of democracy as laid out by the early French and British and the early Americans (Hanna 1973, 72–73).

In Hanna's own view, revolutionary methods of instigating change were necessary "only in the rarest and most extreme conditions. Typically, advances are made by the slower but much sounder evolutionary process. . . . The goals are to improve the democratic open pluralistic society, and to do it by constitutional or accepted methods" (Hanna 1974, 109–110).

Although his views on the social utility of the schools underwent change over time, his belief in the power of education to effect positive change in society did not. Hanna sought social improvement through many of his professional endeavors, but improvement within the parameters of democratic philosophy. Simplistic labels such as *radical* and *conservative* are too restrictive to describe adequately his educational philosophy or approach. If any label fit this student of John Dewey, it was *pragmatist*.

Hanna was pragmatic, too, in choosing when to refrain from defending his beliefs. For example, when the *Building America* se-

ries came under attack by right-wing forces, Hanna did not vigorously defend it, although the magazine was his brainchild and he had spent more than a decade on its editorial board. In a telling exchange, Hanna related to an interviewer that Stanford President Ray Lyman Wilbur once told him, “I have been able to achieve the things I have [because I have] . . . let the image develop and fed it that I was a conservative man” (ibid., 109). In Hanna’s mind, that echoed earlier advice from Jesse Newlon to “Never behave in such a way that you have the platform from which you speak jerked out from under you. If you speak in such a way that you are no longer given the platform, you are dead” (ibid., 108). Hanna took this advice to heart, and it allowed him to advocate dramatic changes in the social education of children at home and abroad without suffering undue personal criticism.

#### CONCLUSION

Ultimately, none of the problems Hanna identified and on which he labored has been solved. Children and youth at home and abroad still need to understand their social, political, and economic milieus and learn to effect change through democratic means. For instance, recent studies indicated that high school students from widely diverse backgrounds share common misunderstandings about the economic systems in which they live (Stallones, McCants, and Watkins 1997; Sweeney, Foster, and Stallones 1996). However, scholastic knowledge alone—no matter how deep—may not be adequate to bring about the sense of community and the dedication to its improvement that Hanna sought to develop in children. Fundamental to the type of community that Hanna envisioned is a universal mutual respect based on the worth of each individual. Unfortunately, the mechanistic theory of social evolution upon which all his work was based provided no adequate basis for appreciating individual worth. In fact, the same theory of social evolution has

led to individual worth being tied to ethnicity in fascist states, to usefulness to the state apparatus in Marxist states, and to economic productivity in market economies.

Historically, American society avoided these instrumental views of human beings by appealing to higher law. The Declaration of Independence attributes to all men an inherent equality and “unalienable rights” endowed by a creator. The Constitution is more subtle than the Declaration, but it relies throughout on the legal principle of constitutionalism, which assumes immutable, universal principles underlying positive law. By contrast, Hanna viewed values such as the worth of the individual as changeable social constructs. He wrote that a task of education is to take part in “designing social arrangements and value systems which will facilitate the basic human satisfactions” (Hanna 1939a, 14). In other words, social structures, values, and all else were subject to the whims of “basic human satisfactions.” In the end, the philosophical foundation of Hanna’s work was at odds with some of his practical goals, although he never dealt with that inconsistency.

Perhaps due in part to that inconsistency, Paul Hanna’s success in redesigning social science instruction failed to enact his vision for American society. Americans are less community-oriented today than in the past. In fact, many look to decades past as a golden age of community life. Architects and homebuilders are experimenting with new forms of housing development that place homes closer together and focus on common areas, all within walking distance of stores and shops, to rekindle the spirit of community from the imagined past. Americans today are not any more politically active in efforts to build a better life than they were in Hanna’s day. In fact, in the face of political scandals, lackluster candidates, and increasingly complex policy issues, voters express their apathy through declining levels of voting and other forms of political participation. Students in today’s schools are not any better adjusted to their social milieu than in Hanna’s time. In fact, the increasing

alienation and isolation of children has been expressed in incidents of school violence that Hanna could not have imagined. However, these mounting social problems are not so much a repudiation of Hanna's work as an invitation to revisit it more thoughtfully.

Hanna's diagnoses of the problems in American culture are still valid. The rapid pace of change in the modern world breeds individual and social alienation, fragmentation, and isolation. These forces conflict with human longings for integration and community. Nor is postmodernism a solution. That mindset simply surrenders to the "fragmentary and chaotic currents of change as if that is all there is" (Harvey 1989, 44). Some of the solutions still lie where Paul Hanna saw them—in a sound curriculum designed to help children understand the political, social, and economic forces swirling about them, coupled with experiences in democratic problem solving to build a sense of empowerment and community in each child. A new look at the work of Paul Hanna, enhanced by careful reconsideration of the sources of universal mutual respect, will help develop new insights for social education as the schools and society move together into the twenty-first century.