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CHAPTER 1

The Nature Of The Social Studies

Introduction

Laurie is disturbed, as well might she be. No one would blame her for being resentful, even for calling damnation down upon her entire undergraduate preparation. For in the space of a very few days, Laurie has discovered that (1) her methods instructor's description of social studies has little connection with the realities of classroom teaching, (2) the social studies teachers at Millard Fillmore Junior-Senior High School reflect an almost total inability to communicate with students, and, (3) despite the earnest intentions of the school's administrators, in the final analysis, they have not the slightest idea what direction the department should follow.

Readers should not conclude that in some obscure way social studies teachers are dull, unimaginative, or resistant to change. Nor should it be thought that everyone connected with the enterprise of preparing teachers and teaching students is similarly unable to communicate. The authors would like to propose another explanation.

It appears to us that the central problem lies in the inability of all concerned to see beyond their words. Think for a moment: all of the teachers, administrators, and professors described in the introduction make use of the "same" words. All talk about "social studies," "citizenship," "democracy" and a host of other terms. But it seems obvious that these words do not convey the same meaning to all. The "citizenship" of Mr. Kravitz and Mr. Szymanowski is simply not the same "citizenship" as that of Mrs. Goodrich, Art Leonard, or Dr. Myers.

When the three authors -- all of whom have taught social studies and have been engaged in the preparation of social studies teachers since the mid-1950's -- became aware of this disturbing reality, they began to speculate on the underlying issues. Slowly it dawned on us that there is and has been no single entity called the "social studies," for we could identify three distinct and separate traditions, all of which are called

“social studies.” It then became clear that not only was there no agreement as to the essential nature and purpose of the social studies, there was also little consensus as to desirable content and proper methodology.

As we reflected on this in an article which formed the foundations of this work,¹ it became increasingly apparent that the social studies field lacks a consistent purpose and set of goals. And lacking such clarity, teachers have been unable to decide either upon the best content or most appropriate methods. To be sure, there have been attempts at defining the nature of the social studies and some have been widely quoted.² But no one definition was either accepted or used by the practitioners who were teaching social studies to the nation’s young people or by the university professors who prepare those same teachers. In order to bring to the field some semblance of identity, we should like to propose a definition.

Social studies is an integration of social sciences and humanities for the purpose of instruction in citizenship education. We emphasize “integration,” for social studies is the only field which deliberately attempts to draw upon, in an integrated fashion, the data of the social sciences and the insights of the humanities. We emphasize “citizenship,” for social studies, despite the difference in orientation, outlook, purpose, and method of teachers, is almost universally perceived as preparation for citizenship in a democracy.

Although most social studies teachers would probably accept this definition, we suggest that teachers have tended to interpret “integration” in different ways. We suggest that there are patterns by which teachers integrate ideas, information, values, skills, and beliefs. And, upon analysis, we suggest that there are three dominant modes of integration.

In addition to this definition, we now wish to provide you with the core, the thesis of this work. The authors have identified at least three separate and distinct social studies traditions and have argued that teachers *tend* to teach in predictable ways; that these predictable ways form patterns, and that these patterns can be understood and interpreted. The first tradition we call “Citizenship Transmission.” This is the oldest tradition in the field, the one which the populace as a whole seems to favor. The

essence of this tradition is the deliberate inculcation of what is considered the most desirable knowledge, values, and skills assumed necessary for survival of the culture. The second tradition we call “Social Studies Taught as Social Science” and we assert that this tradition -- at least in its most recent form -- stems from a variety of events which took place in the 1960’s. “Social Studies Taught as Social Science” means that teachers wish to acquaint students with the methods of research, the modes of inquiry, and the ways of looking at the world adopted by social scientists. The third tradition we call “Reflective Inquiry.” This tradition comes from the philosophy of John Dewey and his followers since the beginning of the 20th Century.

The emphasis in this chapter is on the necessity of preparing students for citizenship. The most important component of citizenship is choice: students will need to identify problems and issues and to make decisions about matters of policy and belief.

At this point, a thoughtful reader might ask, Why do we need a definition of social studies? Of what value is it to think about integrating social studies in terms of the three traditions? Both questions are fair and entirely relevant. The answer is that it is long past time for social studies teachers to think seriously about the important concepts and generalizations in the field. It is necessary for all of the Connie Goodriches, Art Leonards, and Mr. Kravitzes of the teaching profession to cease employing terminology as political slogans and begin thinking beyond the words toward the underlying assumptions. It is, in short, time for serious conceptual clarification, for teachers in the social studies have simply not reached the goals which they have consistently offered to the American people.

There is ample evidence to support the assertion that social studies teachers have not reached goals which they have been projecting for more than seventy years. In 1941, the publication date of the first Purdue Opinion Poll, it was learned -- to continuing surprise and sorrow -- that students who had taken civics and American history courses held beliefs diametrically opposed to the Constitution. Other research has shown that high school graduates are not especially well informed about current events. There is even evidence to demonstrate that,

despite the continual exposure to roughly the same material in civics and American history, students are often ignorant of important historical events and of the structure and function of government. The net result, as the American educational philosopher John Dewey noted a half century ago, is to leave citizens to the mercy of all sorts of manipulators and shapers of "public opinion." Indeed, the evidence suggests that Americans tend to think about social issues and political figures in ways which have nothing to do with the model of the rational, deliberate decision-maker so beloved of civics teachers.

In short, the evidence concerning social studies goals is unambiguously consistent: the "products" of 12 years of social studies are too often ignorant when they should be informed, irrational when they should be logical, and illiberal when they should have been guided by the philosophy of our Constitution and Bill of Rights. And at the root of the matter seems to be the persisting difficulty of teachers to think seriously and plan properly in order to reach their cherished goals -- the training of future "citizens" in "problem-solving" and "decision-making" to the end that they can intelligently rule themselves in a political "democracy."

It is for the purpose of thinking in a serious and sustained fashion about the meaning of educational purposes that we now ask you to examine three different ways of conceiving of purposes. We invite you to examine three traditions in the social studies.

Purpose as Conceived by Citizenship Transmitters

Do you remember the introduction in which Laurie recalls her initial interview with the principal? He stresses that "her job is to teach these kids to respect their country and to grow up to be good citizens." The community, he tells her, "expect us to mold these kids, to teach them proper behavior and respect for authority . . ." He concludes by reminding her that she has "the chance to teach them about our forefathers, and the Constitution, and about the wars we have won . . ." Let us examine the principal's assumptions, for taken as a whole, they are completely consistent and make perfect sense. Let us look at the key term, "citizenship."

In this dialogue, the principal reflects what we have designed as "Citizenship Transmission." The essential term is "citizenship." The social studies teacher's job, the principal insists, is to create "good citizens." But please note, "good citizenship" is defined by right knowledge, "proper behavior," and "respect for authority." Now, note, also, that Laurie is encouraged to generate loyalties, values, and attitudes by studying about "our forefathers, and the Constitution, and about the wars we have won . . ."

The term "Citizenship Transmission" refers to a mode of teaching in which the teachers intend that certain behaviors, knowledge, outlooks, and values will be learned by their students. These behaviors, knowledge, etc., are traditional in the culture in which both teacher and student participate. The teacher is literally *transmitting* those extremely important cultural patterns which he believes society wishes him to transmit.

The end or purpose of this tradition, as the name suggests, is citizenship. However, the term "citizenship" must be defined precisely as it is meant by Citizenship Transmitters. A citizen is one who conforms to certain accepted practices, holds particular beliefs, is loyal to certain values, participates in certain activities, and conforms to norms which are often local in character. Two authors⁸ succinctly and accurately summarize the purpose of citizenship transmission in their explanation to students of the meaning of "good citizenship."

A good citizen is the citizen who carries out all of the duties and responsibilities of American citizenship. Good citizenship means that the citizen is a good member of the American nation. Good citizenship means that the citizen obeys the laws, pays his taxes, and attends school . . . Good citizenship means that he is willing to help defend his country.

The emphasis in this definition is on *participation*. Knowing what is expected of him, the good citizen fulfills those expectations. This definition also emphasizes *acceptance*. This means simply that one has internalized certain norms. Without being especially conscious of doing so, the person -- the im-

mature person, the child -- quietly and slowly has incorporated a set of attitudes, values, and convictions. Some of these outlooks are derived from the entire society; that is, they are national in scope. These include paying taxes, attending schools, and defending one's country. Some of the norms and beliefs -- in fact, we believe, most of them -- reflect local norms. That is, they are beliefs about what is considered desirable moral behavior held by inhabitants of a particular region.

For instance, teachers commonly believe that they must, that they have absolutely no choice except to teach what the community expects them to teach. Despite the unconstitutionality and illegality of teacher's leading students in prayer in the public schools, many teachers assert that they would obey the community if it insisted that they lead prayers. By the same token, if citizens in the community hold that labor unions are noble and humane institutions which must be protected and preserved, teachers would be most willing to teach this belief. If the prevailing regional conviction is that Blacks are inferior, teachers would transmit this conviction. If, on the other hand, the dominant local belief is that Blacks have a place in the sun and that integration is desirable, then teachers would be perfectly willing to convey this view.

The social studies teacher as transmitter, according to our definition of purpose, is one who has accepted a particular belief, whatever it may be. He believes and his behavior reflects his belief. He would wish that his students behave and feel similarly. In short, the teacher defines a good citizen as one who holds certain values and attitudes, conforms to accepted practices, and participates in the accepted civic procedures. One point must be emphasized. Transmission does not refer only to transmission of mainline, traditional values. Transmitters are by no means necessarily conservative. Whether it is teachers at Freedom Schools, radicals at some alternative schools, members of the John Birch Society or adherents of any other philosophical position, a teacher can be labeled "transmitter" if he teaches in such a way that he intends for students to emerge holding certain beliefs, values, and convictions. Transmission, then, does not refer to a particular *value* that is transmitted but rather to a particular *intention*.

If the intention of the Citizenship Transmitter is to bring about belief in and allegiance to a set of values which he believes are essential to the preservation of society, what is the purpose of those whom we designate as advocates of Social Studies taught as the Social Sciences?

Purpose as Conceived by the Social Science Position

Once again, we ask you to recall some dialogue from our introduction. Do you remember the impassioned speech of Arthur Leonard, the bright young anthropologist who wishes to convert Laurie? He tells her that his course is "based on the assumption that students can learn to think critically by observing the inquiry process of social scientists." The Arapesh, he advocates, are to be studied so that students can learn firsthand "how primitive society works; how people live, how they raise children." The young are to learn anthropology "by doing many of the same things real anthropologists do." He concludes by insisting that "the best way to train youth effectively is to teach them to think scientifically."

Although there are many variations on the Social Science position, we can say that the purpose is to create *future citizens* who have thoroughly learned the way of thinking of social scientists.⁴ This way of thinking, it is held, has been fruitful in yielding perceptive, discriminating researchers who know how to interpret and use social knowledge. To the extent that young people learn this way of thinking, they, too can be equally perceptive and discriminating.

The interpretation of the term "citizenship" by advocates of the Social Science position is far more complex than the other two traditions. As we have seen, the transmitter equates citizenship with the internalization of certain beliefs and loyalties, with proper participation, and with correct attitudes. The Social Scientist would consider such a position to be parochial and indoctrinative. In all likelihood, the Social Scientist would draw from the lengthy history of the liberal arts for his definition of citizenship. When a Social Scientist says that his teaching method will yield good citizens, what he means is that the student should have learned a mode of thinking from social science disciplines; that this mode of thinking is generalizable;

and that having learned it, he will understand properly, appreciate deeply, infer carefully, and conclude logically. In effect, the Social Scientist means pretty much what his liberal arts colleagues in the past have always meant by the phrase "liberating the mind."

This mode of thinking, as we have seen, centers around the structure of the discipline which is also defined as a process, that is, a process by which scholars come to know. One component of this process consists of the large, overarching generalizations found within each discipline. For instance, the discipline of economics includes one familiar generalization with which you are acquainted: it is that man has unlimited wants but nature provides only limited resources. The discipline known as anthropology contains its important generalizations, which, taken collectively, form an intellectual structure. One such generalization is that there are certain universal ways of behaving, called cultural universals, which are to be found, with infinite variations, in all societies. All disciplines include generalizations which are extremely important. Whether called principles, axioms or assumptions, these major generalizations define the concerns and interests of each discipline.

In addition to important generalizations, the term structure also refers to the process by which scholars within a particular discipline gain new knowledge. Each discipline includes certain knowledge-gaining techniques which enable researchers to acquire and to verify their hypotheses. The archaeologist digs in the ground or under the ocean to unearth artifacts; he subjects them to a variety of testing and analytical procedures; and he attempts to make inferences about the culture from which the artifacts were derived. The sociologist interviews individuals, sends out questionnaires, and attempts to see how well his data fit his original hypothesis. The historian delves into archives, collects and often translates documents, and attempts to weave a pattern of events by which he can reconstruct the past. Each of these examples illustrates the meaning of the term "the process by which new knowledge is gained."

As they slowly gain insight and use the structure of the discipline, students are encouraged to acquire the thinking patterns of social science disciplines. Students are then in a

position to use these same thinking patterns later in their own lives as they come to grapple with the problems that inevitably arise in a political democracy.

In brief, proponents of the social science position hold that the purpose is to produce citizens who have learned the thinking patterns of social scientists. That is, they perceive the world as social scientists perceive it and they use the social scientist's conceptual framework in making decisions. It has followed that the social scientists' task is defined as teaching a new generation of social studies teachers the intricate and subtle modes of hypothesizing, gathering data, making references, and reaching conclusions employed by the various social science disciplines.

In sum, those who advocate the teaching of the social studies as social science believe that the best preparation for citizenship in a democracy is training in the modes of thinking employed by social scientists. Students who learn to think about complex issues with the skill and precision of social scientists are best able to analyze the workings, structure, and problems of the society which they will soon inherit.

Now, what of the approach of those whom we designate Reflective Inquirers?

Purpose as Conceived by Reflective Inquirers

The authors have made Kathy Wilhelm, Connie Goodrich, and Dr. Myers spokesmen for the position we call "Social Studies Taught as Reflective Inquiry." Recall, for a moment, Mrs. Wilhelm's argument with another teacher. She admits that DeeDee is a very attractive girl, "but it is possible to reach her, once you get her interested in something . . ." Connie Goodrich takes a similar position. She defends her teaching by saying, "What could possibly be more worthwhile than to help the kids gain an understanding of their own values?" And later, "I really try to get my students involved in the controversies that surround us. I want them to think for themselves." And the path to this goal is to "help the kids think critically about the issues of the day."

The key words here are "interests," "values," "critical

thinking" and "becoming involved in controversies that surround us." The Reflective Inquiry position is built upon a very few assumptions -- assumptions which run contrary to almost everything believed by Citizenship Transmitters. And, even though our Reflective Inquiry advocates use some of the same words as Social Scientists, they really are not tuned in to the same frequency.

The ultimate aim of advocates of this position is citizenship. But citizenship to Reflective Inquirers means something quite different than citizenship as defined by those whom we have described as Citizenship Transmitters and Social Science advocates. As defined by Reflective Inquirers, citizenship refers to the process of making rational, considered, well thought-out decisions.

The rationale for this definition -- which we will expand on in Chapter IV -- is that those who live in this society are continually caught in complex situations which require them to make decisions in morally ambiguous circumstances.

This definition of "citizenship" is inextricably related to the characteristics of this society and we ought now therefore say a few words about our society. Its most prominent characteristic is that it is a political democracy. "Democracy" is a complex term not capable of a short definition, but all agree that what makes a democracy distinctive is that those who are governed must govern themselves. That is, in some fashion the people make the basic regulations, the ground plans, by which they agree to be ruled. Second, because of the extremely rapid advance of technology, the spread of communication and the ease of transportation, very rapid social change -- in our democracy at any rate -- is the norm. The swiftness of social change has meant that attitudes, beliefs, and values are constantly in the process of being altered, shifted, and modified. Third, we are a diverse, pluralistic society. This means simply that our society consists of a variety of races, religious, regional outlooks, economic theories, philosophies, and social beliefs.

The social reality, then, is that individuals at any age are called upon to make decisions in a complex, rapidly changing social order in which value conflict is the rule rather than the exception. Inquiry teachers believe that decisions are not post-

poned until "later" but begin when one is confronted by choice. It follows that the process of inquiry should be taught when one enters kindergarten and continues through the rest of one's life.

Reflective Inquirers formulated their position in large part as a reaction to the Transmission tradition. As you will recall, the Citizenship Transmitter believes that there are certain values and items of knowledge which it is his duty to transmit to the young. To the extent that the young acquire the "correct" knowledge and values, they will become good citizens. Reflective Inquirers define this as an attempt to inculcate children to preconceived cultural norms of what is good and true. Given the extraordinary variations with regard to notions of goodness and truth, those who think that they are only translating what the "community" or "society" wants them to teach are -- in the eyes of the Reflective Inquirers -- simply kidding themselves. In reality, they are transmitting a selected, particularistic outlook.

What then do Reflective Inquirers think about values and how do they handle the question of what knowledge to teach? Rather than indoctrinating a particular set of social values, Reflective Inquiry advocates believe that it is essential for students to engage in a continual process of clarifying their own value structure. Inquirers believe that it is not given in advance that a particular value, belief, social position, or philosophy is better than another. Nor does it follow in fact or logic that a particular economic theory must be accorded loyalty. Nor is a particular conception of racial relations known to be good in advance, awaiting only transmission to students. This position, based upon diversity and cultural pluralism, is that each individual's distinctive task is to make a rational selection among all competing positions.

With regard to knowledge, two concepts seem to be essential to this tradition. First, Reflective Inquirers do not separate the *knowing* from the *valuing* process. Facts are not split off in a realm distinct and separate from values. The Reflective Inquiry advocate believes that the process of clarifying values involves knowledge. As an individual attempts to decide for himself what is desirable, he must obtain knowledge, information, data, and facts. One does not make decisions nor does one come to value without needing and using facts. Second, to the question,

What Knowledge ought people have? the Reflective Inquirer answer, That knowledge which people use.

The hooker in this sentence is, of course, "use." What is meant by "use?" The Reflective Inquirer believes that knowledge is used when individuals attempt to deal with some interest, concern, problem or need. As individuals faced with ambiguous circumstances try to figure out what they ought to feel, believe, or do, they *use* knowledge. That is, they employ knowledge as *data*. That knowledge necessary to have, then, is what the individual must acquire in order to act in his own best self-interest. Or, to put it another way, valid knowledge is what an individual needs in order to become an autonomous decision-maker.

The assumption is that the process of value clarification and knowledge acquisition -- and, to repeat, the two processes are not separable -- is the skill Reflective Inquirers wish to teach in order to create autonomous decision-makers who can function in a political democracy.

Conclusion

If the reader is -- quite understandably -- thinking, "That's nice. So there are three traditions within the social studies. What does this mean to me? How is it supposed to help me become an effective social studies teacher?" We should like to conclude with a restatement of our original introduction.

Assume for the moment that one's theoretical understanding of the social studies functions like a map.⁵ Now, also assume that just as a map tells one what a particular terrain is like and how one might negotiate that terrain, the way one thinks about the social studies, similarly, provides direction. How one thinks about the social studies tells one what content to select, how to treat it, how to evaluate learning, what values are important and how "success" in teaching is to be defined.

The problem is that social studies teachers throughout this century have been operating with a faulty map -- or perhaps more accurately, with different maps --- which, in effect, has told drivers to head in several directions at once. Year after year, teachers have been told that they:

must make children into loyal citizens
must teach patriotism, respect for the law, and obedience to authorities
should draw their curriculum content from the social sciences
should respect their students' views, whatever they may be
are responsible for socializing the young to the end that they get along well with everyone
must lead children into a modern society, and that this process requires learning a more appropriate set of values and beliefs

One can take two views of this list. One can believe, "Yes, that's right, we ought to do all of these things." Or one can conclude that these objectives are so inherently inconsistent that there is no possibility that a teacher can realize all of them.

The authors take the second point of view. To try to teach young people that they ought to hold all of the "right" beliefs and that they should learn to critically examine all points of view is to ask for the impossible. To respect students' views is one thing; to replace them with another "more appropriate" set is something else. To attempt to do both is to condemn the teacher to a life of frustration, indecisiveness, inconsistency, and ineffectiveness. To those who would operate with a clear map we suggest, "Learn to identify and to evaluate the different positions that are held by social studies teachers."

We conclude, finally, by one last return to our inquiry social studies teacher, Laurie Townsley, who, as you may recall, does not know what to say when a couple of brash high school kids ask her, "What *kind* of social studies do you teach?" Laurie feels called upon to make a decision, to commit herself to a way of looking at the social studies. Unfortunately for Laurie -- and everyone else -- *how* she is to decide is disturbingly elusive. Laurie, can, of course, simply go with the most attractive person in the teacher's lounge. She can for instance become like Art Leonard because he is smart, well trained, and nice -- not to mention good-looking. However, this is basically an irrational way of choosing.

What Laurie ought to do is to learn how to listen to those teachers. First, she ought to assume that what any teacher says

should be understood within a context, within a frame of reference. Second, she might -- from our standpoint -- assume that the way to understand the principal's desire for good behavior or a teacher's concern for interests is to interpret such behavior within a larger set of meanings. This is how our entire Three Traditions hypothesis functions: as a way of looking at teaching such that you see not only what teachers say but what they indeed mean to convey and what consequences flow from their beliefs.

One last word to students -- in particular, to some imagined detractors who mutter, "I just don't want to be labeled. Don't pin a label on me." Granted, your desire for uniqueness, for individuality. Granted, too, that labels are not always and forever accurate. However, we argue that teachers do tend to behave in predictable and repeated patterns. What we have done is to name some of these predictable and repeated patterns. We therefore entreat you not to protest against the terms, but to ask whether the terms do indeed describe real teaching behavior. And then we request that you ask yourself what kind of behavior you feel you can live with.

A Word About the Organization

The purpose of the introduction, essentially a case study, is to acquaint readers with problems of the social studies as they occur in an everyday setting. The purpose of Chapter I, which you have just finished reading, is to lay out the themes of this book. We wish to suggest that Laurie, you, and all other social studies teachers, should begin to think about the social studies in a certain way, using certain conceptual categories.

In Chapters II, III and IV, we are going to develop these categories by spelling out the meaning, origins, significance, and consequences of what we see as three historical traditions within the social studies. In no sense are these new traditions. They can be seen from the beginning of recorded history, from the time Plato described Socrates' questioning style, and from the period in which the ancient rabbis trained their students in the Sacred Scripture. We call these three traditions "Social Studies Taught as Citizenship Transmission," "Social Studies Taught as the Social Sciences" and "Social Studies Taught as Reflective

Inquiry." To abbreviate these admittedly clumsy terms, we call them Transmission, Social Science, and Reflective Inquiry.

Chapters II, III and IV are organized around three questions or categories. We selected this form of organization because it reflects the actual questions that each teacher asks and answers.

These questions are, first, What is the purpose of social studies?, second, What is the method of social studies? and third, How does one select content? The first question can be reduced to one idea. For what reasons is social studies taught? or, phrased differently, What is the most important outcome that I want as a result of students having taken my course? The second question means roughly, How would I, as a teacher, go about organizing ideas and teaching them to students? That is, What principles or generalizations guide me as I decide how to teach? Finally, the third question, How does one select content? can be translated to mean, Now that I know *why* I am teaching and *how* it is to be done, with what content am I going to do it?

There is a final section, Chapter V, which is both a wrap-up and way of checking yourself out. This chapter contains a self-check test which you might wish to take and which is designed to tell you where you probably fit in terms of these three traditions.⁶ Following the self-check test is an analysis of the three different patterns of answers and what they signify in terms of the three traditions thesis.

The intended audience for this work is primarily, but not exclusively, those who are either preparing for a career in social studies or for those who already teach in the field. We feel, however, that professors of social studies, educational foundations and curriculum, might also benefit from a reading of this book. Our purpose in writing this work is not persuasion but rather the desire to enable teachers of the social studies to become more discriminating and more intelligent in their approach. And, we believe, in becoming more reflective, teachers will become more competent.