

Social Studies and the Birth of NCSS

The year 1783 marked the end of the American Revolution and set this country on a path as the "United" States of America. The majority of Americans at this time were uneducated. The home, job, and church all played a greater role in education than did the schools (Barr, Barth, and Shermis 1977). The citizens of the United States would need, however, to be educated in the values and responsibilities necessary for national cohesion and survival. According to Cremin (1980),

The goal was nothing less than a new republican individual, of virtuous character, abiding patriotism, and prudent wisdom, fashioned by education into an independent yet loyal citizen. ... Only as Americans could awaken and nurture a corresponding independence of manners and opinion would the Revolution be completed and a proper foundation for the Republic established. The task of erecting and maintaining that foundation became the task of American education. (5)

As this country began its experiment with self-government, the seeds for what we call "social studies" were planted to ensure the survival of the nation. Benjamin Franklin and other influential citizens saw the need for an educational system that would develop in students a sense of patriotism and nationalistic values. They encouraged instruction that would promote "moral training, training for citizenship, the judgement, and the imagination" (Hooper and Smith 1993, 14).

Some of the great minds of the early nineteenth century viewed the subjects that would become part of the "social studies" as a critical part of education. Thomas Jefferson's thinking influenced educational thought for years. As Chairman of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia, Jefferson reported in 1818 that history and geography were important subjects for a primary education (Cremin 1980, 110). He also believed that these subjects, with political economy and the law of nature and nations, were essential to achieve the goal of a higher education. Benjamin Rush, another signatory of the Declaration of Independence, saw the need for education to develop good citizens. He thought young men and women should study history, geography, and political economy. And John Adams, when asked by Jefferson about subjects of practical value, included geography, history, and chronology as courses of "real value in human affairs" (Cremin 1980, 249).

The Emergence of Social Education

Saxe (1991) contends that the social studies "had its own set of unique beginnings" and did not originate, as many writers argue, "with the examination of the development of history as a field of study in the nineteenth century and its extension into the twentieth century" (1). He asserts that the "foundations" of social studies originated in Great Britain during the 1820s and quickly moved to the United States (3). Social studies emerged as an attempt to use education as a vehicle to promote social welfare, and its subsequent development was influenced both by Americans and others.

When examining the inception of social education in this country, the textbooks of the time are one of the best resources (Hooper and Smith 1993; Smith and Vining 1990). According to Jarolimek (1981), history, geography, and civics were the dominant social science courses found in the early American elementary and secondary curricula. It seems appropriate to examine these types of texts for clues about the content of the early social sciences, the precursor of social studies.

Textbook Influence on Social Education

According to Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977), textbooks before 1880 emphasized "moral and patriotic values through historical myths, moral parables, and even religious stories" (18).

Geography textbooks were some of the earliest to appear in classrooms. Brown (1941) identified Jedidiah Morse as the "father of American geography" and the first American geographer to write for an American audience. Morse's *Elements of Geography* (1784) presented the geography of the United States in some detail. Published in the north, this geography was considered by southerners, according to Davis (1981), "to denigrate Southern places, people, and customs" (22). Used primarily for elementary type schools, the textbook included a history of countries and states while a 1788 edition added a history of the United States after the Revolution. Most geography taught in elementary schools between 1784 and 1830 also included a study of history. In addition to Morse's text, for example, J. A. Cummings's *An Introduction to Ancient and Modern Geography* (1813) integrated history and geography (Tryon 1935).

During the earliest period of U.S. nationhood, the subject of history did not exist as a separate course in the secondary or elementary grades and was generally taught as part of reading, geography, or the classics. Noah Webster was the first writer to include history as part of a reader. In 1785, the third part of Webster's *A Grammatical Institute of English Language* was published. Its title was "An American Selection of Lessons in Reading and Speaking, Calculated to Improve the Mind and Refine the Taste of Youth, and Also to Interest Them in Geography, History, and Politics of the United States." Later editions of his works included a history of the settlement of the United States and more geography. Other writers followed Webster's example, and historical material began to appear in more and more readers (Tryon 1935).

Webster's readers were also influential in exposing students to history in the elementary grades. One example was Webster's *The Little Reader's Assistant*. This beginner's reader was designed to stimulate children's curiosity in the history of the country (Tryon 1935).

History was not widely granted an autonomous place in the schools until after the 1830s. Before that time, however, it was found in some of the private schools and academies. John McCulloch, a Philadelphia printer, compiled a U.S. history book for lower grades in 1787. This was the first textbook in American history. By 1801, six history textbooks had been published in the United States (Tryon 1935; Wesley 1937; Cremin 1980; Hooper and Smith 1993). In 1827, Massachusetts required the study of U.S. history in secondary

schools located in towns of five hundred families or more, and general history was required in schools where the town's population exceeded four thousand inhabitants (Cremin 1980). Actions like these spurred the production of history textbooks.

Between 1801 and 1860, there were 351 textbooks in history published or used in the United States. Most of these were general histories (109), followed by U.S. histories (105), ancient histories (77), English histories (28), and others (32). Prominent authors included Salma Hale, Jesse Olney, Emma Willard, C. A. Goodrich, A. F. Tytler, Samuel Whelpley, Samuel Griswold Goodrich (Peter Parley), Royal Robbins, Marcius Willson, J. E. Worcester, William Sullivan, and others. Most of the content of these texts was military, political, or social and economic, in that order (Tryon 1935). *The Tales of Peter Parley about America* (Goodrich 1827) were one example of an American history written for young children.

In the thirty years prior to the Civil War, history became an independent subject offered in most schools in the upper grades; it still did not hold the rank of subjects like arithmetic and geography. Five states (Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Virginia) passed legislation requiring the teaching of history in the schools before 1860 (Tryon 1935).

One prolific writer of early textbooks was Samuel Goodrich (Peter Parley), whose history and geography textbooks captured a large portion of the market during the 1830s. Goodrich published more than 160 books, many of which pertained to history and the social sciences (Palmer, Davis, and Smith 1991; Smith and Vining 1991). These early history and geography textbooks, all published in the north, promoted white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant values. Slavery was criticized, but blacks were characterized as inferior to whites (Cremin 1980).

Between 1821 and 1851, the geography textbooks of William Channing Woodbridge were also popular in the United States. In New York state alone in 1831, Woodbridge's geographies were being used in 412 towns. He is known to have collaborated with Emma Willard, one of the first American females to publish a geography text, *Ancient Geography, as Connected with Chronology, and Preparatory to the Study of Ancient History* (1822; Walters 1993; Nelson 1987). Another prominent female author, characterized by Vining and Smith (1994) as being among the "first generation of American geographers," was Susanna Rowson. She published her first geography book, *An Abridgement of Universal Geography*, in 1805. The book used information published in the works of Morse and various English writers, but she modified it, making it more usable with young students. Later, S. S. Cornell (1854) was another prominent author of geography books, perhaps using her initials rather than her given name to conceal her gender.

Saxe (1991) argues that the work of many of the above-mentioned writers did not have a major influence on the origins of social studies as we understand it.

Finally, the third branch, as exemplified by individuals like Noah Webster, Emma Willard, and Peter Parley (Samuel G. Goodrich), . . . although related to both traditional history and social studies curricula in spirit and intent, can claim no direct lineage to the genesis or development of the 1913-1916 Social Studies. (2)

The present authors contend, however, that textbooks and those who author them have almost always been major factors in the social studies and account for the largest amount of instructional materials used by teachers. Therefore, the most prolific authors of earlier historic periods certainly had an impact on shaping what was to become the social studies.

History and the Social Sciences

Social education at the turn of the century was dominated by historians. The then emerging social sciences of sociology, political science, and economics were still establishing themselves in colleges and universities, and were not able to obtain a secure place in high school classrooms. The founding of the American Historical Association (AHA) in 1884 by university-trained historians marked the establishment of a professional organization that would allow historians to exert influence over the school curriculum (Hertzberg 1989; Barr, Barth, and Shermis 1977). As noted by Keels (1980), "In the years between 1890 and 1911, it was a given that the historians [through the American Historical Association] were the appropriate authority for making recommendations concerning the social studies..." (106).

Historians encouraged the initial social studies curriculum reform effort in 1892 at the Madison Conference in the subcommittee on "History, Civil Government and Political Economy." Historians also formed the AHA Committees of Seven (1899), Five (1905), and Eight (1907) to endorse a history-dominated curriculum. Of these committees, NEA's Committee on History, Civil Government and Political Economy and AHA's Committee of Seven were the more influential for the early social studies curriculum (Cruikshank 1957; Hertzberg 1989; Jenness 1990; Nelson 1992; Saxe 1991; Tryon 1935; Wesley 1950; Whelan 1991).

Despite the domination of history during the early years of the twentieth century, social scientists wanting to further the interests of their respective disciplines began to form new professional organizations. The founding of the American Political Science Association (APSA) occurred in 1903. The American Sociology Association was created in 1905 (Barr, Barth, and Shermis 1977). Free from control of the historians, these social scientists viewed the school curriculum as fertile ground for their respective disciplines.

Social scientists found history unable to provide the answers to the complex and difficult problems facing twentieth-century America. The social sciences were increasingly viewed as a vehicle for studying and proposing solutions to the problems resulting from a dynamic and evolving American landscape. With increasing immigration, and the growth of industrialization and urbanization, American society was understood to be experiencing rapid and unprecedented change (Hofstadter 1955; Ross 1991). Through the social sciences, students of social studies would focus on first understanding, and then improving a rapidly changing, contemporary American society. It was social studies, its advocates argued, that would properly educate democratic citizens to live in their present world.

Cruikshank (1957) summarized the social studies curriculum of 1893 to 1915 as one where the subject matter in secondary social studies became stabilized, with the content being determined mostly by historians. "Government" became "Civics," a more practical course. Geography was taught either as part of history or mostly as physical geography. Economics appeared to be well established in

the curriculum. Sociology had been introduced by 1911, but was rarely found in schools.

The Emergence of the Social Studies

According to Barr, Barth, and Shermis (1977), the social studies was nurtured by the works of John Dewey and promoted by such prominent educators such as George Counts, Edgar Wesley, Harold Rugg, and Earle Rugg. Wesley (1937), sometimes referred to as "the father of the social studies," noted that the following represent significant steps in the development of the social studies:

- 1892** Madison Conference on the teaching of history, government, and economics
- 1893** B. A. Hinsdale's *How to Study and Teach History*
- 1897** William H. Mace's *Method in History*
- 1897** Founding of the *Journal of School Geography* [whose name was changed to the *Journal of Geography* in 1902. It subsequently became the official publication of the National Council for Geographic Education, which was established in 1915.]
- 1899** Publication of the Report of the Committee of Seven of the American Historical Association
- 1902** H. E. Bourne's *The Teaching of History and Civics*
- 1909** Founding of the *History Teacher's Magazine* (which became the *Historical Outlook* in 1918 and *The Social Studies* in 1934)
- 1909** Report of the Committee of Eight of the American Historical Association on history in the elementary schools
- 1911** Report of the Committee of Five of the American Historical Association on history in secondary schools
- 1914** Organization of the National Council of Geography Teachers
- 1915** *Community Civics*, Bulletin 23 of the Bureau of Education
- 1915** Henry Johnson's *Teaching of History in Elementary and Secondary Schools*
- 1916** Report of the Committee of the American Political Science Association on the teaching of government
- 1916** Report of the Social Studies Committee of the National Education Association, Bulletin 28 of the Bureau of Education
- 1921** R. M. Tryon's *The Teaching of History in Junior and Senior High Schools*
- 1921** Organization of the National Council for the Social Studies. (7-8)

The coming revolution in the social studies curriculum was foreshadowed in 1915 by the observations of a historian, Teachers College professor Henry Johnson. Johnson, perhaps the first critic of social studies, argued that if the type of history instruction advanced by advocates of social studies was implemented, no true historical study could result. Johnson held the view that proper historical inquiry had merits of its own, and found great fault in any study of history conditioned by present interests and concerns (Johnson 1915).

Just such present needs, however, were to be the guiding principles for the emerging social studies curriculum. History would not be removed from the curriculum. Rather, the type of history instruction found acceptable to the "new insurgents" (Saxe 1991) in favor of social studies curriculum reform was the "new history" of James Harvey Robinson. In large part because of its emphasis on the present, this type of history instruction dovetailed nicely into the curriculum reform espoused by social scientists gaining influence over the social studies curriculum.

Robinson (1912) held that history had to be studied to increase understanding of the present. If history did not do this, Robinson argued, it was failing to contribute to the improvement of society. Many historians balked at Robinson's utilitarian vision of history, as they understood their field to be a more scholarly and scientific study of the past.

It was the advocates of the social studies, forwarding a vision of history advocated by Robinson, who stepped forward to bridge the gap between the academic study of the past and the modern concern for the production of good citizens. These social studies advocates recommended that schools concern themselves exclusively with the production of democratic citizens. Adopting the curriculum ideas of educational reformers such as Arthur W. Dunn, the emerging social studies curriculum sought to actively engage students in an examination of their surrounding political, economic, and social world. By studying contemporary problems and issues of society, these social studies advocates argued, students would be better able to function in and contribute to the improvement of society.

Wesley (1937) wrote that economics, sociology, and civics were called "social studies" as early as 1905. He was probably referring to the earliest curriculum specifically labeled as "Social Studies" and intended for citizenship education, "The Social Studies in the Hampton Curriculum." This curriculum, taught at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Hampton, Virginia, (also known as the alma mater of Booker T. Washington) was created in 1905 by a Columbia University educated sociologist, Thomas Jesse Jones (Jones 1906). The school was originally founded to educate the freed people of the south at the close of the American Civil War.

Although controversial because its emphasis was on social control, Jones's social studies curriculum was groundbreaking in its unique combination of sociology, political science, and economics. The aim of this effort was to present to Hampton's students, primarily African Americans and Native Americans, a series of individual social studies. It would be the cumulative effect of these individual social studies, according to Jones (1906), that would result in the Hampton student's gaining a model of proper behavior, resulting in the education of a good citizen.

The Committee on Social Studies

Led by increasing calls to make the secondary school curriculum more relevant to everyday life, and to free the high school curriculum from domination by university entrance requirements, the National Education Association (NEA) undertook the task of reorganization and reorientation of secondary education. To this end, with Clarence Kingsley as chairman, work began in 1911 to form the Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) that was officially chartered on July 13, 1913. It was a subcommittee of CRSE, the Committee on Social Studies, that first brought the social studies onto the national stage with its recommendations in 1916. The Committee on Social Studies was, according to historian Edward Krug (1964), "one of the most successful efforts of the entire CRSE" (355).

With Thomas Jesse Jones, a former classmate and colleague of Kingsley's at the U.S. Bureau of Education, at the helm, the committee's name was changed from the Committee on Social Science to the Committee on Social Studies. This change was significant because social studies rather than social science was seen as the vehicle by which students would be exposed to social education.

Jones, as exemplified in his Hampton social studies curriculum, understood social studies to be intended to produce a student inculcated with socially acceptable behaviors and values (Correia 1993).

Jones wrote in the Preliminary Statement of the Committee on Social Studies "that the high-school teachers of social studies have the best opportunity ever offered to any social group to improve the citizenship of the land" (1913, 16). Good citizenship, Jones contended, was to be the purpose of social studies. Jones continued, "Facts, conditions, theories and activities that do not contribute rather directly to an understanding of the methods of human betterment have no claim for inclusion in the social studies" (17).

While history would hold a prominent place in the committee's recommendations, the capstone course of the social studies curriculum was to be the senior year "Problems of Democracy" course. As H. Wells Singleton notes, while historians balked at "the adoption of the problems of democracy course, the sociologists and political scientists moved quickly to endorse the offering" (1980, 93). The "Problems of Democracy" course was one of the truly unique offerings forwarded by the Committee on Social Studies. Embodying in a single course the spirit of the entire report, this offering made the better understanding and study of present society the focus of an entire year of study. All the social sciences and history were to participate in this attempt at a better understanding and improvement of the present.

When analyzing the impact of the Committee on Social Studies, Wesley (1950) noted that the committee

gave currency and respectability to the phrase "social studies." It went far toward destroying the notion that school subjects must faithfully and fully reflect the scholarly bodies of materials from which they are drawn. It did much to popularize the needs of pupils and to emphasize the desirability of providing for pupil growth rather than of merely storing information for the future. (85)

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The leaders of the social studies who shepherded its emergence onto the national scene, such as Thomas Jesse Jones, Arthur W. Dunn, James Harvey Robinson, and Clarence Kingsley, did not play any substantive role in the eventual formation of NCSS. Leadership in social studies passed from those who introduced it to those who would champion its acceptance in America's schools. These new social studies leaders, described as "educationists," were professional university-level educators, and not full-time social scientists or historians (Keels 1980). No longer would social studies be led by those not exclusively within education. The era when subject-matter specialists dictated the social studies curriculum was over. Social studies professionals would continue to consult actively with these subject-matter specialists, but the stranglehold of the latter on the social studies curriculum had ended by 1920 (Keels 1980). AHA helped create NCSS in 1921, and supported it during its early years until its break in 1935. Murra noted (1970) that there were multiple "Founding Fathers" of NCSS: J. Montgomery Gambrill, Daniel C. Knowlton, Harold Rugg, Earle Rugg, and Roy Hatch. All were professors except Earle Rugg, who was a graduate student. However, Earle, the younger brother of Harold Rugg, deserves "a special niche among the Founding Fathers of the National Council for the Social Studies" (729). Although others were involved in the creation of NCSS, Earle's signature appears on the letters of November 11, 1920, and February 10, 1921, sent from Columbia University Teacher's College, which led to the official founding of NCSS in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on March 3, 1921.

Wesley (1937) described the NCSS relation with AHA as follows:

For years following the organization of the Council in 1921, it met at the back door of the American Historical Association and was regarded and treated as a poor relative. ... The typical historian was indifferent, condescending, or scornful of the Council. ("*Social Education Asks*" 1970, 802)

This relationship, according to Wesley, was the reason that he, as President of NCSS in 1935, gave "the Council freedom to become a social studies organization instead of a pseudo-historical society" (802).

The first President of NCSS was Albert McKinley, editor of a teaching journal called *The Historical Outlook*.

According to Jenness (1990):

The early NCSS was an attempt, well understood as such, to further or at least prepare for the development of a federation of subject matters; certainly it signaled the rejection of a view that history teachers in the schools could "handle" all other discipline-derived content. The NCSS was also oriented toward teachers and their support, intellectual and moral, at all levels. (99)

The Council still accepted history and civics as a central part of the social studies and did not want people to think that history was to be abandoned. However, "they favored 'the social studies' because it meant a broader and richer definition of the field, which would include greater attention to the social sciences" (Hertzberg 1989, 91).

Concluding Remarks

Prior to the birth of NCSS, the renderings of scholars, the minutes and recommendations of learned societies, professional organizations, reports in journals, and textbooks offer information about the evolution of the content and methodology of the social studies as we know it. Historically, textbooks are the best evidence about what was actually taught because teachers have always let textbooks dictate the majority of content taught in school, and still do today. These sources reveal to us that social education early on promoted values, religion, nationalism, geography, history, and politics.

As educational organizations and historians began to establish national commissions and committees in the late 1800s, individual subjects were promoted, but there was a sympathetic ear to integrating the various social sciences with history as long as history was taught as a separate subject. Then, as the social scientists began to create their own national organizations and study committees to investigate the curriculum, the struggle for a place for each subject in the public school curriculum began to intensify.

Philosophically, scholars began to disagree about not only what should be taught but how it should be taught. Even though the content was being determined mostly by historians, they could not agree about the goals and purposes of history. Much of this discussion was going on during a progressive period in American history.

The progressive movement in America, with its goal of improving the American way of life by expanding democracy and attaining economic and social justice, influenced education and the curriculum. Progressive educators wanted to implant ideas obtained from research in the social sciences and psychology. Progressives were concerned that, because education was to be provided for all, the methods of teaching school and the meaning of education needed to be altered (Cremin 1964). Influenced in large part by John Dewey and other progressive educators, schools were increasingly called upon to educate "good citizens" and to contribute to the overall betterment of society.

The social studies did not just happen. Social studies evolved during the era under examination to include history and the social sciences, and a more integrated, relevant approach to teaching those subjects. As social studies began to find its way into the school curriculum, NCSS was formed to provide leadership and to give credibility to a subject that would be constantly challenged during the twentieth century.

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The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is a U.S.-based association devoted to supporting social studies education. It is affiliated with various regional or state level social studies associations, including: the Middle States Council for the Social Studies, the Washington State Council for the Social Studies, the New York City UFT Association for the Teaching of Social Studies, the Michigan Council for the Social Studies, Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies., and Virginia Council The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) contends that student learning should involve civic competence as part of preparation for college, career, and civic life. See C3 Framework. Minnesota's social studies standards embrace this focus on civic life along with deep thinking about how people live together on earth. Our state's anchor standards compel students to: understand the facts, concepts, principles, and perspectives that shape social studies. apply learning to complex situations and contexts. think critically about important issues and communicate their findings. engage in th According to a NCSS position paper, "The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) is increasingly alarmed by the erosion of the importance of social studies in the United States. This erosion, in large part, is a consequence of the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). However, through its choice of partners, its rigid adherence to Common Core lesson guidelines, and the sample material it is promoting, the NCSS has virtually abandoned not just meaningful social studies education, but education for democracy and citizenship as well. According to the editors of the bulletin, who were also the primary authors of the C3 Framework, "We engaged fifteen of the best social studies curricular organizations in taking the C3 Instructional Arc Challenge."

NCSS Members take advantage of award winning publications, recognition programs, conferences, information services, and special offers. Whether you're looking for lesson plans, textbooks, or new insights, you'll find it in NCSS. (Plus, you'll save with your members-only discounts!) As a member, NCSS offers you opportunities to meet and exchange ideas with colleagues through state and local councils, Special Interest Groups, and job-alike groups. We also invite you to participate in the council's important work. Serving on an NCSS committee, you can test and expand your leadership skills and in... Journals: Social Education and Social Studies and the Young Learner Books Conferences Rho Kappa Social Studies Honor Society. Social Studies (like Cultural Studies) is a melange drawn from the social sciences and the humanities (Philosophy, Literature, Religious Studies, etc.) that has more of a Humanities emphasis. The discipline of Social Studies may examine similar topic areas to, say Sociology, but the approach will be more philosophical than it is scientific. 21.3k views · View 7 Upvoters · View Sharers. How can you learn about social science if you don't engage in the study of the individual and his impact on society and conversely the study of culture and society and their impact on the individual? If you take the words literally, social science is social studies employing the "scientific method" (look this up). I. Culture Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can. a. explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns; b. give examples of how experiences may be interpreted differently by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference

a. construct and use mental maps of locales, regions, and the world that demonstrate understanding of relative location, direction, size, and shape; b. interpret, use, and distinguish various representations of the earth, such as maps, globes, and photo-graphs