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The School and Society: Secondary School Social Studies  
Education from 1945-1970

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Submitted Spring 2013

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

“Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. Our requirements for world leadership, our hopes for economic growth, and the demands of citizenship itself in an era such as this all require the maximum development of every young American's capacity.”<sup>1</sup>

President John F. Kennedy opened a speech to Congress with these words in 1961, echoing a common sentiment linking education reform to citizenship needs. Since the start of the Cold War, the American education system was under fire from public criticism. In the United States, public education has always been extremely politicized. In particular, the teaching of the social studies—blending elements of history, civics, economics, political science, geography, sociology, and anthropology—has been, and today continues to be, polemic. This thesis will argue that the subject of the social studies, as a central inculcator of common national values, is intimately linked to the meaning of citizenship.

This thesis will focus on the changes that occurred in secondary social studies classes from 1945 through 1970, specifically alterations to the aims and curriculum of the social studies and how these changes relate to the meaning of citizenship. These transformations in the social studies are manifested in many different ways, from orientation and aim of the social studies to the curricular content and pedagogy. As the subject that is most intimately related to society and politics, the social studies course is shown to be the most politically entangled of school subjects. The period investigated in this thesis was wrought with many social and political changes—ranging from the start of the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the counterculture of the 1960's. Because of these events, the responsibilities, expectations, and meaning of American

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Kennedy, “Special Message to Congress on Education,” United States Congress (Washington D.C.), February 20, 1961.

citizenship changed drastically. Studying the influences and changes of the social studies is essential to understanding the meaning of and changes to citizenship.

Emile Durkheim, one of the founding fathers of the sociological discipline, was one of the first to write about the relationship between citizenship and education. His writings are vital to understanding the theory behind this connection. In their book *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society*, Diane Ravitch and Joseph Viteritti discussed Durkheim's theories, saying:

Durkheim fully understood that the mechanical solidarity of the school would require moral or ideological meaning beyond the processes designed to provide required workplace and social skills. ... Education should be based on society's ideal sense of itself, an approved notion of citizenship. He recognized that removal of the religious nature of the sacred demanded some substitute.<sup>2</sup>

In a nation with separation of church and state, the meaning of citizenship must be separated from religion, and schools are a crucial way to build common bonds (or what Durkheim calls "solidarity") between citizens. Schools therefore take on the initiative as an inculcator of national values, a form of "solidarity" between citizens. Thus, the schools ideally attempt to create more than just someone who can fit into modern economy or modern class structure; they strive to create the ideal citizen for the envisioned future, based on societally "approved notions of citizenship."

As contemporary political and cultural events, such as the Civil Rights Movement and Cold War, created changes to the concept of American values, schools were forced to change to reflect these new values. However, schools reflect contemporary events in a way that is unique, because the school must inherently educate students for success in the future world, not for the immediate present. Thus, they not only reflect contemporary solutions to what are perceived to

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<sup>2</sup> Diane Ravitch and Joseph Viteritti, *Making Good Citizens: Education and Civil Society* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001), 188

be future problems, but also future responsibilities of citizens. Ravitch and Viteritti said, “Often the combatants in education have had a singular, overarching goal: they have fought for their vision of schooling because it embodied their ideology and their goals of a future society.”<sup>3</sup>

During the time period examined in this thesis, there was a great deal of debate about the purpose and goals of the American educational system. Every side had their own interpretation that was backed by a certain ideology of the way that the world worked. Thus, as the focus of American politics shifted, visions of the ideal future citizen changed too.

Throughout the entirety of the era studied in this thesis, the vision for future citizenship is representative of virtue ethics theory of citizenship:

Virtue ethics argues that a person requires education in order to become an individual. The politics of virtue education have a thick rather than thin view of the citizen of a nation, namely of the citizen as a complex, educated, and vibrant member of society. There is therefore an important connection between virtuous citizens and effective and living institutions; this connections is through the dual operation of virtue and obligation. An autonomous citizen will want to be an active and involved participant in a community.<sup>4</sup>

While the idea of citizenship changes drastically throughout the time period of this thesis, it always remains within the virtue ethics sphere of citizenship theory. In the decades between the present day and the time period examined in this thesis, neo-liberal theories of citizenship will play a much more prominent role in politics and education. However, for the sake of this paper, citizenship is continually tied to the survival of American democratic values and obligations to public institutions. This reflects the important national value that, despite changes to the meaning of citizenship, the survival of American institutions and society were of the utmost importance.

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<sup>3</sup> Ravitch and Viteritti, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Engin Isin and Bryan Turner, eds., *Handbook of Citizenship Studies* (London, England: Sage Publishing 2002), 7-8.

In this way, schools are exemplary of the changing definition of citizenship. In their *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, social scientist Engin Isin and sociologist Bryan Turner explain that, “as societies are forced to manage cultural difference and associated tensions and conflict, there will be necessarily significant changes in the processes by which states allocate citizenship and a differentiation of the category of citizen.”<sup>5</sup> Between 1945 and 1970, the United States saw an unprecedented amount of social, political, and cultural tension and conflict. One result of this was a transformation in the meaning American citizenship. As the role of responsibilities of citizenship changed, social studies courses were forced to keep up with these new alterations.

This thesis is organized chronologically and breaks down the time period from 1945 to 1970 into four separate periods. The first time period is from 1945 to 1947, which for the purpose of this paper I call “the immediate postwar period.” The social studies during this era were characterized by the emphasis on improving what educators called “intergroup relations.” Reflective of the world’s yearning for peace after World War II, this period stressed goodwill between members of different socio-economic and racial groups. However, this idea mainly focused on international goodwill rather than improving domestic relations between disparate groups. It is thus clear that citizenship was seen in international, rather than domestic terms.

The next time period, ranging from 1947-1957, reflects the next stage of development in the social studies and citizenship education. During these years, educational goals shift away from goodwill and cooperation, to a focus of individuality and nationalism. With the rise of McCarthyism and the Red Scare, citizens were expected to be individualistic and shun any sort of organizing for communal ideals. This period was a time of intense criticism of the American educational system, and particularly the social studies. Schools were blamed for many of the

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<sup>5</sup> Isin and Turner, 9.

problems of society, and school districts forced teachers to take loyalty oaths. Most school districts fortified their curriculum with civics and citizenship education classes. As an extension of the social studies, civics course thus received an oversized portion of attention, criticism, and calls for change. Citing the need to inculcate students with what were called “American democratic values,” the school was seen as a battlefield in the Cold War. In 1954, the American school system received a massive overhaul with the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that struck down the racial segregation of schools. Although this forced integration was notoriously realized with “all deliberate speed,” this ruling threw the idea of what exactly “American democratic values” were into the spotlight. There was massive national support for reforming the American school system, for both racial and Cold War purposes. As contemporary events changed what it meant to be a citizen, schools had to adapt to meet this new demand.

Then, in an instant, the educational spotlight pivoted from the social studies to mathematics and science. With the successful launch of Sputnik in 1957, many critics of American education felt validated—their belief that America was “losing” the Cold War was now justified. Money, and all the pressures associated with an increase in funding, bombarded the schools, with most of it going to improving math and science education. In many ways, this public spotlight shift allowed a more intellectual debate to emerge about the social studies. During this time, contemporary social and political turmoil became so intense that these issues inevitably wound up entering the classroom. In addition to Sputnik and renewed Cold War fears, the Civil Rights Movement was gaining momentum. In social studies classroom where ideas of rights and democracy were being taught, it seems implausible that students wouldn’t try to make sense of these cultural changes in the classroom.

This commotion resulted in two distinct schools of thought. One, led by American historian Arthur Bestor, advocated for abolishing the social studies and instead teaching students the individual social science disciplines that make up the interdisciplinary social studies course. He argued against teaching contemporary events in the classroom, and was critical of the work of scholars of education. For the purpose of this paper, this school of thought will be referred to as the “Bestor-ites.” The other faction, led by the National Council for the Social Studies, argued avidly for teaching contemporary issues. They believed that by making the curriculum more relevant to students’ lives, they would be more interested in learning. For the sake of this paper, they will be referred to as the “educators,” “professional educators,” or “educationists.” This group was largely made up of those who work in education departments of colleges and universities. Embedded in these two groups’ arguments are different visions of the meaning and purpose of citizenship. Bestor-ites believed that citizens needed a solid liberal arts background for each individual to be able to comprehend the complex cultural and political changes going on during this time. The professional educators saw the school as an institution capable of dealing with these complex problems and creating citizens who can work together to find ways to deal with these issues in a group and institutional setting.

The final chapter of this thesis is based around the “new social studies.” This transformative theory for the social studies was a culmination of much of the debate swirling in the previous decade or two. The theoretical basis for the new social studies was the work of educational psychologist Jerome Bruner, who advocated for learning to be done through “discovery” or “inquiry.” Applied to the social studies, this forced students to look at primary sources and come up with their own conclusions. Combining the ideas of the Bestor-ites and the professional educators, the new social studies promoted teaching contemporary events through

the study of single academic disciplines. Reflecting the themes of movements such as the New Left, the counterculture, and the Civil Rights Movement, the new social studies focused on changing the individual. Contemporary politics, reacting to the events mentioned above, also shifted the spotlight from the international to the domestic arena. As themes from these revolutionary movements began to creep into the public consciousness, people began to ask the question: Why shouldn't American education, in order to keep up with society, be due for its own revolution? As members of those important social movements began to think about a radical future for the United States, the role of the American citizen shifted. These visions for the future were reflected in social studies courses. This radical reinterpretation of the role of the citizen, school, and social studies course was subject to some backlash, but most of it was directed at the applicability of the new social studies and the future responsibilities of the school in creating this reimagined citizenry.

It is clear that the years from 1945 to 1970 present a large range of ideas, themes, and events in the field of education. These changes to the American school system during the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been well documented by educational historians. However, much of the existing secondary literature dealing with the social studies focuses on textbook studies that cover broad time periods. Little exists detailing changes to the social studies curriculum and the objectives of the social studies course during this time period. In addition, social studies and history textbooks generally did not keep up with the rapidly changing political landscape. For this reason, the majority of this thesis focuses on the curriculum and ideals of the social studies program, rather than changes to the texts used in social studies classes. This thesis will therefore explore the gap in information about the influences on and changes to the social studies curriculum and course.

The era, 1945-1970, was chosen for the rapidity of change and tumult in politics, society, and education:

“The era 1940 to 1968 was felt...to be the first systematic attempt to identify the objectives of the social studies....These objectives were much used by social studies curriculum committees as a source of suggestions for general statements of purpose during the 1940’s and 1950’s.”<sup>6</sup>

As the first time professional educators were thinking about the objectives of the social studies, this era marked the first time that social studies courses were designed with a particular goal in mind. This thesis will illuminate the connections between the educational critics, theorists, and the application of the social studies through the curriculum.

The principle secondary sources used in this thesis are Diane Ravitch’s book *The Troubled Crusade* and Daniel Edgar Coons’ PhD dissertation analyzing three different New York State American History curriculums. Published in 1983, *The Troubled Crusade* is an overview of the changes that occurred in American public education from 1945 to 1980. Ravitch is one of the preeminent scholars of educational history, and served as Assistant Secretary of Education under George H.W. Bush. In addition to Ravitch’s book, this thesis also uses a PhD dissertation from Daniel Edgar Coons, of the University of New York Albany. Written in 1972, Coons analyzed three different New York State American History curriculums. His analysis provided excellent insight into records that were not accessible to me at the New York State Archives.

Many integral primary sources for this thesis come from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), an organization founded in 1921. The NCSS publishes an annual yearbook containing essays on what they believe are the most pertinent contemporary issues in

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Edgar Coons, “An Analysis of Selected American History Syllabi According to Five Curriculum Determinants” (PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 1972), 3-4.

the social studies. These yearbooks are intended for teachers, administrators, and scholars of education. For this thesis, the yearbooks proved a wealth of information, as they offer insights into what relevant scholars were discussing during each time period. As a group of scholars whose job is maintained by interest in the social studies, the NCSS does have a bias towards maintaining the importance of the social studies in the school curriculum. This will be highlighted in Chapter 4 of this thesis, when academics from disciplines outside of education departments began to criticize the purpose and importance of teaching the social studies in schools.

Other important primary sources are records from the California State Archives and the New York State Public Library. I chose to focus on New York and California, because in 1950 and 1960, they were the first and second most populous states, respectively.<sup>7</sup> As the two most populous states, they were often near the forefront of academic (and political) changes. As suburbanization occurred throughout the 1950's and 1960's, urban centers became more riddled with what were deemed "urban problems" (drugs, crime, poverty). Despite these urban issues, suburbanization led to a drastic increase in size of metropolitan areas. The New York City metropolitan area was by far the largest in the country in 1950 and 1960, and California contained two of the seven largest metropolitan areas in 1950, and two of the six largest metropolitan areas in 1960 (the Los Angeles and San Francisco metropolitan areas).<sup>8</sup> As urban and metropolitan areas became more populous, a greater percentage of political power and media became concentrated there. Thus, these areas had a significant influence on national opinion.

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<sup>7</sup> US Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, US Census Bureau, *Demographic Trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Census 2000 Special Report* (Washington, DC: GPO, November 2002), A-1.

<sup>8</sup> *Demographic Trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, p 37.

If more time and money could be committed to this thesis, a wider survey of states could be included. However, as this thesis will show, the social studies and history curriculums of California and New York adequately reflected the changes going on during this time period. From California, this thesis analyzes personal letters and publications from social studies specialists in the California Department of Education, as well as a large social studies project centered around the Bill of Rights. From New York, the majority of the content the thesis uses is related to the New York State American History I curriculums of 1953 and 1965. Information about these curriculums comes largely from a PhD dissertation by Daniel Edgar Coons, published in 1973, that analyzed these curriculums and provided analysis of important information that is no longer accessible to the general public.

In addition to these sources mentioned above, many articles written academics working in many different academic disciplines (education, history, and various social sciences), social studies teachers, public school administrators, and educational critics are used in this thesis. All of these sources paint a picture of the important themes in education during this time period. The context of these articles is the social studies, while there is an underlying subtext about the meaning of the citizenship. This thesis will illustrate the important connection between the two, by examining the discussions swirling in academic circles about the social studies and then looking at the application of these debates in New York and California. It is important to study this relationship between the social studies and citizenship, for it provides ways to understand the manner in which political and social movements affect the lens through which citizens view the world.

## Chapter 2: Postwar Period, 1945-1947

The immediate postwar period, which this study will treat as the brief period from 1945 through 1947, showed interesting developments in the orientation of the social studies that are completely unique when compared to the previous and subsequent developments in the subject. After the conclusion of World War II, higher education changed dramatically with the passage of the GI Bill, which allowed veterans to attend college for little to no cost. The GI Bill reflected the newfound attention that Americans gave to education. No longer was education only for the elite. With a record number of students enrolled in colleges and universities, these new college graduates began to create a culture that emphasized the importance of formal education that extended to their children's schooling. Education became a necessity for the average citizen, so much so that it became a part of citizenship.

The social studies had long been influenced by the dominant political ideas of the time. Before World War II, when the US favored a largely isolationist foreign policy, the social studies taught “the picturesque, the quaint, the ‘different’ aspects of other lands and races, a procedure which merely aggravated our own sense of superiority and which often gave a most distorted view of the actual situation.”<sup>9</sup> Due to political support for isolationism, it makes sense that social studies texts would treat other cultures and nations as “foreign.” The emphasis of “the different aspects of other...races” also aligns with a lack of support for racial equality in the United States.

But how did the aims and goals of the social studies change after the conclusion of World War II? The United States was just as segregated as before the war, as Jim Crow laws still reigned in the South and racial equality was not a particularly popular political cause in the

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<sup>9</sup> Hilda Taba and William Van Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies - Democratic Human Relations: Promising Practices in Intergroup and Intercultural Education in the Social Studies* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1945), 40.

North. Despite this, World War II did create a lot of important changes in attitudes toward the social studies. The “American” values that educators advocated for were directly related to contemporary social and political events. By stressing these American values, the meaning of American citizenship was thrust into the spotlight. Both racial segregation and the celebration of American freedom could not continue for long; eventually this dichotomy of theory and practice would come to a head and force changes to both Jim Crow laws, and in turn, the meaning of citizenship.

During this time, “American values” were seen in relationship to internationalism and foreign relations moreso than during any other period examined in this thesis. After two destructive wars in the last half a century, most political attention was focused on the international arena, and “American values” were seen in international, and not domestic, terms. The United Nations represented many of these new ideals that the victors of World War II wanted to promote: citizens thinking beyond borders, about each other on a global scale. Social studies educators wanted to stress that cooperation and community were of the utmost importance for the future. Educator and superintendent of the Tarrytown, NY school district, Matthew Gaffney, in an article titled “Curriculum Planning for Postwar Education,” explained what educators had learned from World War II, and what they needed to emphasize more in schools:

The curriculum of the next few years must, in some way, be geared into the life and work and thought of the community.... Gradually the community must take on new and broader meaning until it goes beyond “my village,” “my state”—yes, beyond “my country.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Matthew P. Gaffney, “Curriculum Planning for Postwar Education,” *The School Review* 53:4 (April 1945): 213-214.

This emphasis on thinking beyond one's own community reflects the experience of World War II—many citizens in the United States realized that the country could no longer maintain an isolationist foreign policy, and that it was necessary for students to learn about different countries. American citizenship was increasingly seen in international terms—no longer could a country as large as the United States exist outside the sphere of influence from other nations. Thus, it was the role of American citizens to promote democratic values in an international context.

In what would seem to be a contradiction to this idea of the global citizen, there was also a stress on teaching students to respect and embrace “American democratic values.” This stress was a constant in the social studies for the next 30 years, but social and political events would force changes to exactly what “American democratic values” entailed. The idea of inculcating a love of American democratic principles in students was not new, but found renewed energy after World War II. The NCSS wrote in their 1945 yearbook about what they believed American values were, saying “Students should learn from United States history to prize the principles of individual dignity, of the inviolability of human personality, and the essential oneness of mankind that have emerged from this quest. They should understand the sage of a people in quest of a dream.”<sup>11</sup> American educators saw the principle of respect for individual dignity as a purely American value, and they wished to make sure the political and cultural climates in Germany and Japan were never recreated. However, statements such as these were ignorant to race relations and domestic issues in the United States. In this way, American values were seen purely in the context of internationalism and how American democratic values could help make the international order more peaceful. It was believed that American values came out victorious

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<sup>11</sup> Taba and Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies*, 96.

from World War II, and educators wanted to make sure the next generation would maintain these important values.

This idea of promoting American democratic values would stay popular for many years to come, especially during the early 1950's. However, ideas about what exactly those values entailed, and how to implement such a program, would change greatly over time. One popular plan for implementation was to get students interested in the social studies. This idea spans the entire time period of this thesis, but ideas of how to implement this would change greatly over the next twenty years. In 1945, a popular idea for engaging students in the social studies was to make the history more exciting for students. Robert Keohane, a professor of pedagogy, published an article in *The School Review* in 1945 saying that:

The major educational functions of primary sources in the eleventh- or twelfth-grade classes in our national history may be listed as follows: (1) inspirational; (2) "making history live" — giving it warmth, color, and the flavor of the times; (3) reinforcing knowledge of important persons, events, laws, institutions, and problems.<sup>12</sup>

This recommendation to make history more exciting was not related to scholarly developments in the American history field at the time. In fact, the minutiae and details of the work of historians were spurned in favor of more accessible and romanticized historical literature. Keohane also said that, "To have educational value... facts must be related to one another in a conceptual framework or pattern which has meaning for the student and which is not too far out of line with the major interpretations of leading contemporary historians."<sup>13</sup> Appealing to students' interests and experiences was seen as an important way to get them excited about learning American history. However, in 1945, some educators were willing to sacrifice factual content and accuracy for this, as long as the more exciting information wasn't "too far" away

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<sup>12</sup> Robert E. Keohane, "Use of Primary Sources in United States History for High-School Pupils," *The School Review* 53:10 (December 1945): 580.

<sup>13</sup> Keohane, 581.

from the truth. Characteristic of the relationship between the public school and the university, the teaching of history in secondary schools did not keep up with new developments in the study of American history at an academic level. As Keohane shows, this was not the goal of teaching social studies.

The point of sacrificing content for accessibility is highlighted by what many saw as the purpose of teaching the social studies in secondary schools. Reinhard Bendix, professor of sociology at the University of Chicago, thought the goal of teaching social studies was, “to equip the future citizen with a knowledge of historical facts adequate for his role in society.”<sup>14</sup> There was no need to teach more factual and cutting edge history to students that wouldn’t ever need it, or so educators believed. Instead, it was seen as more important to teach students just enough of a romanticized version of history to satisfy their “need.” By the 1960’s, this idea would be turned on its head, as I will show in chapters four and five of this thesis. The main point of teaching social studies in the postwar period, however, was seen by most as a way to create a national narrative that all citizens could access and believe in. Citizenship was not based on individuals needing a critical lens through which to view contemporary events. Rather, citizens from diverse social groups were intended to have a common background through which problems with “intergroup relations” could be assuaged. Social studies classes were the perfect course through which to promote these values.

Educators believed that giving students a framework with which to understand contemporary events was something that the social studies was responsible for. According to debates among academic experts, contemporary problems referred mostly to the international political arena, with little thought going to domestic politics. The National Council for the Social

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<sup>14</sup> Reinhard Bendix, “Education and the Teaching of History,” *The School Review* 53:1 (January 1945): 504.

Studies (NCSS), a group that will be used as a major source in this thesis, represented the majority opinion of academics working in education departments, specifically those thinking about issues in the social studies. They are the most important group of educators who deal with the teaching of the social studies, and can be seen as the consensus opinion of social studies educators. In their 1945 Yearbook, they said:

The world situation shows the imperative need for decreasing tensions that exist between nations, groups, and individuals. To keep ahead of the breaking point intercultural and intergroup education will have to make tremendous strides. The National Council sincerely hopes that presenting this book at this particular time will be a step towards lessening the tension.<sup>15</sup>

As the next chapter of this thesis will show, this stress of intercultural and intergroup education will fall by the wayside in the early 1950's. However, as the geopolitical order was still being reorganized in the immediate aftermath of World War II, educators saw the need for creating goodwill between different nations of people. If this mentality of global cooperation was not emphasized, what was the purpose of fighting in World War II? Public school superintendent Matthew Gaffney said, "It will be unthinkable if, after the war, the teaching of these values does not play a major part in the curriculum. Must we not think more clearly than we ever have before about what these values are?"<sup>16</sup> Despite advocating largely for "these values," those exact values are rarely specified other than in the vague terms of "democratic human relations" or "intergroup relations." Interestingly, these terms are never explicitly defined in the NCSS or other relevant literature. However, the definition implied in the literature is the fostering of a feeling of communal responsibility for a peaceful world across nationalities, races, and genders.

The way in which educators sought to foster these ideals is an important indicator of political and cultural values of the times. The way in which educators want their ideas implemented highlights and reflects important social values. During the postwar period, the

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<sup>15</sup> Taba and Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies*, V.

<sup>16</sup> Gaffney, 215.

social studies were deemed more important to the school curriculum than other subject areas. Because of this, the utmost thought went into how to foster an ethic of democratic human relations among students. Despite this rhetoric, the content of the social studies during this period, from 1945 through 1947, was very reminiscent of social studies education in the decade before. Slight changes were made, but none as drastic as in the years to come. The immediate postwar era opened up channels of dialogue that would prove important for the changes that were to come in the next two decades.

The most dramatic differences in American history and social studies curriculums of this time period was determined by whether a school had a one or two year American history program. The two year programs focused much more extensively on early American history, whereas the one year programs devoted a about two-thirds of the course to 20<sup>th</sup> century American history and one third of the class to contemporary problems.<sup>17</sup> Reflecting the thinking of experts at institutions like the NCSS, the goal of this was to make the history relevant and interesting for the students. California Superintendent of Public Instruction Roy Simpson issued a statement in 1946 saying that “because of the importance of relating history to modern life, it is suggested that content for the high school course be chosen largely from the period since the Civil War.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, schools thought that by teaching recent history, the subject would be more interesting and accessible to students. There was no change to pedagogy or goals of the social

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<sup>17</sup> Course Descriptions, 1946-1947-Department of Education-Division of Instruction, Bureau of Secondary Education. Course Descriptions, F3752:1919,F3752:1920, F3752:1922, F3572:1923, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

<sup>18</sup> United States History and Civics: A Suggested Revision of the Statement of the “Framework” in Eleventh Grade Social Studies, December 30, 1946, California State Department of Education, Division of Secondary Education, F3752:28, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

studies, just a change to what content was emphasized. Ideas for making the social studies relevant to students would change greatly over the coming years.

In addition to the American history/social studies course, nearly every school required another similar class. The names of these courses sometimes differed, but the content was largely the same. Whether called “Civics”<sup>19</sup> or “American Problems,”<sup>20</sup> these courses dealt with the issue of American democracy. One high school described the major objectives of such a course as to, “develop boys and girls into humanitarians, men and women of good will, men and women who love justice, decency, and truth,” and “create in students the desire to help solve the world’s problems and so to work for a world at peace.”<sup>21</sup> The emphasis on intergroup and democratic human relations was evident in these courses. Also apparent is a burgeoning idea of America as the world’s bastion of democracy and peace. This idea grew more important as the Cold War began to heat up. Another area of emphasis in these courses that is reflective of the times is the United Nations, the importance of an international governing body.<sup>22</sup> As tensions with the USSR intensified, the United Nations would not be viewed in such an idealistic light for much longer.

Seemingly in contradiction to the focus on international unity and cooperation in Civics courses is the emphasis on the need to protect the American form of government from outside threats. One school listed the general objectives of the Civics course as, “to create an attitude of intelligent patriotism and a desire to protect our American type and form of government, ideals, liberties, and institutions.”<sup>23</sup> This idea would only gain in popularity over the coming years. This era can be seen as an incubator period for teaching “American democratic values” in schools.

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<sup>19</sup> Course Description, F3752:1920, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Course Description, F3572:1923, 39.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>22</sup> Course Description, F3752:1920, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Course Description, F3752:1922, “United States History.”

Speaking about education in general, Superintendent Roy Simpson said, “A primary purpose of public education is to preserve and improve our democratic way of life through proper training of the young.”<sup>24</sup> As the Cold War intensified and McCarthyism swept over the nation, this belief would only become more prevalent.

During this brief period, all changes were made through the curricular material, rather than changes to pedagogy or the aims of the social studies. The NCSS stated that, “the vehicle for most social studies teaching today is the highly organized subject matter course. Although there is much variation in the titles of these courses, the general content is similar.”<sup>25</sup> The social studies teacher was seen to be reliant on the content, and could only teach what the curriculum provided. Professor Bendix wrote that:

“history cannot be taught in a manner that is essentially different from the way in which it is written. The teacher views the past in the light of the questions which both he and the contemporary society must raise because both must confront, in their role as citizens, the same compelling problems of their society.”<sup>26</sup>

These questions that were to be viewed in relation to the past dealt primarily with how American democratic values related to international relations, as has been stressed throughout this chapter.

The NCSS believed that by focusing on internationalism, schools could fix problems that plagued the previous generation. They wrote that:

Difficulties in group relations are America’s primary problem. This particular generation of American is charged with the task of setting a pattern for democratic human living. Failure at this time may produce the freezing of undesirable patterns of human relations and of the institutions that govern them. The eyes of the world are on America as a prototype of democratic human relations in the entire world. Educational realists recognize a serious challenge in this. Whatever programs are developed in the social studies, they must take their cues from the current realities and needs, must get their direction from current democratic values, and must evolve constructive applications.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> United States History and Civics, F3752:28, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Taba and Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies*, 87.

<sup>26</sup> Bendix, 503.

<sup>27</sup> Taba and Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies*, 23.

It is clear from this passage that educators saw the possibility of changing American society to maintain a peaceful international order, through a new emphasis of internationalism in the social studies. Although this seems like a gargantuan task, the NCSS “recognize(d) the challenge in this.” This attempt at inculcating worldwide peace was to be done through an American lens, as the United States were to serve as the “prototype of democratic human relations in the entire world.” Despite this lofty rhetoric, there was not enough public or political support for an overhaul of the social studies. To achieve this goal, funding for new social studies programs would not be made available until the early to mid 1960’s, when the United States was very different than during the immediate postwar period.

Wanting to promote unity and cooperation, and not ruffle any feathers, educators shied away from bringing race into this conversation of intergroup relations. Some educators recognized the need to reform the entire subject of the social studies. The NCSS claimed that “the aims of intercultural education cannot be achieved through traditional content or routine teaching. Nor can the answer be found in sporadic unplanned efforts, such as an occasional unit on immigration, some brief teaching of Negro history.”<sup>28</sup> No concrete solutions were ever offered, but rather educators only told teachers what not to do. In the very same NCSS Yearbook, it was even recommended to not talk about these issues directly. They said that although “the problems and issues of the society, community, and students are good guides for selecting curricular content, not all these problems can or need be attacked frontally.”<sup>29</sup> The justification for not addressing these issues was that “sharp emotional prejudice is best attacked by loosening other less strong prejudices first.”<sup>30</sup> What exactly the “less strong prejudices” were

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<sup>28</sup> Taba and Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies*, 22.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 45.

was not defined. As the historical record shows, the lack of willingness to address race in American society boiled over by the mid-1950's.

Confusion over how to deal with race was not the only problem social studies education faced. Different states, particularly different regions of the United States, had very different social studies programs. Social studies curricula in the South had not changed in a long time, and academics publishing articles on the social studies rarely even expressed any interest in trying to change the status quo in the South. In fact, "some Southern schools use American history textbooks either written especially for them, or for which Southern editions have been prepared."<sup>31</sup> With educators stressing national unity, regional cultural differences certainly made unification of the social studies curriculum difficult. This would continue to be a problem for years to come. However, the intensification of the Cold War in the 1950's would help to create more unity in the social studies, as the emphasis shifted from progressive ideals such as democratic human relations, to the promotion of American exceptionalism and individuality.

While the fostering of democratic human relations can now be seen as the educational trend of the immediate postwar period, some educators began to push for a curricular change that would have a large impact in the years to come, especially as the Cold War escalated. The NCSS said that, "We need to teach the analysis of prejudice and propaganda because prejudice and propaganda have been found to be major obstacles to good human relations."<sup>32</sup> Many felt there was a threat of communist propaganda in the postwar period, and loyalty towards American democratic principles was an important attitude to foster in schools. Superintendent Gaffney understood this, saying that, "In the years ahead education through the curriculum has a

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<sup>31</sup> Canada-United States Commission on Education, *A Study of National History Textbooks Used in the Schools of Canada and the United States* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1947), 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Taba and Til, eds., *Sixteenth Yearbook of the Nation Council for the Social Studies*, 26.

contribution to make to the stability of the country by creating loyalties.”<sup>33</sup> It is clear from examples such as this that the a central function of the social studies was to “create loyalties.” American citizenship at this time, and as Gaffney said, “in the years to come,” would increasingly be associated with loyalty towards the United States. As the Cold War intensified in the early 1950’s, it became increasingly necessary for a more unified conception of American citizenship based around loyalty and unwavering faith in the democratic values of the United States. As the international scene grew tense, and American citizenship became more focused on loyalty, the social studies were thrust even further into the academic spotlight.

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<sup>33</sup> Gaffney, 215.

### Chapter 3: 1947-1957 – The Height of the Cold War

As the Cold War began to heat up in the late 1940's, American education began to undergo significant changes. Immediately after the end of World War II, educators had ideas about what principles should be emphasized in schools, and more specifically in the social studies. As relations with the Soviet Union grew tense, the ideals stressed in schools represented new ethics reflective of the themes of the burgeoning Cold War. This included an increase in American nationalism and fear of a subversive Communist plot that could destabilize the United States. Aided by the rise of McCarthyism and the ensuing Red Scare, education was thrust into a peculiar spotlight. The NCSS wrote in 1952, "It is not too much to say that the continuance of the American way of life depends, at least in part, upon the effective instruction in the social studies, for as the citizens of a democracy are taught today so goes the nation tomorrow."<sup>34</sup> Later on in the 1952 yearbook, it was added that, "It is absolutely necessary for the survival of our society that social studies teachers fully understand the relation of what they are teaching to the preservation of the free world."<sup>35</sup> Surpassing merely inculcating loyalty, the survival of American citizenship was thus thrust onto the social studies by educators. The social studies therefore became the centerpiece of American education during the early 1950's, and were in turn under intense public scrutiny.

For much of the late 1940's and 1950's, schools bore an increased amount of criticism for the ills of society. This criticism led to many discussions about how to reform schools; this dialogue reveals that the solution to America's "failing schools" was through changing the curriculum. Implicit in this conversation is a reformation in the aims and goals of education, so

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<sup>34</sup> Jack Allen, ed., *National Council for the Social Studies Twenty-third Yearbook: The Teacher of the Social Studies* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Publishing Company, 1952), 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

that school priorities more accurately reflected Cold War citizenship needs. Until the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1957, the social studies were at the forefront of this discussion, as Cold War fears were the largest factor driving these criticisms of the American school system. Historian Arthur Bestor wrote often about the inadequacies of schools. He represented a popular sentiment that American education was not keeping pace with the demands of modern society.<sup>36</sup> Bestor will play a large part in Chapter 4 of this thesis, as he was a widely influential figure in circles of educational critics. During the early and mid-1950's, Arthur Bestor directed a lot of his anger towards teacher education, saying that teacher education programs were failing.<sup>37</sup> The brunt of the public's anger with education was directed towards teachers, and resulted their censorship.

The censorship of teachers began in 1947, when President Truman succumbed to public pressure and instituted a loyalty program for all government employees, including teachers. The public responded with widespread fear of Communism, and the Red Scare had formally started. The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) began to question many Americans accused of having ties to Communist or Marxist groups, and states began to adopt loyalty pledges for teachers. In her book *The Troubled Crusade*, educational historian Diane Ravitch said that, "By 1950, thirty-three schools had adopted legislation permitting the ouster of disloyal teachers. In twenty-six states, teachers were required to sign a loyalty oath...In fourteen states, embellishments were added: some states required teachers to promote patriotism...."<sup>38</sup> Teachers, moreso than other public employees, were targeted as potential subversives. Educational historian Diane Ravitch continued:

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<sup>36</sup> Arthur Bestor, "Future Direction of American Education," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 35:9 (June 1954): 374.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 374.

<sup>38</sup> Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 93.

Because of their important role in shaping the minds and values of the younger generation, education institutions invariably attracted the attention of those who were concerned about disloyalty and subversion, particularly at the state and local level, where most schools and institutions of higher education were financed and controlled.<sup>39</sup>

Teachers became afraid to teach controversial issues in school, for fear of losing their job. Robert Hutchins, educational theorist and former President and Chancellor of the University of Chicago said that it was even dangerous for him to say “what everybody was saying ten years ago” and that “we must do all we can to promote world understanding. Vocal pressure groups throughout the land now take the view that any kind of interest in organizing the world for peace is unpatriotic.”<sup>40</sup> By contrasting American ideals as opposite the interest of world peace, it is clear that the Cold War presented a clear break from the previous era, when organizing for world peace was a priority of social studies education.

There was obviously a large gap between what education commentators wanted and what was taking place. Rather than subjecting social studies teachers to the democratic ideals they were promoting, teachers were scared into teaching what they were told. The culture of fear and suspicion ran rampant, and teachers were quickly becoming “second-class citizens.”<sup>41</sup> Arthur Bestor explained this best, saying in 1954, “American education faces a dangerous crisis today because of the “cultural lag” that vitiates the thinking of large groups of professional educationists in the United States.”<sup>42</sup> Despite being aware of this discrepancy, conditions for teachers would not improve until a new crisis usurped it in the 1960’s.

Perhaps the best exemplar of this Cold War fanaticism was the 1952 Supreme Court case, *Adler v. Board of Education of the City of New York*. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled 6 to 3

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<sup>39</sup> Ravitch, 82.

<sup>40</sup> Robert M. Hutchins, “Are Our Teachers Afraid to Teach?” *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* 40:2 (Summer, 1954): 203.

<sup>41</sup> Hutchins, 204-205.

<sup>42</sup> Bestor, “Future Direction of American Education,” 374.

in favor of upholding New York state’s Feinberg Law. This law was “designed to bar from public schools and colleges all teachers who belong to groups advocating the violent overthrow of the Government.”<sup>43</sup> This ruling was eventually ruled unconstitutional and overturned 15 years later, in 1967. Thus, this was obviously a quite dramatic and tumultuous period in the United State’s educational history.

With the Cold War well underway and criticism of schools in full swing, debates swirled about what the role of the school should be. No longer seeing the need for intergroup relations and goodwill amongst nations, one idea could now be agreed upon—schools were necessary to protect the United States against the threat of Communism. This manifested in the increased focus on citizenship education, civics, and inculcating “American democratic values.” While the schools had been seen as inculcators of citizenship in the past, this took on new meaning during the Cold War. On the opening pages of this yearbook, the National Council for the Social Studies said, “the task of the school, and particularly the social studies teacher, is made more vital and more difficult because of the struggle between freedom and slavery which is now going on.”<sup>44</sup> This “struggle between freedom and slavery” referred not to civil rights abuses in the United States, but rather to the Cold War. In this way, the focus of American values was still international, and little mention was made about domestic issues.

Perhaps in an attempt to stem the antagonism of teachers, this 1952 NCSS yearbook focused on the teacher of the social studies, and represented the ideas of various educators thinking about the social studies, schools, and society. Citing the complexity of the increased need for civic education, the NCSS wrote, “intelligent citizenship does not merely mean a simple

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<sup>43</sup> “N.Y. Courts Ponder Feinberg Law Act Would Bar Teachers Belonging To Groups on the Subversive List,” *The Harvard Crimson*, June 20, 1950.

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1950/6/20/ny-courts-ponder-feinberg-law-act/>.

<sup>44</sup> Jack Allen, ed., *National Council for the Social Studies Twenty-third Yearbook*, 3.

faith in American democracy. It calls for a thorough knowledge of political principles and institutions, of history, and of economics.”<sup>45</sup> The role of the citizen had clearly shifted from the immediate postwar era. Now, citizens were expected to be vigilant vanguards of American democratic values, continually on the look-out for communist subversion of these values. Citizens must be intelligent enough to be able to comprehend and resist the perceived communist threat. This would inevitably require a multidisciplinary education focused on citizenship training.

During this time, and because of this newfound multidisciplinary need, the social studies began to truly encompass more than just American history. When New York state made a new American history curriculum (this American History class served as the social studies class for New York schools, but maintained the traditional name of “American History”) in 1953, the curriculum reflected that, “for the first time, the school was said to be held responsible for the development of a set of moral and spiritual values in pupils, with these values fostering a deepened respect for the United States and emphasizing service to the country as a duty of all American citizens.”<sup>46</sup> The new curriculum also stated that, “the task of providing education for effective citizenship is a major responsibility of every school.”<sup>47</sup> Because of this new emphasis on improving American citizenship education in the schools, the social studies were thrust into the spotlight. More so than any other course, the social studies were deemed necessary for creating intelligent democratic citizens.

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<sup>45</sup> Arthur Bestor, “Aimlessness in Education,” *The Scientific Monthly* 75:2 (August, 1952): 109.

<sup>46</sup> Coons, 78.

<sup>47</sup> Coons, 117.

Despite this new attention and basic agreement, more nuanced debates, such as the broad aims of the social studies, were up for discussion. Charles Clark, professor of education, published an article about the social studies curriculum in *The High School Journal* stating that:

three essential areas of social learning...should represent the scope of the task of the social studies: Integration of the individual in his relationships with the social environment...competence in inter-personal relationship...and effective membership in American institutional life.<sup>48</sup>

The second point, “competence in interpersonal relationships,” harkens back to the previous chapter. However, little application of this idea ever came to fruition. Instead, the final point, “effective membership in American institutional life” was the part of the social studies curriculum most focused on by educators. The 1953 New York state curriculum stated, “American history has values in terms of loyalty because common experiences and common aspirations are essential ingredients in patriotism.”<sup>49</sup> The main thrust of nearly all the literature about the social studies by educators during this period dealt with the promotion of American ideals through better citizenship education.

Many wrote about these ideals, such as “democratic heritage” or “democratic tendencies,” in very vague terms. In 1952, the National Council for the Social Studies attempted to buck this trend and define exactly what was meant by “American ideals:”

Basic American ideals include: 1) A respect for the infinite value of the individual and a recognition of his sacred worth... 2) A belief in equality of opportunity for each individual to develop and use his potentialities. The ideal human equality has not validity without equality of opportunity. 3) The team method of solving common problems and promoting common concerns.... 4) A faith in the use of reason.... 5) Hope for the future—a faith that if we do work together and use our reason, we can solve our problems and continue in the future to improve our way of life as we have in the past.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Charles M. Clarke, “Organizing the Social Studies Curriculum,” *The High School Journal* 35:5 (February 1952): 150-151.

<sup>49</sup> Coons, 117.

<sup>50</sup> Jack Allen, ed., *National Council for the Social Studies Twenty-third Yearbook*, 8-9.

It is interesting to note the use of the concept of the individual and group collaboration. The emphasis in the social studies on intergroup relations and cooperation between social classes (“ideals” number three and five), ethnicities, and other differences was a holdover from the previous era of educational trends. These values are not mentioned in any of the other literature from this era, and could serve as representative of the NCSS’ true feelings towards education as well as a signpost of the future direction of social studies education after McCarthyism subsided. This will be more evident in the next chapter, when the themes of progressive education come back into the dialogue. The first two points focus on the individual and the need of each person to be respected equally. These ideas would maintain their legitimacy throughout the era of McCarthyism.

During this time period, individualism replaced cooperation as ideal to be strived for. Academics in the field of education told teachers to focus on the individual, for many thought teachers were incapable of effecting society as a whole. Earl S. Johnson, education commentator and professor of social sciences at the University of Chicago, said, “The teacher’s chief and immediate task is to aid in the making of the character of individuals, not in making the character of society, except indirectly and in the long run.”<sup>51</sup> Charles Tonsor, principal of Cleveland High School in Brooklyn, New York, wrote in *The Clearing House* of the need to teach for “free men” and “for individualism” in order to preserve the rule of law and avoid descending into anarchy.<sup>52</sup> This focus on individualism stems from the need of educators to distance American education from Soviet education. Combining the increased attention on the social studies with loyalty oaths

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<sup>51</sup> Earl S. Johnson, “Teaching and the Democratic Character,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 15:1 (October 1955): 85.

<sup>52</sup> Charles A. Tonsor, “Education Today: For Law and Order or Anarchy?” *The Clearing House* 23:8 (April, 1949): 494.

and McCarthyism, educators looked for any way to emphasize what made the United States different, and better, than the USSR.

Many educators pondered about how to implement the principles of American individualism in the school. Earl S. Johnson recognized that such a task required “unavoidable indoctrination.”<sup>53</sup> However, this unavoidable indoctrination set the “benchmarks for belief and thought in our society,” and “constitute our categorical moral imperatives which do not change, although the conditions and means for their realization do change.”<sup>54</sup> Johnson’s recognition that societal changes influence the ways through which these ideals would be implemented provided a key explanation for why methods of curricular implementation were changing from the earlier period: as conditions changed (the Cold War beginning), education would need to accommodate these changes. This resulted in the need to differentiate American values from Soviet values—individualism versus collectivism—as the Cold War intensified. Educators decided that the best way to adequately implement these American ideals was through curriculum revision.

By the time the 1950’s were underway, it was apparent that curricula were changing quicker than ever before. The 1954 National Education Association survey of over 4000 school curricula showed that there was an “increased tempo of curriculum revision” during the late 1940’s and early 1950’s.<sup>55</sup> Educators Kimball Wiles and Woodrow Sugg published an article in the *Review of Educational Research* titled “Factors Influencing Curriculum Development.” They identified the factors influencing curriculum development to be “social conditions, the efforts of community groups and parents, foundations, and professional associations and agencies, colleges

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<sup>53</sup> Johnson, 84.

<sup>54</sup> Johnson, 84.

<sup>55</sup> Kimball Wiles and Woodrow Sugg, “Factors Influencing Curriculum Development,” *Review of Educational Research* 24:3 (June, 1954): 195-203.

and universities, state departments of education, and local school improvement.”<sup>56</sup> They also recognized that “the international situation has influenced the curriculum.”<sup>57</sup> This newfound recognition of the scenarios affecting curricular development, however, did not rid it of influence from these forces. Despite this recognition, curricula developers continued to conform to the whims of the contemporary trends in education.

It was also recognized that the social studies inherently reflects the social issues of the time. In the aptly named article “Social Studies Reflects Social Issues,” written for *The High School Journal* in 1953, professor of education at Duke University Jonathon McLendon wrote about the relation between the two. He said, “In the schools of a democracy it is inevitable that the social studies reflects social issues.”<sup>58</sup> He hypothesized that:

Social issues enter social studies classes through three doors: (1) through incidental treatment accorded these social issues related to the topics typically taught in social studies courses, (2) through direct and extensive study of each of several social issues in some social studies courses, and (3) through the utilization in many social studies classes of published materials that present varying points of view toward controversial issues.<sup>59</sup>

However, because of the Red Scare and loyalty oaths, it was not always possible to present varying points of view toward controversial issues. As previously discussed, teachers were also reluctant to directly teach controversial issues. From McLendon’s analysis, that leaves only the first option (through incidental treatment) as the only real avenue during this era through which social issues can be reflected in the teaching of social studies.

One way that social needs incidentally permeated the classroom is through the new curricular trends. One popular trend during this time was to shift the courses towards what were called “practical needs.” Writing about the goals for organization of the social studies

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<sup>56</sup> Wiles and Sugg, 195.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

<sup>58</sup> Jonathon C. McLendon, “Social Studies Reflects Social Issues,” *The High School Journal* 37:2 (November 1953): 60.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

curriculum, professor of education Charles Clarke said that, “It is safe to state that the most urgent needs in this field of the curriculum are for a nationwide, long-range shifting of emphasis from traditional social science courses towards courses organized around real needs.”<sup>60</sup> While these “real needs” are never specifically identified, there are certain additions to curricula that are unique to the 1950’s that give an idea of what types of needs they mean. In the New York State American History curriculum from 1953, “for the first and only time, it was suggested that each school incorporate civil defense procedures into the social studies program.”<sup>61</sup> As previously described, the Cold War fears played a large part in this addition. Civil defense procedures have little intellectual properties, but certainly played a practical role in citizenship education. It is additions such as this that are special to this specific early Cold War period.

Another popular curricular trend, held over from the previous era, aimed to make the material more relatable to the students. Educators Jonathon McClendon and Sylvia Robinson said social studies courses in 1956 “lack vitality, realness, and practical applicability to everyday life because they deal with distant times, remote places, and seemingly abstract principles.”<sup>62</sup> Educators thought, “relating current events to the materials commonly taught in the social studies will vitalize instruction and appeal to adolescents’ out-of-school interests.”<sup>63</sup> It is important to note that the changes being suggested to the social studies are coming from changes in the content and curriculum, and not changes to pedagogy.

The attempt to make the social studies more relatable for students extended to textbooks. Some felt textbooks were “loaded with facts and details. There is so much to remember that

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<sup>60</sup> Clarke, 149-150.

<sup>61</sup> Coons, 82.

<sup>62</sup> Jonathon McLendon and Sylvia Davis Robinson, “Current Affairs for Social Studies Classes, 1956-1957,” *The High School Journal* 40:1 (October 1956): 41.

<sup>63</sup> McLendon and Robinson, 41.

students flounder in the sterile mass of words.”<sup>64</sup> The big question concerning textbooks was about their scope and organization. Like the postwar era, most believed that the way to make the social studies more relatable was to study more recent history, rather than change the orientation of the curriculum or pedagogy. A study of the five most commonly used secondary school American history textbooks found that “four of them devoted around 50 percent of their pages to American history since Reconstruction.”<sup>65</sup> This disproportionate focus on more modern American history is directly related to the attempt to make high school history more practical and relatable. The same study found that a few textbooks even “cover to 1900 in the first half of their text; hence, devoting 50 percent of their space to the happenings since the turn of the century. They justify this on the basis that these are the events which have had the most direct bearing on America today.”<sup>66</sup>

A related critique of social studies textbooks was that they were too objective and scientific. Instead, argued social studies teacher Paul Schreiber in a 1952 publication of *The Social Studies*, the course should be taught subjectively. He said:

The American high school student is deprived by his textbook of the thrill and inspiration of active participation in the American Epic. He loses, thereby, the feeling of steadiness of moral values and the spiritual integrity of living. He has not been permitted contact with the elemental values of American life. ... There is nothing of the deep love of country which could be inspired by the story of the stern majesty of the shining mountains and the loneliness of the vast plains, nor the high chorus of color in the sunset.<sup>67</sup>

He explicitly argues for increased subjectivity in the textbooks, and even says that “our story needs to be told to our youth in the form of an epic saga” and that it “must be in a form that will

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<sup>64</sup> Paul Schreiber, “American History Needs A New Kind of Textbook,” *Social Studies* 43:8, December 1952): 315.

<sup>65</sup> Bob L. Taylor, “Some Trends in Secondary American History Textbook Organization,” *Social Studies*: 47:7 (November 1956): 255-256.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor, 256.

<sup>67</sup> Schreiber, 316.

make it eagerly read as a ‘best seller.’”<sup>68</sup> Statements such as these are unique to this time period, and some went as far as to disregard prominent American historians from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1950’s are marked by non-educators joining educators in pressing for more nationalism and less factualism in texts. And these critics shunned the progressive historians that held sway in the field of American history for much of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Attempting to speak for the disgruntled layperson, lawyer and amateur historian Howard Westwood published an article in the *Social Studies* journal claiming that, “The oversimplified and “scientific” treatment of the discipline of Marx or of Turner— or, if you will, of Beard—is plain deception.”<sup>69</sup> By associating Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard with Karl Marx, Howard Westwood is attempting to discredit these two seminal American historians. These are two men who practically created and defined the American historical profession. Beard in particular developed a critical look at the Constitution, something that many Cold War educators and citizens alike did not want to promote. In this way, there was an attempt to limit the variety of viewpoints accessible to students, in order to make sure they were not prone to subversive ideas.

As McCarthyism started to become more of a memory than a reality, politics began to shift slightly away from conservative and nationalistic values. Education also followed this trajectory. Educators began, slowly but surely, to ask more questions that challenged the status quo. As the Cold War became more ingrained in American politics and culture, the nature of American citizenship would continue to change. The role of citizens would change as the requirements for fighting the Cold War evolved.

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 316.

<sup>69</sup> Howard C. Westwood, “A Layman’s View of High School American History,” *Social Studies* 46:1 (January 1955): 5.

In 1954, one of the single most important events in American education took place: the ruling of *Brown v Board of Education* to desegregate schools in America. This idea was not touched on previously in this chapter, because those writing about the social studies during this time period made little to no reference to this monumental decision. As previously stressed, there was a great deal of restriction on the ability of citizens and academics to question or challenge “traditional” American values. This extended to race, where many social studies educators were afraid of being censored for addressing the restriction of freedom in America. The United States was trying to position itself as leader of the free world, and the Jim Crow laws of the south were an international embarrassment.<sup>70</sup> The *Brown* ruling had incredibly significant ramifications for American education. Of the *Brown* decision, Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren said that education had become so integral to society that “it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.”<sup>71</sup> With this ruling, a new rhetoric was set for education, based on equality of opportunity.

One very significant area of change from *Brown* was that citizens had to be treated by law as individuals, not as group members.<sup>72</sup> This reinvented the conception of American citizenship, which would have substantial implications for the social studies. As citizens of color pressed for their civil rights, the legal cases dealt with each plaintiff as an individual, and did not address the entire group. This signaled a shift in the legal perception of citizenship, which would

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<sup>70</sup> Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>71</sup> Chief Justice Earl Warren, as quoted in Diane Ravitch, *The Troubled Crusade: American Education 1945-1980* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 127.

<sup>72</sup> Ravitch, 125.

have ramifications for all of American society and culture. This revolutionary shift was not discussed during this chapter, because the ramifications were not felt for several years. Once the dust had settled from the *Brown* decision, educators began to act on these changes. The lag time here is significant, for it shows how entrenched fears of both censorship and institutional change were. During the early 1950's, citizenship was defined in terms of allegiance to American democratic values and American institutions. The *Brown* ruling squarely contradicted this vision of citizenship, and few knew how to progress. Thus, the effects of the *Brown* ruling on social studies education would not be felt until the late 1950's and early 1960's.

## Chapter 4: 1957-1965

The anger directed towards American education in the late 1950's and early 1960s was not very different than the criticism from the early and mid-1950's. However, it was during this period, the late 1950's and early 1960's, that this criticism manifested itself differently in schools, shifting from social studies critiques to complaints about the teaching of mathematics and science. The importance of schooling to the Cold War ceased to just be nationalistic rhetoric; it became reality when the Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik in 1957. "The Soviet launch of the world's first artificial satellite on October 4, 1957, promptly ended the debate that had raged for several years about the quality of American education."<sup>73</sup> The Cold War fears of falling behind the Soviets was no longer just talk, and schools worked hard to bulk up on science and mathematics.

Sputnik ushered in a new age, where one thing could be agreed on by all: American schools needed some sort of change. "For the first time since the end of World War II, people of all political backgrounds agreed that the national interest depended on improving the quality of America's schools."<sup>74</sup> The National Council for the Social Studies wrote in 1960 that, "One answer which seems to ring beneath the words of every chapter in this Yearbook is that *unless we change the things we have been doing, we are dooming future generations to a life less rich, less free, less personally satisfying than even the modest lives most of us have today.*"<sup>75</sup> Seeing American society as "doomed" if the American educational system didn't change, a new urgency to "fix it" impacted American society's perception of education. The Cold War thus became

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<sup>73</sup> Ravitch, 228.

<sup>74</sup> Ravitch, 228.

<sup>75</sup> Franklin Patterson, ed., *Thirtieth National Council for the Social Studies Yearbook 1960: Citizenship and a Free Society: Education for the Future* (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Company, 1960), 274.

more personal, as every citizen needed to do their part to make sure future generations were not doomed to the evils of communism. Citizenship took on a much more personal meaning, as each person had to “do their part.” Sputnik was seen as a tangible example that American democratic values were in jeopardy. For the sake of the preservation of American values, the role of the citizen had to adapt to the changing needs of the Cold War. In this moment, that meant improving mathematics and science education.

After its moment in the sun, the social studies were temporarily thrown on the backburner.<sup>76</sup> Social studies educators tried to combat this shift by relying on the fiery Cold War rhetoric that brought the social studies to the forefront of the educational debate in the early to mid 1950’s. Lawrence Metcalf, one of the foremost progressive educators, believed that “A soft policy with regard to the social sciences is required for survival in a dictatorship. A similar soft policy, it should not be forgotten, will ultimately destroy a democracy.”<sup>77</sup> However, commentators didn’t exist only in the realm of social studies educators. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan Jr., addressing the National Council for the Social Studies at their annual convention, said:

Teaching more about the Bill of Rights could have one very practical result for social scientists in terms of the cold war value conflict. Exposing high school students to material on “comparative civil rights” might achieve the aims of current critics of the social studies more effectively than would a the courses devoted exclusively to “The Evils of Communism” which some of those critics propose.<sup>78</sup>

Those working in state departments of education also recognized the need to maintain the prominence of the social studies. Educators in the state of California department of education

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<sup>76</sup> Lawrence Metcalf, “New Horizons in Teaching the Social Studies: The Reflective Teacher,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 44:1 (October, 1962): 17.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Barham, “Ignore the Social Studies?” *The Clearing House* 34:8 (April, 1960): 454.

<sup>78</sup> 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the NCSS, November 24, 1962, William J Brennan, Jr., Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Department of Education, State Board of Education, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Everett Calvert, F3752:1020, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

claimed, “no more vital task faces our schools than assisting their pupils to understand the nature and basis of our rights and freedoms, both historically and in their contemporary application.”<sup>79</sup>

While some of this rhetoric can be seen as bias, for these educators certainly wanted to keep their jobs, it also shows how those constructing the social studies curriculum thought about the important concepts of rights and freedoms.

However, despite the widespread agreement that the schools needed to be altered, deep philosophical divisions lay between proponents of educational change. Despite these philosophical differences, all the different schools of thought used the same nationalistic Cold War rhetoric. The NCSS, recognizing the potential devastation that political and philosophical differences could create for social studies reformers, argued that the terms citizenship and free society are broad and vague, and it may be best to keep them that way.<sup>80</sup> This way, reformers could hide behind such phrases as “American values” and “promotion of democratic values.”

They were not alone in realizing that the social studies program had been:

fashioned over the last century by “patriots,” professors, and publishing houses” and that the social studies directly represented “an entente between folk and academic cultures. And such agreements—like those that keep southern conservatives and northern liberals under the same political banner—rest on the abstractness of their defined purposes.”<sup>81</sup>

Despite an unspoken agreement to use vague rhetoric, a dialogue between two distinct groups of reformers emerged.

Now out of the public spotlight, a more intellectual and academic debate developed about the social studies. This debate created two main schools of thought, and both groups responded to and influenced each other. One group, led by historian and education critic Arthur Bestor,

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<sup>79</sup> Teaching the Principles of the Bill of Rights, as adopted, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction Everett Calvert, F3752:1020, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

<sup>80</sup> Franklin Patterson, ed., *Thirtieth National Council for the Social Studies Yearbook 1960*, 3.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Hanvey, “Augury for the Social Studies,” *The School Review* 69:1 (Spring, 1961): 12.

argued for teaching subjects based solely on the academic disciplines, with little interdisciplinary work. This group also emphasized the importance of keeping contemporary issues out of the classroom, and wanted the school to be isolated from social and political events. For the sake of this thesis, I will call this group the Bestor-ites. Their ideal society relied on a well-informed, critically and independently thinking citizenry. The opposing group was made up of academics working in education departments at universities throughout the country. For the sake of this paper, I will call this group the educators or professional educators. They advocated for the exact opposite of the Bestor-ites: contemporary issues needed to be taught and discussed in the classroom, preferably through interdisciplinary work. This group argued that the school should try to push and change society for the better. They envisioned a future where citizens would need to know how to work together to discuss and solve social and political problems. Particular knowledge itself was deemed less important to the citizens' lives than learning the process through which knowledge was gained. This chapter will address the different philosophies of these two schools of thought and their ideal for future citizens.

### Arthur Bestor and the Educational Critics

Historian Arthur Bestor became known in the 1950's for his critiques of contemporary education. At the time a professor of American history at the University of Illinois (he moved to the University of Washington in 1963, where he stayed for the remainder of his career), Bestor gained more fame (or notoriety, depending on one's perspective) as author of the book *Educational Wastelands* in 1953. Bestor argued vehemently against progressive education and for a greater emphasis on the liberal arts in public schools. Across the country he won the ire of educators, and the heart of education critics. He was not alone "in his belief that what was taught

in the schools was obsolescent, trivial, or insufficiently challenging.”<sup>82</sup> Bestor’s ideas came to solidify an entire wing of educational philosophy that held significant weight in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s. Bridging a unique gap, Bestor represented the disapproval of American schools for both the generally discontent public, as well intellectuals. In 1959, he described his philosophy in a journal article published by MIT Press on behalf of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences:

American education has been shaped to its present form by the forces in American society, forces that have been largely unresisted or even perversely reinforced. It can be reshaped by sternly resisting certain of these forces and by deliberately enhancing the strength of others. American education must also be reshaped if the United States is not to follow the path of degeneration blazed by other nations that in the past have complacently cherished their vices equally with their virtues, from a cozy feeling that both were their very own. The duty of American educators is to make the discriminations that are necessary if social forces are to be so directed as to revitalize American education, and, through education, American society. This is the sum of my argument.<sup>83</sup>

Bestor wished for students to learn a set body of knowledge, derived from modern advancements in the academic fields made by professors and other academics. This strict emphasis on the academic disciplines meant going against the trend among professors of education to incorporate more contemporary events into the curricula. Arthur Bestor wished to make the school separate from societal changes, in order to, in his eyes, save education. He said, “The independence of education from social pressures must be defended not merely for the sake of education but primarily for the sake of society.”<sup>84</sup> He therefore saw education as completely separate from society, a theory that forsook nearly a half-century of the educational theory. In both his words and his theories, Bestor did not hide his disdain for scholars of education.

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<sup>82</sup> Ravitch, 229.

<sup>83</sup> Arthur Bestor, “Education and Its Proper Relationship to the Forces of American Society,” *Daedalus* 88:1 (Winter, 1959): 76.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 75.

However, even more contentious than the debate over schools, was the debate over the teaching of the social studies. As an historian, this area bore the brunt of Arthur Bestor's focus and critique. This is because he believed that "history and the social studies, among all the disciplines of the school curriculum, [have] the primary responsibility for civic training."<sup>85</sup> Couched in rhetoric reminiscent of the early 1950's conservatives of the Red Scare, Bestor argued for the grave importance of history and the social studies. The attention he gave to this area is also likely a result of his own training and bias as a professor of American history. Bestor argued that by making the curriculum more relevant, as his opponents contended, students were being deprived of a quality education and American institutional values were being eroded.

Bestor admonished the focus on relevancy in the curricula and personal relation to subject matter. Perhaps mocking the seriousness of his opponents' rhetoric, Bestor said that their claims were "utter nonsense. A student does not *solve* a contemporary problem in the classroom."<sup>86</sup> He continue, saying that the focus on relevancy "turned the social studies classroom into a clinic for discussing the personal problems."<sup>87</sup> He claimed that the "preoccupation with contemporary affairs, in programs of social studies, deprives young people, in effect, of the ability to profit from the whole past experience of mankind."<sup>88</sup> He argued that students would actually be better equipped to solve contemporary issues if they learned how those in the past had solved problems. But that wasn't his only critique—he also claimed that the study of contemporary affairs didn't actually give the students the skills they would need to combat the problems of the world. This focus, he said, "has implanted in them [the students] the

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<sup>85</sup> Arthur Bestor, "History, Social Studies, and Citizenship: The Responsibilities of Public Schools," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 104:6 (December, 15, 1960): 549.

<sup>86</sup> Bestor, "History, Social Studies, and Citizenship," 552.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 550.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 551.

arrogant and fatal belief that they can deal successfully with contemporary problems by a round of group discussions, without benefit of precise knowledge, logical analysis, or historical understanding.”<sup>89</sup> Thus, Bestor believed that without proper academic training, citizens could not fix the ills of society.

It was the study of history, Bestor claimed, that would actually help students deal with contemporary issues more than any other subject, even new interdisciplinary classes such as “Contemporary Issues.” This is because history “provides genuine problem-solving situations... History provides training in precisely those processes of mind that a citizen must use when wrestling with the problems of his own day.”<sup>90</sup> Professor Bestor believed that the study of history, as with every subject, should be more rigorous and defined by the academic disciplines. Instead of the social studies, an amalgamation of history and the other social sciences, Bestor argued for standalone classes in history, economics, sociology, and other social sciences.

He claimed that the current social studies course barely even related to the academic disciplines it was based on, saying, “Between the social studies, so-called, in the elementary and secondary schools, and the social sciences as known to the mature world of scholarship, there exists at present only the most superficial resemblances and the most tenuous intellectual connections.”<sup>91</sup> He wanted to see a better relationship between scholars and public school students. However, he never specified how he intended to accomplish this.

Others tried to elaborate on this. Robert Hanvey, curriculum specialist at the University of Chicago, claimed that “technology” would serve this role, but didn’t specify which technology

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 552.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 552-553.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 551.

would help.<sup>92</sup> Despite this, there was optimism among Bestor's compatriots that they would win the day. "The rate at which new knowledge is being produced" was thought to eventually force the social studies to incorporate more concrete social science.<sup>93</sup> As the final nail in the coffin, Bestor bashed professors of education, saying they had inferior knowledge of the modern world when compared to professors of social sciences. "Men in such positions (historians, geographers, economists, etc) are aware, as specialists in pedagogy cannot be, of the intellectual demands that the modern world is actually making, and will increasingly make, upon the adult citizen."<sup>94</sup>

Arthur Bestor thus hoped to increase the rigor of American elementary and secondary education. Focusing his attention on the social studies, Bestor argued for studying the subjects that make up the social studies separately, rather than as a single interdisciplinary course. He believed that this would help students to better comprehend and solve the problems of society when they were older. Through this argument, Bestor places academic learning as far superior to social learning, and deems the former more important for citizenship than the latter. He views citizenship as reliant on intelligence and independent thinking. This can largely be seen as a reaction to Cold War fears, such as Sputnik and potential Soviet subversive plots.

### Professional Educators and the Quest for Relevancy

There was a considerable amount of response and backlash to Bestor's ideas. Many professors of education, pedagogy, and curriculum felt threatened by an outsider bashing their ideas for the advancement of American public education. Refutations of Bestor ranged from claiming he made "over-generalizations, exaggerations, and the occasional misstatements of

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<sup>92</sup> Hanvey, 11-24.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>94</sup> Bestor, "History, Social Studies, and Citizenship," 553.

fact,”<sup>95</sup> to claiming his critiques were based on a “superficial acquaintance”<sup>96</sup> with the material he was critiquing. Another author claimed that Bestor and his fans “ignore what is known today of the learning process.”<sup>97</sup> Lawrence Metcalf, a well known progressive-minded educator, claimed Bestor could not adapt to, or understand, change in a democracy:

Even more striking is the fact that Bestor fails to recognize that no matter how ultimate is the worth of democracy, the actual meaning of democracy to people who believe in it will change with the times. It is the fixed meaning given to individualism by both conservatives and liberals which hampers our efforts to deliberately plan for a more democratic society.<sup>98</sup>

There is a plethora of witty and intelligent retorts to Arthur Bestor and his followers, but as a critical, conservative group, Bestor-ites held a great deal of public sway.

But who, besides Lawrence Metcalf, were the prominent opponents of Bestor? Perhaps the most subtle, even-handed, and influential opponent of Arthur Bestor was the National Council for the Social Studies. As a group of educators, their backlash can be seen in two ways: an ideological difference, as well as a fight for the relevance of their job. While never explicitly coming out against Bestor’s ideas, the NCSS actively advocated for making the social studies more interdisciplinary and teaching subject matter that was more relevant to students’ lives. Building on the work of educators in the previous era (Chapter 3), they understood that schools reflect the values of contemporary society. In their 1960 yearbook, the NCSS noted that, “certainly, our past and present experience is that society has usually led, and schools have usually followed.”<sup>99</sup> In 1958, the NCSS created a Commission on the Social Studies, which found that “new educational programs, *responsive* to social change and the funded insights of the

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<sup>95</sup> Paul Woodring, “The Decline of Educational Philosophy,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 40:1 (October 1958): 8.

<sup>96</sup> Lawrence E. Metcalf, “Intellectual Development in Modern Schools,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 38:7 (April, 1957): 277-280.

<sup>97</sup> J.H. Best, “Social Studies in the Secondary School Core Curriculum,” *The High School Journal* 43:1 (October, 1959): 30.

<sup>98</sup> Metcalf, 278.

<sup>99</sup> Franklin Patterson, ed., *Thirtieth National Council for the Social Studies Yearbook 1960*, 5.

social and behavioral disciplines, were...critically needed.”<sup>100</sup> Groups like NCSS and the Commission on the Social Studies were hopeful for the future, echoing the more progressive-minded academics of university education departments. They believed that “education in times like these might go beyond being a reflex of social change to become in some measure an innovating social force itself.”<sup>101</sup> In these ways, the NCSS, the most influential source of social studies innovation, showed that social studies educators believed education could not just respond to social change, but actually be an agent for change itself. These ideas would gain more ground as the 1960’s progressed.

Critics of Bestor’s ideas, maintained that the social studies curriculum must be based around the integration of various social sciences and must be relevant to the lives of students. Educators believed that it was of utmost importance for students to think critically about contemporary events. “A fundamental task in the social studies is to help students determine whether there is any warrant for holding certain beliefs.”<sup>102</sup> In 1957, Lawrence Metcalf clarified his own position while directly addressing Bestor’s mis-analysis of educators’ ideas, saying Bestor believed that:

historical data would be taught only if it clarifies some conflict of concern to the learner. This approach would not mean that we teach students only what they “want” to learn. This is a distorted view of the doctrine of interest and is the view which Bestor attributes to educationists. A more accurate view says that we build interest in a socially significant conflict —whenever that interest is lacking in students—and proceed to help students resolve the conflict at a level of understanding appropriate to their maturity. Much history will not be taught under this approach, but whatever history we teach will have intellectual meaning and worth to the students who learn it.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>102</sup> Lawrence E. Metcalf, “New Horizons in the Teaching of Social Studies: The Reflective Teacher,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 44:1 (October, 1962): 17.

<sup>103</sup> Metcalf, “Intellectual Development in Modern Schools,” 280.

Not only was history to be taught in a different way, but Metcalf also believed that Bestor's type of history was educationally inferior in depth of knowledge to the emerging trends in the education of history. He said that students "may at best learn a great deal about *what* happened... but they can never learn *why* anything happened, because their content has no power to explain or predict events."<sup>104</sup>

One important way to learn why events happened and to give depth to the knowledge of history was to teach controversial issues in the classroom. This was something that made many social studies teachers uncomfortable, as it is much easier to advocate for than to actually teach. Of *Brown* specifically, Judah Harris, a researcher at the Anti-Defamation League, found that, "when the 1954 Supreme Court decision on public-school desegregation is presented, discussion of its underlying principles and the subsequent ongoing attempts at both compliance and evasion are bypassed."<sup>105</sup> Despite the fact that few wanted to talk about these controversial contemporary issues, educators still pushed to bring them into the classroom. In 1960, the NCSS represented this idea, saying that "education should tackle these difficult areas exactly because they *are* difficult and therefore of great potential danger if left alone."<sup>106</sup> Despite that, few teacher-training programs actually addressed this need.<sup>107</sup> This is just one of many gaps between implementation and theory going on among educationists at the time.

An interesting area of resurgence for professional educators was the teaching of intergroup relations. Like the teaching of controversial issues, this area was largely influenced by contemporary social and political events. As mentioned in Chapter 2 of this thesis, intergroup

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<sup>104</sup> Metcalf, "New Horizons in the Teaching of Social Studies," 20.

<sup>105</sup> Judah J. Harris, "1963 Inter-group Relations in SS Texts," *Theory into Practice* 2:3 (June 1963): 13.

<sup>106</sup> Franklin Patterson, ed., *Thirtieth National Council for the Social Studies Yearbook 1960*, 13.

<sup>107</sup> Stanley E. Ballinger, "The Social Studies and Social Controversy," *The School Review* 71:1 (Spring 1963): 97-111.

relations were an important stress in the social studies after World War II. However this time, intergroup relations had a decidedly domestic, rather than international focus. This is largely due to the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling, which put American race relations in the public spotlight like never before. In their 1958 yearbook, the NCSS said that, “Never before has America been so concerned about problems of intergroup relations. The Supreme Court decision of 1954 declaring school segregation unconstitutional has brought to the fore an area of education that has long been of concern to teachers”<sup>108</sup> The importance of this topic continued for many years, and the NCSS 1960 Yearbook devoted two chapters to the topic of intergroup relations.<sup>109</sup>

It is clear that the *Brown* had a profound impact on educators, and is a large reason for their insistence on improving intergroup relations. Their focus on interdisciplinary learning of contemporary events combines nicely with this idea. Educators understood that students learn both social and academic ideas in school. This led to their want to improve students’ ability to interact with and understand various social groups. Through the study of polemic contemporary events, educators believed students could learn how to help improve the social frictions that minority groups were facing in the United States. Thus, their conception of citizenship was influenced much more by *Brown* and domestic events such as the Civil Rights Movement, than by international events such as Sputnik.

This renewed focus on intergroup relations highlights how the Bestor-ites and the educators were simultaneously debating, yet talking past one another. Bestor-ites and large swaths of American society were scared by Sputnik, and focused their attention and criticism on

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<sup>108</sup> Roy A. Price, ed., *Twenty-Eight Yearbook of the National Council for the Social Studies: New Viewpoints in the Social Sciences*, (Menasha, Wisconsin: George Banta Company, 1958), 198.

<sup>109</sup> Franklin Patterson, ed., *Thirtieth National Council for the Social Studies Yearbook 1960*.

the American education system like never before. Their focus was largely international, and their conception of citizenship was based on nationalistic Cold War values. On the other hand, the educators were influenced more by domestic turmoil due to *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Civil Rights Movement. They wished to create a citizenry that understood differences, and knew how to discuss problems with one another. While these two groups argued over what should be taught in the social studies, and thus the meaning of citizenship, a new theory called the “new social studies” was using themes from both groups to gain consensus on a new direction for the social studies course and curriculum.

## Chapter 5: The New Social Studies, 1961-1970

Since the end of World War II, the debate over the social studies had changed greatly. By 1970, the conversation “about the nature of the social studies...would have been unheard of even fifteen years ago.”<sup>110</sup> At each stage of development and debate, contemporary social trends influenced the shape and rhetoric of the discussion: the postwar era saw a need for increased communal working, the McCarthyism era resulted in an increase in nationalistic fervor, and the post-Sputnik era saw a need make students more interested in their studies through making school more relevant to students’ lives. Having significant overlap, both conceptually and chronologically, with the post-Sputnik era, the “new social studies” was in many ways a culmination of the previous movements. However, the overarching concept of the new social studies was far more radical and wholly encompassing than any of the previous ideas about the social studies. Combining the emphasis on the individual, as educators were striving for, and large scale change in orientation of the educational system, as the Bestor-ites hoped for, the new social studies embodied both schools of thought in a theory that was grounded in educational psychology.

The underlying basis for the new social studies is reliant on the discipline-shattering ideas of educational psychologist Jerome Bruner. His 1961 book *Process of Education* changed educational psychology and philosophy in a way akin to John Dewey and Jean Piaget. Bruner’s message in *Process of Education*:

“was that students learn best and most usefully not by being asked to master the conclusions of scholars about questions which the student only dimly comprehends, but

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<sup>110</sup> William W. Goetz, “New Social Studies: Boon or Bust?” *The Clearing House* 44:7 (March, 1970): 405.

by being given the raw data himself and learning to ask his own questions and to draw his own conclusions.”<sup>111</sup>

This emphasis on raw data, or primary sources, in the curriculum was not new to educational philosophy. Reflecting Arthur Bestor and how he championed the study of individual academic disciplines, Bruner emphasized the need to learn “structure.” By structure, Bruner meant the mode of thought, or structure, of an academic discipline. He claimed that “the teaching and learning of structure, rather than the mastery of facts and techniques” is essential to knowledge.<sup>112</sup> In this way, he again recalled Bestor by promoting the study of academic disciplines. However, he also reflected the academic educators by stressing the need to not just learn facts. He claimed that studying structure would make “later performance more efficient... through... nonspecific transfer, or more accurately, the transfer of principles and attitudes.”<sup>113</sup> This transfer of principles and attitudes is akin to studying contemporary events and discussing individual “attitudes.” This shows the lasting impression of McCarthyism, where teaching civic education was seen as of the utmost importance. Bruner thus reflected many of the changes that had been going on up until this point in education, and gave a stellar justification for these curricular ideas. However, the pedagogical shift that he advocated for was the most radical aspect of Bruner’s theory. He emphasized “discovery” (also known as “inquiry”) based learning.

Discovery learning “is in essence a matter of rearranging or transforming evidence in such a way that one is enabled to go beyond the evidence so reassembled to additional new

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<sup>111</sup> Richard H. Brown, “History and the New Social Studies,” *The Saturday Review* (October 15, 1966): 80.

<sup>112</sup> Jerome Bruner, *Process of Education* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), 12.

<sup>113</sup> Bruner, 17.

insights.”<sup>114</sup> Summarizing the new developments in the social studies, professor Paul Kelley of the University of Georgia said, “The principal arguments in support of the discovery method involve claims that a) it provides motivation, by creating interest, b) it results in better understanding, and c) it results in better retention.”<sup>115</sup> As described in the previous chapter, the post-Sputnik era saw a dramatic increase in mathematics and science education, and a focus on problem-solving skills infiltrated every subject of the school curriculum. Bruner’s idea of discovery reflected this by claiming to increase problem solving skills. He stated that, “practice in discovering for oneself teaches one to acquire information in a way that makes that information more readily viable in problem solving.”<sup>116</sup> Again, reflecting the academic themes of this era, Bruner wanted to make students more interested in learning. While others merely suggested making the curriculum more relevant, Bruner provided explicit psychological justification for this belief. He hoped to change rewards for learning from extrinsic motivators to intrinsic ones. Bruner said:

“The degree that one is able to approach learning as a task of discovering something rather than “learning about” it to that degree will there be a tendency for the child to carry out his learning activities with the autonomy of self-reward or, more properly by reward that is discovery itself.”<sup>117</sup>

In fact, Bruner didn’t merely stop at claiming that making students more interested would help them in a particular subject. He aid that “the very attitude and activities that characterize “figuring out” or “discovering” things for oneself also seem to have the effect of making material

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<sup>114</sup> Jerome Bruner, “The Act of Discovery,” *Harvard Educational Review* 31:1 (Winter, 1961): 22.

<sup>115</sup> Paul E. Kelly, “What’s Happening in the Social Studies,” *The High School Journal* 51:5 (February 1968): 236.

<sup>116</sup> Bruner, “The Act of Discovery,” 26.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

more readily accessible in memory.”<sup>118</sup> Discovery would thus have an impact on total brain function, not just on improving knowledge in a certain subject, such as social studies. As educator William Goetz summarized in his article assessing the effect of the new social studies, “Bruner’s *The Process of Education*... was destined to provide the theoretical basis for much of the “new” social studies.”<sup>119</sup>

### The New Social Studies

The “revolution” in the social studies, called the new social studies, was based on revising the social studies curriculum and reforming traditional pedagogy to more closely resemble Bruner’s ideas of discovery learning. The new social studies, Diane Ravitch said:

hoped to replace current methods—characterized by teacher-led “telling” and student recitation—with curriculum packages that used “discovery,” “inquiry,” and inductive reasoning as methods of learning; the rationale was that students would find the field more interesting and would retain longer what they learned if they “figure out,” through carefully exercises or experiments, the basic principles of the field. ... They emphasized the understanding of a few central concepts in a discipline, rather than trying to “cover” an entire field, the way current course in science or history did. Where present curricula stressed the informational, descriptive, and applied aspects of a subject..., the new curricula would teach the structure of the academic discipline; students would learn how a... social scientist thinks.<sup>120</sup>

The ideas, concepts, and projects of the new social studies were done mainly at universities and colleges by social science professors detached from the students they were hoping to better educate. It is noteworthy that this did generally not include professors in the universities’ and colleges’ departments of education. In 1963, the United States Office of Education launched the “Project Social Studies, which included more than 50 curriculum projects devoted to improving

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 32.

<sup>119</sup> Goetz, 404.

<sup>120</sup> Ravitch, 232.

the social studies.<sup>121</sup> Project Social Studies gave federal money to groups that worked to revise the social studies curriculum. Usually this money went to think tanks based at universities. In a 1970 article assessing the changes to the social studies curriculum, educator Donald Bechtel stated that, “The objectives (of Project Social Studies) were to improve instruction, research, and teacher training in the social sciences and to disseminate information on social studies curriculum development to the nation’s schools.”<sup>122</sup> The most prominent of these think tanks was at Carnegie Mellon University. Known as the Carnegie scholars, this group was led by historian Edwin Fenton, and used Bruner’s psychological theories of learning to inform their new curricula.

The new social studies can be seen as a culmination of many past educational movements, particularly past social studies movements discussed in previous chapters of this thesis. Despite this, it was seen as an entirely new product. Edwin Fenton, professor of history one of the leaders of the Carnegie Mellon think tank group defined the new social studies:

“The new social studies involve five major areas of the instructional process: (1) objectives, (2) teaching strategies, (3) materials, (4) pupil deployment, and (5) evaluation. Each area impinges upon all the others; a change in one implies a change in all. Taken together, these cumulative changes will produce a distinctly new product.”<sup>123</sup>

It is clear that Fenton and other proponents of the new social studies aimed to make comprehensive changes to the social studies curriculum. As stated in the above passage, the new social studies targeted goals, pedagogy, materials, examinations, and evaluation. As previously

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<sup>121</sup> John M. Good, John U. Farley, and Edwin Fenton, “Developing Inquiry Skills with an Experimental Social Studies Curriculum,” *The Journal of Educational Research* 63:1 (September, 1969): 31.

<sup>122</sup> Donald L. Bechtel, “Curriculum Changes in the Social Studies,” *The Clearing House* 44:6 (February, 1970): 364.

<sup>123</sup> Edwin Fenton, “The New Social Studies: Implications for School Administration,” *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals* 51:317 (March, 1967): 62.

described, problem solving skills were seen as a necessity for Cold War citizens. Discovery learning and the new social studies emphasized this change in citizenship roles.

As previously described, the post-Sputnik era saw an increase in teaching problem solving and critical thinking in the schools, and Bruner reflected this in his emphasis on discovery. This transitioned cleanly into the new social studies. In a 1965 article published in *The High School Journal*, educator Harris Dante looked at the recent developments in the social studies and their implications for the future. Of the current state of the social studies, he said that, “There seems to be general agreement that significant learning results from critical thinking and problem solving which make use of analysis and the basic principles of the various disciplines in examining crucial social problems.”<sup>124</sup> Not only did this incorporate critical thinking, but it also reflected the educators’ argument from the previous chapter about teaching current events. The idea that discussing contemporary social problems in the classroom was beneficial was taken from the educators and applied to the new social studies.

However, the new social studies did not take every piece of advice from professional educators. In fact, they also drew directly from Arthur Bestor’s idea of teaching only strict academic disciplines rather than of making subjects more interdisciplinary. Bestor, as the reader may recall, argued for learning the mode of thinking which an academic needs for his or her academic discipline. As a prominent educational psychologist, Bruner gave Bestor’s ideas weight in the world of professional educators, as he was an educational psychologist. Thus, “proponents of the new social studies put increasing stress on the mode of inquiry of the scholar as being the proper heart of course offerings.”<sup>125</sup> This idea actually lay at the heart of the new

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<sup>124</sup> Harris L. Dante, “The Social Studies Face the Future,” *The High School Journal* 49:1 (October, 1965): 31.

<sup>125</sup> Brown, 81.

social studies, and is based on Bruner's emphasis on structure. Paul Kelley's summarized the current trend in social studies education and its influences, saying that the "effort by the organized academic disciplines to shape the social studies curriculum might simply be called the disciplinary approach. If its advocates have a spiritual leader, he is Jerome Bruner."<sup>126</sup>

Advocates for the new social studies often cited Bruner to give their ideas legitimacy. Bruner's standing in the education community gave legitimacy to Bestor's ideas. Educator Paul Kelley said that, "Bruner insists that emphasis should be on the so-called structure of the disciplines. One should not simply begin by teaching history. One should begin by teaching what history is, which is to be accomplished by outlining the internal structure of history as an academic discipline."<sup>127</sup> Bestor too argued for teaching the mode of thinking in each social science discipline, and, after having Bruner's name attached for validity, his ideas finally found a more powerful voice.

The new social studies called for two things borrowed from the two groups discussed in the previous chapter: 1) increasing the study of contemporary events through making the curriculum more relevant, and 2) making the curriculum and mode of thinking of the social studies more in line with the structure of the social science disciplines. The justification for the study of contemporary events, however, was ironically based in the rhetoric of teaching academic disciplines championed by Arthur Bestor, who vehemently argued against relevancy in the curriculum. Edwin Fenton claimed that, "In order to train future citizens well, in order to teach students to cope with their personal problems, in order to help them analyze contemporary public issues, and in order to teach them to interpret the past, we must teach them a structure of

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<sup>126</sup> Kelly, 233.

<sup>127</sup> Kelly, 235.

the social studies disciplines.”<sup>128</sup> Quotes such as these exemplify how the new social studies was the amalgamation of both Bestor-ites and anti-Bestor-ites.

A major difference, however, between the arguments of the educators for relevancy and the new social studies emphasis on relevancy, is its view towards the relationship between the school and society. Educators wanted to improve society through studying it; the new social studies wanted to improve society through improving the individual. Edwin Fenton defined the essential purpose of the new social studies was “to help the child develop into a useful, independent citizen.”<sup>129</sup> This focus on the individual is because proponents of the new social studies believed that:

“inquiry into these conflicts and tensions (between institutions and individuals) will not remove the tension at a societal level, but it could provide the student with insights and understanding by which he can make more intelligent decisions concerning the way in which he will relate himself to those tensions.”<sup>130</sup>

The direct challenges that contemporary American society faced—such as increasingly violent and tense race relations, the ever present backdrop of the Cold War, the Vietnam War and the counterculture directly opposing it—led to a great change in the responsibilities of the citizen. Schools aimed to inculcate the ideal citizen of the future, and current events forced great changes to what this entailed. No longer did the ideal citizen go along with the status quo, as was expected in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. Instead, citizens were expected to think critically about complex social and political issues, and know what they personally believed in. As citizenship shifted from being focused on society to being focused on the individual, social

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<sup>128</sup> Fenton, 66.

<sup>129</sup> Fenton, 62.

<sup>130</sup> Phillip Schlechty, “Teaching Strategies in Social Inquiry,” *The High School Journal* 53:3 (December, 1969): 181.

studies also changed to reflect that. The result was the new social studies, discovery learning, and increased relevancy in the curriculum.

Progressive social studies educators Lawrence Metcalf and Maurice Hunt summarized their thoughts on relevancy in the social studies curriculum, saying, “We need the kind of educational relevance that would help and require young people to examine their most basic assumptions about the kind of world that exists, and how they propose to change the world from what it is into something preferable.”<sup>131</sup> Relevance in the curriculum no longer meant the relationship of the students in general to society. Within the new social studies, it meant the relation of the individual student to current events that directly affected their life. A goal of education was still societal change, but many saw this change as in individual terms.

This is related to the lingering effects of the *Brown v Board of Education* ruling and the Civil Rights Movement that followed. American society and politics became more focused on domestic issues, just as citizenship turned towards issues of the individual. Diane Ravitch wrote that:

As the racial crisis and urban crisis became the nation’s most pressing problems, the Cold War competition with the Soviets moved to the back burner and lost its motivating power...Government agencies and foundations redirected their agendas to search for mechanisms to meet the needs of disadvantaged minority children, and scores of compensatory programs were created throughout the country. Such efforts were multiplied by congressional passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, with its focus on educating poor children.<sup>132</sup>

As this movement won major advances through court cases and grassroots demonstrations, there was a large stress on the individual. Climaxing with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the political legislation addressed “urban problems.” Disillusioned with change on a

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<sup>131</sup> Maurice Hunt and Lawrence Metcalf, “Relevance and the Curriculum,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 51:7 (March, 1970): 359.

<sup>132</sup> Ravitch, 233-234.

wide scale, solutions to these problems were seen in individuals. The new social studies represented a chance to do just that—focus on the individual in a new and progressive way.

Despite the focus on the individual, there was a directly competing theory within the new social studies about the need for social change. In order for education to be properly focused on the individual, proponents of the new social studies often advocated for a radical change to school as a whole. Published in the *Peabody Journal of Education* in 1968, high school principal Wayne Malone said that, “It has become increasingly clear that in order to teach adequately about the process of politics the entire school should become a laboratory for citizenship education.”<sup>133</sup> In this vein, many advocates for the new social studies, including Edwin Fenton, argued that the classroom and school needed to undergo a radical change.<sup>134</sup> It was believed that if schools were to implement a curriculum based on relevancy, there would first “require fundamental changes in educational institutions and attitudes” to be successful.<sup>135</sup>

In addition to advocating for a change to the basic school structure, the new social studies also required an increase in funding for schools, particularly for the social studies. It is unclear whether this money was supposed to come from other subjects or be funded from something other than property tax. Regardless, it was necessary that the new social studies have adequate financing, or else it could not be successful. This extra cost resulted from a “greater expenditure of money for books, other teaching materials, and equipment.”<sup>136</sup> This extra funding was so important, that some believed the “revolution” in the social studies would “succeed or fail only if the schools, supported by the public, are willing to spend three, four, and five times as much as

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<sup>133</sup> Wayne Malone, “Civic Education,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 46:2 (September, 1968): 112.

<sup>134</sup> Fenton, 62-73.

<sup>135</sup> Fred M. Newmann, “The Analysis of Public Controversy: New Focus on the Social Studies,” *The School Review* 73:4 (Winter, 1965): 430.

<sup>136</sup> Fenton, 69.

they currently do at present for social studies.”<sup>137</sup> Needless to say, this was a grand revision for the school curriculum.

### Critics of the New Social Studies

Despite the drastic revisions that the new social studies proposed, there was not as large of a push back as one may expect. This can be attributed, in part at least, to the fact that the new social studies was building on and incorporated the ideas of the last two decades of educational trends. This movement integrated aspects from so many different groups, that most could latch on to at least one of the many sides of the new social studies. In addition, there was a lot of support in American society during the late 1960’s for experimentation and progressive-minded changes to society. That being said, there were still legitimate gripes with the new social studies. These included questions of cost, productivity, and how realistic the implementation of the new social studies was.

Some argued that the new social studies had the wrong goals in mind. These critics were generally educators who were against an increase in teaching students about the structure of social science disciplines. Phillip Schlechty, professor of education at the University of North Carolina disagreed with the guiding principles of the new social studies, saying that “to understand the nature of social science is not, however, synonymous with understanding the nature of man. Social science is only aspect of man’s creations.”<sup>138</sup> Dr. Richard Gross, president of the National Council for the Social Studies, articulated why he, and many other professional educators, did not see promise in the new social studies:

Anyone familiar with the history of education in America knows that there is little about the “new” social studies that is new. It is just that we are in another cycle of inductive instruction; the

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<sup>137</sup> Brown, 80.

<sup>138</sup> Schlechty, 178.

discoverers have “discovered” problem solving, inquiry from the sources, the value of interrelating past and present, and the importance of skill development in the processes of the disciplines.<sup>139</sup>

These critics, like the new social studies advocates, also wanted to change the social studies.

However, many were uncertain just how drastic the changes needed to be.

In a similar vein of criticism, some believed that the changes that the new social studies proposed would not, and could not, solve the current problems in the social studies.

One senses this from many sources—from the repetitive haggling over theoretical questions, from the failure of many social studies projects to produce materials and programs on schedule, from expressions of concern over possible confusion in the field, from disclosures that many of the changes occurring are quite superficial, from the frowns that appear when the term “*new*” *social studies* is introduced, from reports such as the one by the Education Testing Service that social studies instruction has not changed in a decade, and from the fact that in many, many classrooms, facts, lectures, and textbooks seem to hold sway.<sup>140</sup>

Thus, despite the ferment in the theory behind the social studies, the changes that the new social studies promised were not coming to fruition. The reason for this most likely stems from many experienced teachers who were unwilling to change the way they had taught for the many years. Textbooks and lectures were staples of the social studies class, and the new social studies was proposing an immediate schism from this. Social studies teacher Jon Betts wrote in *The History Teacher* that the “typical teacher will oppose vigorously any revolution that questions the validity of major portions of the traditional history curriculum.”<sup>141</sup> It is not surprising that, when presented by outsiders with a radically different way of doing their job, teachers were not wholly receptive to the idea of the new social studies.

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<sup>139</sup> Dr. Richard E. Gross, “Messages to the History Teacher from Dr. Roy F. Nichols, President of the American Historical Association, and Dr. Richard E. Gross, President of the National Council for the Social Studies,” *The History Teacher* 1:1 (November, 1967): 17.

<sup>140</sup> Goetz, 404.

<sup>141</sup> John L. Betts, ““Revolution” in the Social Studies?” *The History Teacher* 1:1 (November, 1967): 19.

The largest area of criticism of the new social studies was that it was unrealistic.

“Programs devised in the great curricula think tanks are often unrealistic in their demands on the normal Social Studies schedule and on the competency of the average teacher.”<sup>142</sup> It is the classic ivory tower versus the real world implementation-of-theory debate, and teacher educators generally saw the new social studies as interesting theoretically, but impractical in implementation. Citing the growing divide between suburbs and city centers, educator Donald Schneider of the University of Georgia said:

Certainly a program designed for academically talented students in a culturally and economically rich suburban community has limited usefulness in some of the center-city schools. This is not because the program’s rationale and strategy are inappropriate but because the material and specific techniques are.<sup>143</sup>

Recalling the problems the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 aimed to fix, Scheider makes the case that it is not possible to use the new social studies techniques with inner city populations. University think tanks developing new social studies programs usually “tested” them out on racially homogeneous suburban populations, and rarely ventured into inner cities to try the new techniques with the students of impoverished city centers.

Analyzing the changes brought by the new social studies, educator William Goetz wrote in 1970 that, “The social studies revolution started at the top. Much of the criticism and proposals came from the university couched in academic jargon dressed in the refinery of scholarly articles and doctoral dissertations. It failed to turn many teachers on.”<sup>144</sup> Some took the delayed implementation of the new social studies as a sign that universities may not be well enough equipped to deal with nationwide implementation of their ideas. Goetz concluded his

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<sup>142</sup> Harry A. Dawe, “Reformation in Teaching History: A Reply to John L. Betts,” *The History Teacher* 1:3 (March, 1968): 32.

<sup>143</sup> Donald O. Schneider, “Making Social Studies Relevant for All Secondary Students,” *The High School Journal* 52:6 (March 1969): 273.

<sup>144</sup> Goetz, 405.

essay saying, “The extended debates on theory, the delays in producing materials, the constant revisions—all indicate that the transition from theory to practice has been more difficult than imagined.”<sup>145</sup>

### Application of the New Social Studies in California and New York

As this thesis has described, there were drastic changes in the way that social studies was viewed between 1953 and 1965. With all of these discussions swirling about how to teach social studies, many states wanted to create new programs and curricula for the social studies. Efforts to revamp the social studies in the states of New York and California represented the attempt to create new social studies courses based on the principles of the new social studies. Both New York and California serve as excellent case studies for the effort to take the new social studies out of university think tanks and put it into schools. It is interesting that, despite underwhelming support from university education departments, the new social studies were embraced by state boards of education and curriculum specialists. These developments signal a significant shift in application of curricular theory in the social studies.

The state of New York decided to create a new American History curriculum in 1965, because the previous state curriculum, initiated in 1953, was no longer relevant for reasons discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. Like the new social studies, the State Education Department of New York state hoped to build on the advances of the past decade. They recommended “to reinforce the best aspects of the existing program and also to capitalize

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<sup>145</sup> Goetz, 405.

on promising new trends both in substance and in methodology.”<sup>146</sup> Thus, the New York curriculum of 1965 was heavily influenced by the new social studies, and this influence is reflected in the orientation and pedagogy espoused in the content of the curriculum.

The 1965 New York curriculum explicitly showed the pedagogical influence of Bruner and discovery learning. The state curriculum expressed that, “we have long known that children learn by doing, that they remember best what they discover for themselves, internalize, and then by conscious thought or intuition apply in new contexts.”<sup>147</sup> Through the teaching of the social studies, the curriculum continued, it should be “evident to students that their work in all the social studies areas through the eleventh year has been, in a way, exploratory by nature.”<sup>148</sup> This call for every year of learning in the social studies be “exploratory in nature” was quite revolutionary. Bruner’s concept of discovery learning was now being implemented in public schools, and every social studies teacher was supposed to utilize this learning strategy. To sum up how influential the new social studies was on New York state curriculum creators, Daniel Coons said:

In 1965, the published materials for the American History I course emphasize the importance of pupils discovering knowledge for themselves, since this would make the course work more exciting, meaningful, and relevant, and therefore enhance learning. It was felt that students should use the historical method of research in discovering knowledge for themselves, and be able to engage in economic, political, historical and social analysis on an individual basis.<sup>149</sup>

Using identical language to proponents of the new social studies, the above quote reflects the how direct the influence of the new social studies was on the curriculum. The social studies were to be relevant, make use of discovery learning, be in the vein of the historical discipline through

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<sup>146</sup> New York State American History I Curriculum of 1965, as quoted in Daniel Edgar Coons, “An Analysis of Selected American History Syllabi According to Five Curriculum Determinants” (PhD dissertation, State University of New York at Albany, 1972), 125.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 73.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

<sup>149</sup> Coons, 84.

use of the historical method, and focus on the individual. Thus, unlike Arthur Bestor, advocates of the new social studies were able to actually get their ideas implemented in the schools, largely thanks to the contributions and credibility of Jerome Bruner amongst educators working in the New York State department of education.

This focus on implementing the new social studies in schools meant that the two schools of thought from Chapter Four, the Bestor-ites and the educators, each achieved an aspect of what they wanted: studying the individual disciplines of the social sciences and studying material relevant to the lives of students. The New York state American History curriculum of 1965 stated that the students would “‘know how’ to interpret concepts from anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science and sociology, which, in turn, would make this course both relevant and practical for the individual student.”<sup>150</sup> In this way, it was hoped that students would learn to think in a similar way to contemporary social scientists. California also stressed the need to teach in the vein of the social science disciplines. Herbert Gwinn, social studies curriculum consultant to the California State Board of Education, echoed Bestor and Bruner’s call for teaching more non-integrated disciplines instead of the multidisciplinary social studies. He said, “I agree that we need to get history out of the doldrums... I also agree that the term “history and the social studies” is a better term than “social studies.””<sup>151</sup> It was clear that state education departments in New York and California had taken up the call by Jerome Bruner to study the academic disciplines of the social sciences.

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<sup>150</sup> New York State American History I Curriculum of 1965, as quoted in Coons, “An Analysis of Selected American History Syllabi According to Five Curriculum Determinants,” 82.

<sup>151</sup> Herbert D. Gwinn to Dr. Charles R. Keller, February 1, 1962, Department of Education, Division of Instruction, Bureau of Secondary Education. Office Files, Social Studies, F3752:1898, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

These same curriculum specialists also embraced the idea for making the social studies material more relevant to students' lives. The 1965 New York curriculum emphasized teaching information relevant to students' lives. In other words, teaching contemporary and controversial events had finally transitioned from academic discussion to real curriculums. Coons' analysis exposed that, "In 1941 and 1953 the stress was placed upon the development of an American heritage through a study of the problems of the past and in 1965, emphasis was put upon the contemporary problems of our society and possible solutions to these problems when feasible."<sup>152</sup> However, studying contemporary events was not to be done in the way that the education academics of the late 1950's/early 1960's (Chapter 4 of this thesis) hoped to study it. Rather, it was clearly in the vein of the new social studies and Jerome Bruner—through the study of academic disciplines, students would be better able to relate to and understand contemporary issues.

Educators in the California Department of Education believed "much of that which is historical can be taught in such a way that there is a direct line of emotional and intellectual communication from historical characters and actions to the intimate personal lives of the learners."<sup>153</sup> Starting in the early 1960's, this quest for relevancy was highlighted in the state social studies curriculum. In California, the focus of "the eleventh grade... is The United States, A World Power, the Contemporary Scene." This course emphasized how American history related to the present day. Herbert Gwinn said the course would deal with:

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

<sup>153</sup> "Developing Curriculum Materials for Teaching the Bill of Rights in Grades Five through Twelve of the Public Schools," Abstract of the Curriculum Improvement Proposal, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Everett Calvert, Programs. Bill of Rights Project, F3752:1020, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

“how the shaping of the Federal Union and the extension of Constitutional Government influence modern America, how the early growth of an industrial economy influences modern America, the role of American institutions in maintaining the United States, and how America faces the future.”<sup>154</sup>

In the twelfth grade, it was recommended that schools emphasize, “how the Constitution serves a rapidly changing culture... how the services of government affect our daily lives,...and how to participate in local, state, national, and world affairs.”<sup>155</sup> With Supreme Court rulings such as *Brown v Board* backing the Civil Rights Movement, American culture was forced to accept that the Constitution must be adapted to meet present needs. Schools hoped to inculcate this belief in students, hoping that citizens would adhere to rulings such as these in the future. This influence from contemporary events was very present in the writings of Herbert Gwinn and others in the California Department of Education.

By the early 1960’s, there was no doubt that the students were aware of large and impactful current events such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War. Unable to keep these the difficult and complex social and political events out of the classroom, educators felt the need to address these controversial events in the classroom. This was intimately related to attempts to make the curriculum more relevant, as most contemporary events at this time were very controversial and polarizing. The California Department of Education sent a letter to Superintendents of school districts throughout the state, saying:

We believe that teaching in this field no matter how controversial the issue should be conducted within the framework of free discussion. Not only the history of the Bill of Rights should be taught, but contemporary issues it raises... should be discussed. Now is the time to help our young people to become aware of the risks, the privileges, and the personal demands on freedom.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Herbert D. Gwinn to Mr. Charles Mashburn, December 20, 1961, Department of Education, Division of Instruction, Bureau of Secondary Education. Office Files, Social Studies, F3752:1898, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

<sup>156</sup> California State Board of Education to County and District Superintendents of Schools and Principals in Districts Not Employing Superintendents, October 16, 1963, Department of

However, many teachers may have had reservations about teaching controversial contemporary issues, for reasons including fear of backlash from parents and superiors. Also, the censorship of the early 1950's was still in the minds of educators. Despite that fear, those at the highest echelons of the state education department expressed the need to do just that. Educators in California said, "nothing is more closely attuned to the educational process than the probing of controversial public questions, for nothing serves better to demonstrate the immediate relations between the classroom and the world outside its walls."<sup>157</sup> By supporting increased relevancy and studying the individual academic disciplines, state education departments thus showed the great influence the new social studies had on their new curriculums and projects.

One of the best examples of the implementation of the new social studies was a state-wide Bill of Rights project that the California Board of Education created in 1963. In fact, Robert E. Browne, the coordinator of the Bill of Rights project even reached out to Edwin Fenton, historian at Carnegie Mellon University and one of the most famous new social studies proponents, for analysis of the project.<sup>158</sup> This Bill of Rights project was meant to give students a better understanding of how history impacts the modern world through a case study of the document. One of the objectives of the project was to "enable pupils to evolve for themselves criteria for discerning in contemporary affairs, decisions and actions which infringe on any of the

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Education, State Board of Education, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Everett Calvert, Programs. Bill of Rights Project, F3752:1020, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

<sup>157</sup> The National Assembly on Teaching The Principles of the Bill of Rights, p 10, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Everett Calvert, Programs. Bill of Rights Project, F3752:1020, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

<sup>158</sup> Robert E. Browne to Edwin Fenton, November 19, 1965, Bill of Rights Project Room 448, Department of Education, State Board of Education, Chief Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Everett Calvert, Programs. Bill of Rights Project, F3752:1022, California State Archives, Office of the Secretary of State, Sacramento.

right guaranteed to citizens in the Bill of Rights.”<sup>159</sup> The new project would be taught in all secondary schools across the state as part of a United States History class. The project curriculum went on to state:

Discerning the original intent of the Amendments is basic to analyzing current situations and decisions affecting contemporary living and to identifying subtle infringements of individual rights, and taking of appropriate action to prevent the eventual deprivation of the rights guaranteed to all citizens by the Amendments to the Constitution.<sup>160</sup>

In light of the contemporary events, such as the Civil Rights Movement, educators wanted to stress the danger of “subtle infringements of individual rights.” This no doubt was a reference to segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, and the difficulty in reorganizing the social structure of the South. They wanted to make sure students didn’t “fall victim to the subtle errors of thinking which would cloud the minds of mankind during periods of intense social stress.”<sup>161</sup> These “subtle errors” need not only apply to pro-segregationists. This can also be seen as hearkening back to the era of McCarthyism and the loyalty oaths that many teachers had to take in the early 1950’s. Such acts certainly infringed on individual rights, and were the product of social stresses such as the Cold War. With the Cold War still raging, educators were keenly cognizant of the mistakes that had been made in the past. As the ideals of citizenship changed to meet modern needs, the social studies tried to encompass these modern needs. This included stressing the protection of individual rights and the ability to think critically about complex social issues in “times of intense social stress.”

The 1965 New York State curriculum also emphasized the role of the individual in changing society, something that the new social studies also promoted. Rather than treating

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<sup>159</sup> “Developing Curriculum Materials for Teaching the Bill of Rights in Grades Five through Twelve of the Public Schools,” F3752:1020, 1.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

students as a relatively homogeneous group that would react to material in the same way, the new social studies actively sought out to help individuals cope with contemporary problems of society. The 1965 curriculum reflected these events in its intent:

The 1965 published materials claimed that the purpose of the social studies is to promote respect for the individual and his beliefs, regardless of race, creed, color or national origin, and that each student is to be treated as an individual within the school and within the classroom. Thus a shift was evident here in that the emphasis changed from stress on the role of the individual as a “good citizen” in 1941 and 1953 to that of being an individual who respects the rights of others in 1965.<sup>162</sup>

This distinction of emphasizing the individual is very significant to this time period. For the past 20 or so years prior, the social studies was ultimately seen as a way to create good citizens.

Daniels Coons’ analysis revealed that, for the curriculums of “1941 and 1953, the accent was upon group citizenship, whereas in 1965 the stress was placed upon developing individual citizenship qualities.”<sup>163</sup> In this way, the 1965 curriculum attempted to work on changing individual norms, rather than societal norms. This was a main current running through the new social studies, and is very reflective of the time period. The thought was that through developing personal qualities, society could change from the ground up.

Developments in the state education departments of both New York and California showed the influence of the new social studies on social studies education in America. Both promoted Jerome Bruner’s theory of discovery learning. New York explicitly stated the intention for the curriculum to be based around discovery learning. While California created a Bill of Rights project where students looked at primary source documents to “discover” their own conclusions and relate the history behind the Bill of Rights to the present day. This idea of relevancy in the curriculum, as first championed by the professional educators in Chapter Four, was adopted by state departments of education. The adversary of the professional educators,

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<sup>162</sup> Coons, 88-89.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

Arthur Bestor, also got his wish for the teaching the specific disciplines of the social sciences. The new social studies blended the two groups from Chapter Four with the theories of Jerome Bruner, making a new doctrine that was more palatable to those in state departments of education. The application of the new social studies thus served as the climax to the great debates that had been raging in the past two decades about social studies education in American secondary schools.

## Conclusion

As this thesis has shown, the period from 1945-1970 was a very active time for the subject of the social studies, education, and American society. Public commentators and academics of many various disciplines joined the dialogue, providing a unique blend of opinions. I chose to write about this time period, because of the massive volume of dialogue taking place alongside the rapid changes to American citizenship. The 25 years following the end of World War II were a tumultuous time, with McCarthyism and the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the counterculture all having a large impact on society, politics, and citizenship.

This goal of this thesis was to highlight the relationship between the changes in education and citizenship. Although the relationship is never static, there is a constant give and take between these two. As many contemporary issues of this time period brought American ideals into question, the social studies was a natural choice to analyze as it is the school subject that is tied most intricately to questions of American ideals and citizenship. It is easy to just say that social events impact education, but this thesis aimed to show in what ways those influences manifest themselves in the social studies. I found that this impact happened through curriculum changes and changes to the underlying purpose of teaching social studies.

It is important to understand the ways in which education, and particularly the social studies, is influenced by society. As a primary agent of socialization, the school is the place where children learn national values. The social studies class, above all, is where students learn about the United States, its laws, and the values that make up the collective history of the nation. As the definition of “American values” reacted and adapted to changes in American politics and society, the social studies classes were forced to keep up. By studying the influences on the

teaching of the social studies, one can better understand what it means to be a citizen at any particular time.

During the immediate postwar era, schools reflected the international minded political culture, as educators hoped to promote goodwill and intergroup relations. This was in an attempt to change the future of American society by learning from the traumatic mistakes that had just been made by the greater international community. During the years after World War II, education became established as essential for citizenship, which focused on promoting peaceful international cooperation. As the Cold War escalated, the education became seen as important for nationalistic reasons. The social studies promoted American democratic values based on individuality as essential to American citizenship, in an attempt to distance “classic” American values from the collective values of communism. The *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling sent shockwaves through educational fields, but few knew how to reconcile promoting American values such as freedom when this ruling proved that a large percentage of the United States did not have equal rights.

As the intolerance of McCarthyism subsided, the success of Sputnik shifted the educational spotlight away from citizenship education and towards mathematics and science. For the first time in recent memory, social studies educators were able to now discuss issues free from over-bearing public scrutiny. This resulted in the academically heated debate about whether controversial contemporary issues were to be brought into the classroom. The Bestor-ites launched a verbal barrage against scholars in university departments of education, arguing for a return to teaching the traditional disciplines of the social sciences. This thesis has shown, however, that both the Bestor-ites and the educators failed to grasp the root of their differences. Continuing in the tradition of the early Cold War, Bestor and his followers saw the school in

relation to the Cold War: students needed to be intelligent and well versed in academia to be able to be productive citizens in Cold War America. The educators, on the other hand, were much more influenced by the *Brown* ruling and the Civil Rights Movement. Thinking domestically, rather than internationally, this group viewed citizenship education as improving an individual's ability to deal with conflict in a constructive manner. Both the Bestor-ites and the educators refused to acknowledge these differences, and thus were superseded by the new social studies.

These debates all culminated in the new social studies, which combined the teaching of contemporary and controversial materials, while citing the need to teach in the vein of the social science disciplines. Utilizing Jerome Bruner's theory of discovery learning, the new social studies hoped to revolutionize the academic landscape in a way similar to the way Civil Rights, anti-war, and New Left protestors hoped to revolutionize the political landscape. Taking its cue from contemporary social and political movements, the new social studies reconceptualized citizenship education. The goal was to produce intelligent citizens, capable of thinking independently and coming to their own conclusions. The new social studies merged the ideas of Bestor and the educators, while adding an important pedagogical element that the previous eras of social studies revision lacked. Educational psychology laid the underlying reason for this pedagogical shift. Thus, the new social represented the first time that a movement aimed for holistic change in education, from orientation and aims to curriculum and pedagogy.

This thesis thus showed how social and political events impact the meaning of citizenship, which in turn affects the whole educational system, and the social studies in particular. The period from 1945 through 1970 saw great changes to the meaning of citizenship. World War II established American exceptionalism, which was exacerbated by the early Cold War. As the 1950's wound to a close, a schism opened up between two different points of view.

One looked internationally, heavily influenced by the Cold War, while the other sought to create domestic change, influenced more by the Civil Rights Movement. While these alterations to American society and citizenship were taking place, the social studies course aimed to be on the cutting edge, in order to create citizens who were well equipped for the future. These two concepts, citizenship and the social studies, are therefore intimately linked. Through examining the relationship between the two, it is possible to understand the ideals that a society is striving for, as well as projections for the future.

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I affirm that I adhered to the Honor Code on this assignment.

- Kevin Owens