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TEACHING FOR CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND
HIGHER ORDER APPLICATIONS
OF SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

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Abstract

One of seven review/synthesis papers prepared to help frame the research program of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects, this paper describes historical developments and current issues in curriculum, instruction, and evaluation in elementary social studies, with emphasis on teaching for understanding and higher order applications of the content. It is concluded that (a) the higher order goals of instruction in social studies are comparable to those of instruction in other subjects, at least if they are described in a few molar terms (such as conceptual understanding, critical thinking, inquiry, problem solving, decision making, and empowering students with accessible and usable knowledge) rather than decomposed into long lists of molecular part skills; but (b) values, dispositions, and appreciation and self-actualization goals need to be considered along with more conventionally described knowledge and skills goals.
TEACHING FOR CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND HIGHER ORDER APPLICATIONS OF SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

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This is one of a set of seven reports being prepared for Study 1 of Phase I of the research agenda of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects. Phase I of our work calls for surveying and synthesizing the opinions of various categories of experts concerning the nature of elementary-level instruction in mathematics, science, social studies, literature, and the arts, with particular attention to how teaching for understanding and for higher order thinking and problem solving should be handled within such instruction. Study 1 of Phase I calls for review of the literature in educational psychology, cognitive science, and related fields on teaching for understanding and for higher order thinking and problem solving, as well as the literature on these topics as they are discussed by curriculum and instruction experts within the context of teaching particular school subjects. The present paper focuses on statements about teaching for understanding and for higher order thinking and problem solving in the social studies that have been advanced by the leading scholars and organizations concerned with elementary-level social education.

Citizen Education as the Transcendent Purpose

Analysis of alternative views on higher order thinking and problem solving in the social studies begins with recognition that the vast majority of social

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Elaborating on the rationale for this purpose statement and its implications, social studies educators (following Engle, 1960) typically advance a version of the following argument: (a) If they are to maintain their viability, democratic societies such as our own must develop citizens who are both prepared and willing to accept the responsibilities that accompany citizenship in such societies; (b) among the major social institutions, the school is the only one created explicitly for this purpose; (c) although the entire school curriculum is designed to develop desirable attributes in students, the social studies focus in particular on preparing students to fulfill their roles as citizens; and (d) given the complexities of the modern world and the fact that societies must adapt to inventions and other changing conditions, schools cannot hope to prepare their students for effective citizen participation by teaching them a limited and fixed set of values, information, and skills—instead, they will have to concentrate on developing their students into well-informed and thoughtful decision makers. Parker and Jarolimek (1984), for example, stress that a successful social studies program will prepare a particular kind of citizen: one who is an informed person skilled in the processes of a free society, who is committed to democratic values and who not only is able to but feels obligated to participate in social, political, and economic processes. Parker and Kaltsounis (1986) add that the thinking and actions of such a citizen would be characterized by the following three perspectives: (a) global (commitment to liberty and justice for all extends to people everywhere), (b) pluralistic (cultural diversity and differences of opinion are seen as acceptable or even desirable), and (c) constructive or critical (democracy is seen as unfinished business, the nation is seen as in need of maintenance and improvement).
validation rather than as factual knowledge. The third definition of social studies as the examination of social problems also contains two subtypes: (a) social studies as the study of persistent social issues (featuring discussion and debate on enduring dilemmas involving justice, fairness, and competing values) and (b) social studies as the direct study of significant social problems (in which students do direct research on real and current social problems).

Brubaker, Simon, and Williams (1977) identified five major approaches to social studies education: (a) social studies as knowledge of the past as a guide to good citizenship (emphasis on history), (b) social studies in the student-centered tradition, (c) social studies as reflective inquiry; (d) social studies as social science, and (e) social studies as sociopolitical involvement.

Martorella (1985) also identified five major approaches to social studies education and argued that both the evolution of the field over time and the differences in current curricula can be understood in terms of differences in relative emphasis on these five approaches: (a) social studies taught as transmission of the cultural heritage (transmit traditional knowledge and values as a framework for making decisions); (b) social studies taught as social science (master social science concepts, generalizations, and processes to build a knowledge base for later learning); (c) social studies taught as reflective inquiry (use a process of thinking and learning in which knowledge is derived from what citizens need to know to make decisions and solve problems); (d) social studies taught as informed social criticism (provide opportunities for examination, critique, and revision of past traditions, existing social practices, and modes of problem solving); and (e) social studies taught as personal development (develop a positive self-concept, a strong sense of personal efficacy, and an understanding of one's relationships with others).
subjects, not just social studies) as a continuing struggle among supporters of four competing ideas about what should be the primary basis for the design of K-12 curriculum and instruction. In Kliebard's analysis, these four different points of view wax and wane in relative influence and often reappear with new names and seemingly new rationales, but their core ideas remain basically the same. The first viewpoint emphasizes the academic disciplines, looking to them not only as storehouses of important knowledge but as sources of authority concerning what counts as important knowledge, how this knowledge should be organized and taught, and how new knowledge should be developed. This point of view was dominant when the schools were organized and has persisted as a powerful conservative counterweight to reform movements. Reformers typically emphasize the core ideas in one or more of the other three persistent points of view. They consist of (a) those who argue that the natural course of child development should be the basis for the design of school curriculum and instruction, so that the content taught at any particular grade level would be keyed to the interests and learning needs associated with its corresponding ages and stages, (b) those who would work backwards from their perceptions of the qualities associated with ideal fulfillment of the adult roles in society (citizen, worker, etc.) in order to design schooling primarily as a mechanism for preparing children for these adult roles, and (c) those who wish to use the schools as mechanisms for combating social injustice and promoting social change by focusing curriculum and instruction on discussion of social issues. Because social education focuses explicitly on social content, much of the evolution of the social studies curriculum and most of the debates and reform movements that have developed periodically, especially those concerned with secondary education, can be understood within this context provided by Kliebard.

At the elementary level, social studies is more clearly a school subject separate from its underlying academic disciplines, and its development through
approach, Haas identifies three subtypes: (a) "analysis of public issues," in which students are led to discuss and defend positions on controversial public policy issues; (b) "education for civic action," in which students are led not merely to debate and make decisions about policy issues but to follow through on their decisions through active participation in civic affairs; and (c) "modes of inquiry," in which students are led to develop and test hypotheses using the methods of scientific inquiry that are favored in history and the social sciences.

Haas notes that the "process of thinking reflectively" orientation toward reform of mainstream social studies teaching has shown itself in Dewey's emphasis on reflective thinking in the 1920s, the core curriculum movement in the 1930s, the life adjustment education movement in the 1940s, the "new social studies" programs and values education programs of the 1960s, and the development of programs emphasizing analysis of public issues and education for citizen action during the 1960s and 1970s. Meanwhile, calls by academicians for reform in the "intellectual aspects of history and the social sciences" tradition were influential in the 1930s and in the "new social studies" programs of the 1960s, and they are being voiced commonly once again in the late 1980s (especially by historians, geographers, and economists). Despite all of these reform pressures, however, the "conservative cultural continuity" approach has remained entrenched as the mainstream rationale for social studies education, particularly at the elementary level (Haas, 1979).

The Development of Social Studies as a School Subject

Before social studies acquired its name and became established as an interdisciplinary school subject concerned with citizen education, the social studies were represented in the curriculum in the form of courses or readings in history and civics. Citizen education had always been seen as an important
committee established "social studies" as the name of the content area and argued that the area should be informed by several social science disciplines in addition to history, that social education should be its primary purpose, and that content selection should be guided by consideration of its personal meaning and relevance to the student and its value in preparing the student for citizenship (not just by the degree to which it is emphasized in the academic disciplines). These features have characterized social studies as taught in the schools ever since, despite competition among the various underlying disciplines for representation in the curriculum and competition among the five approaches described by Martorella (1985) concerning how the content should be handled and what kinds of activities and assignments should predominate.

In the elementary grades, the curriculum began to draw not only from history and civics, but from geography and economics, and later from psychology, sociology, and anthropology. Instruction gradually became dominated by textbooks that functioned primarily as storehouses of facts, the purview expanded from an almost exclusive focus on the United States to a more global orientation, and the emphasis on inculcation of American values broadened to include values analysis, decision making, critical thinking, and "life adjustment" skills.

**The Expanding Communities Approach**

Gradually, the expanding communities approach to the elementary school social studies curriculum became almost universal. This approach calls for beginning with the self and then expanding the purview to the family, the neighborhood, the community, the state, the nation, and the world. Thus, students study self, school, community, and home in kindergarten; families in grade one; neighborhoods in grade two; communities in grade three; state history and geographic regions in grade four; United States history in grade five; and world
Grade Five: U.S. history. The first Americans, exploration and discovery, Colonial life, revolution and independence, westward movement, war between the states, immigrants, the Roaring 20s, life styles in the United States, values of the American people, our neighbors to the north and south, United States as world power, great American leaders.

Grade Six: World cultures/hemispheres. Political and economic systems, land and resources, people and their beliefs, comparative cultures.

Western hemisphere: Early cultures of South America, the major contemporary South American countries, Central American countries, Canada, Mexico, historical beginnings of the western world. Eastern hemisphere: Ancient Greece and Rome, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Middle East, Europe, Africa, India, and China.

Besides the expanding communities framework, this listing of commonly taught concepts exemplifies the citizen education emphasis of social studies and the fact that concepts are drawn from various disciplines and blended to center on a topic rather than organized according to each separate discipline. The basic framework can accommodate most emerging topics (environmentalism, multicultural education, etc.) and can be taught with very different mixtures of the five traditions mentioned earlier. It also can be taught with very different degrees of emphasis on integration, causal explanation (in addition to mere description), and application of the content addressed, as well as with very different mixtures and degrees of emphasis on skills such as data gathering, critical thinking, or decision making. (Note that skills, and for the most part values and dispositions as well, are not included in this list of topics and themes; consequently, such skills, values, and dispositions may or may not be taught with reference to the topics and themes being studied at the time.)
children should study the state before studying the nation); fractionating the curriculum so that students do not get enough opportunity to see relationships that exist across communities; and failing to allow for integration of skills instruction with instruction in content (Joyce & Alleman-Brooks, 1982; Naylor & Diem, 1987). Yet the expanding communities structure remains entrenched, partly because it is familiar to teachers and used in all of the leading curriculum series, but also because so far it has proven possible to incorporate new content into it and adapt it in ways that respond to common criticisms without changing its basic structure.

Recently, the expanding communities approach has been attacked by critics who believe that the replacement of an emphasis on history (and to a lesser extent, civics, and geography) by an emphasis on sociology, economics, psychology, and anthropology in the curriculum of the primary grades has been a mistake (Bennett, 1986; Egan, 1982; Finn & Ravitch, 1988). These critics believe that the study of history should be the backbone of social and civic education and that history can be taught in the primary grades in personalized and dramatic ways that will be effective, not only in developing within students a sense of time and place within which to embed their social learning but also in continuously stimulating their interest and curiosity. Along with making the case for stressing history, geography, and civics throughout the elementary social studies curriculum, these critics also attack the content currently taught in the primary grades, as well as the expanding communities curricular organization that they associate with such content. Ravitch (1987), for example, dismisses much of the content taught in primary grade social studies curricula as "tot sociology," viewing it as mostly a collection of boring abstractions that students have no interest in and do not need to learn anyway (because they develop most of this knowledge through normal experiences outside of school). She goes on to note that the expanding communities approach was
largely spurious, believing that the issue could be resolved by introducing
students to the best available knowledge as a means to the end of producing re-
sponsible citizens. He argued that in addition to giving students some famili-
arity with the research methods of the disciplines, social studies education
should help them to recognize cultural diversity and to acquire a critical
stance for evaluating both one's own knowledge and the claims or arguments of
others. He also argued that in addition to the structures of the disciplines,
curriculum developers had to confront several issues peculiar to the social
studies: student readiness to engage in the academic tasks suggested, the role
of values and controversy stemming from the sensitivity of the social studies
to matters of public or personal policy, and the unusually complex problems of
curricular organization stemming from the federated nature of the social
studies.

Nevertheless, the "new social studies" programs developed in the 1960s
were built around conceptual organization structures stressed in the disci-
plines and featured discovery or inductive teaching and learning; use of the
modes of inquiry of historians and social scientists; attempts to build in cumu-
lative, sequential learning; the notion that any idea can be taught success-
fully in some form to any student of any age; content drawn from the newer
social sciences; post-holing (focusing on one topic or situation in depth); and
proliferation of new audiovisual materials (Hertzberg, 1981). These new pro-
grams were concentrated at the upper elementary and secondary levels and on the
higher achieving students, but the ideas behind them influenced all curricula
at all levels. Although these "new social studies" programs failed in the
sense that they soon disappeared from the schools, they have had a lasting
influence by causing traditional curricula to be rationalized more explicitly
around key concepts and generalizations, to give more attention to peoples and
cultures outside the United States and Western Europe, to introduce more
They conceded the value of the disciplines as "maximum culminations of organized knowledge," but argued that

in recognizing the value of the disciplines, we have unconsciously accepted the disciplines as the only source of organized knowledge. In so doing, we have ignored the fact that most of the decisions we make in our daily lives are neither referred to nor guided by the disciplines. (p. 2)

They went on to point out that humans organize and reorganize their experiences into their own individual cognitive structures that fit their personal needs, rather than on the basis of structures used in the disciplines. They also noted that disciplines concern themselves with small and intentionally isolated segments of existence, thus producing knowledge that is fragmented, abstract, and theoretical. They argued that such disciplinary knowledge is suitable for teaching to older students who are capable of appreciating its value, but that elementary students need a topical approach that is better adapted to the realities of human situational learning and the ability of these students to see different forms of learning as relevant and comprehensible. By considering a topic in all of its aspects (rather than addressing only those aspects that fit within a particular discipline at any given time), and by considering it within the context of its implications for personal decision making, students should find social studies instruction relevant and meaningful rather than distant and abstract. Thus, in the elementary grades, social education should emphasize the individual student's need for relevance, saving emphasis on society's needs (e.g., for individuals trained in the disciplines) for later.

Many current social educators (probably the majority of the membership of National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS]) share these views. Bragaw and Harootonian (1988), for example, drawing heavily from Raskin and Bernstein (1987) in developing their rationale, suggest that social studies should concentrate on teaching students to understand how the world actually is and operates
Reflecting current thinking among leaders in the field, Kaltsounis (1987) calls for a balanced and integrated approach that he sums up in his concept of the "dynamic" curriculum. A good dynamic curriculum would meet the following conditions:

1. Built around cohesive content that is both (a) drawn from the social sciences and (b) related to the students and their social context
2. Selects and presents knowledge not as an end in itself but as a means to assist students in determining courses of action to improve society and their places in it
3. Includes attention to the social values that must be considered in making decisions about such courses of action
4. Stresses assessment of these social values by the students for possible voluntary acceptance (as opposed to inculcation leading to involuntary acceptance)
5. Develops in students the skills to acquire knowledge and values and to apply them in making decisions

Most other authors of contemporary textbooks on social studies teaching make similar statements, calling for reaffirmation of citizen education (i.e., not training in the social science disciplines or development of personal life adjustment skills) as the primary purpose of school social studies and for a balanced and integrated approach that incorporates the best elements of earlier approaches (recognizing these as sound ideas when not carried to extremes).

There is relatively more emphasis now on thinking than on memorizing, and relatively more emphasis on principles and causal relationships than on facts and definitions. Some of this emphasis can be seen as well in the latest editions of elementary curriculum series; the extent to which it has begun to influence teaching practice remains unknown.

The Current NCSS Guidelines

Statements representing the current consensus among leaders in the field are issued periodically by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). In 1981, the NCSS released a statement on the essentials of social studies,
Elaborating on these criteria, the NCSS identified the following as essentials for programs that would contribute not only to the development of students' capacity to read and compute, but also to link knowledge and skills with an understanding of and commitment to democratic principles and their application.

Knowledge

Classroom instruction relating content to information drawn from the media and from experience would focus on the following areas of knowledge:

1. History and culture of our nation and the world
2. Geography--physical, political, cultural, and economic
3. Government--theories, systems, structures and processes
4. Economics--theories, systems, structures and processes
5. Social institutions--the individual, the group, the community and the society
6. Intergroup and interpersonal relationships
7. Worldwide relationships of all sorts between and among nations, races, cultures and institutions

From this knowledge base, exemplary programs would teach skills, concepts, and generalizations that can help students to understand the sweep of human affairs and ways of managing conflict that are consistent with democratic procedures.

Democratic Beliefs

Fundamental beliefs drawn from the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution form the basic principles of our democratic constitutional order. These democratic beliefs depend on such practices as due process, equal protection, and civic participation, and are rooted in the concepts of justice, equality, responsibility, freedom, diversity, and privacy. Exemplary school programs would not indoctrinate students to accept these ideas blindly, but would present knowledge about their historical derivation and contemporary application
community provides opportunities for students to learn the basic skills of participation, from observation to advocacy. To teach participation, social studies programs need to emphasize the following kinds of skills: (a) working effectively in groups—organizing, planning, making decisions, and taking action; (b) forming coalitions of interest with other groups; (c) persuading, compromising, and bargaining; (d) practicing patience and perseverance in working for one's goal; and (e) developing experience in cross-cultural situations.

Civic Action

Effective social studies programs will provide students not only with the knowledge and skills needed to become active and effective civic participants, but also with the disposition to do so (NCSS, 1981).

Even this brief summary of guidelines from the NCSS statement on the essentials of the social studies may seem overwhelming to a classroom teacher. Yet, the NCSS essentials statement is just the tip of the iceberg. NCSS has also published much more detailed curriculum guidelines and reports of task forces concerned with the scope and sequence of the social studies curriculum. Lengthy lists of objectives also appear in the scope and sequence charts shown in the teachers' editions of the textbooks used in the schools, and states and local districts often publish lengthy lists of social studies objectives as well.

These lists usually show a great deal of overlap and are organized according to the four types of goals described in the NCSS list: knowledge, skills, values or beliefs, and citizen participation (including both dispositions and action goals). Still, they are overwhelming. In addition to everything that might be expected based on what has been said so far, elementary level social studies curricula include material on such topics as pedestrian and bicycle
of how particular lessons fit within the big picture, the result is likely to be a program long on isolated practice of facts or skills and short on integration and application. Research on teachers' curriculum gatekeeping in social studies (reviewed in Thornton, in press) suggests that most teachers are uncertain or confused about the purpose of social studies instruction and that their planning and teaching are influenced at least as much by their disciplinary training, their own ideosyncratic ideas about teaching, and their concerns about convenience and classroom control as by the rationales propounded by scholars.

**Intended Versus Enacted Curricula**

What actually occurs in the classroom will depend on where the policy setters, curriculum designers, and (especially) teachers stand on the continuing issues and tensions that divide the field (Atwood, 1986; Hertzberg, 1981; McKenzie, 1986; Mehlinger & Davis, 1981; Shaver, 1981). One of these is the degree to which the social studies are seen as serving the ends of society by promoting good citizens versus serving the ends of the individual student by promoting life adjustment goals. Related to this is the issue of relative emphasis on personal versus local versus national versus global perspectives. Another is the treatment of values, particularly the relative emphasis on inculcating particular values versus teaching students to examine values and take this information into account when making decisions.

Elementary teachers typically favor a citizenship training emphasis, teaching of a broad range of facts, and inculcation of traditional and locally favored values. In contrast, university-based theorists and curriculum designers tend to place more emphasis on concepts and generalizations drawn from the disciplines, addressing less content in greater depth and with more emphasis on application, and a critical stance toward values and traditions.
experience, culture, and beliefs. Here the guidelines mention the content and methods of inquiry and data analysis used in history and the social sciences, but also add that the program should draw from other related fields such as law, the humanities, the natural and applied sciences, and religion.

Other criteria are that curriculum, instruction, and evaluation should be designed around clearly formulated objectives and that learning activities should engage students directly and actively in the learning process by causing them to use knowledge, examine values, communicate with others, make decisions about social and civic affairs, formulate and test hypotheses, gather and analyze data, and participate in community activities. There is also mention of the need to structure programs to help students organize their experiences to promote growth, learn how to continue to learn, and be able to relate their experiences in social studies to other areas of experience. Elaborating on this, the guidelines suggest that learning can be structured either around basic concepts, principles, and methods drawn from the social sciences or around analysis of the causes, consequences, and possible resolutions of social issues. They go on to say that it would be inadequate to limit programs to courses in the individual disciplines, because input from many disciplines is needed to address the complex and enduring social issues that social studies courses should be focusing on in the first place. Here again, we see the NCSS's emphasis on citizenship education, not introduction to the disciplines, as the main purpose of social studies.

Contemporary Discontent and Reform Proposals

Many contemporary scholars look back fondly on the 1960s and 1970s as a period of energy and innovation in social studies curriculum and instruction, but view the 1980s as a period of retreat from innovation, reduction of alternatives, and homogenizing of the curriculum (Naylor & Diem, 1987). These and
Higher Order Thinking and Problem Solving in Social Studies

So far, this paper has identified citizen education as the transcendent purpose of social studies instruction, described competing views about how this purpose should be accomplished, provided a historical account of how the elementary social studies curriculum in the United States has evolved in response to these competing views and other influences, and summarized contemporary views as exemplified by the NCSS guidelines and the criticisms that have been leveled against the de facto national curriculum. The paper now moves to a focus on higher order thinking and problem solving in social studies.

Most of what is said in the social studies literature on higher order thinking and problem solving concerns application of knowledge in the process of critical thinking, decision making, and citizen participation activities. Possibly because it is assumed that the expanding communities approach ensures such understanding, there is relatively little mention of the meaningful understanding aspects of higher order thinking. Furthermore, descriptions of instructional strategies are usually phrased in terms of first learning and only then applying knowledge; not much is said about enhancing the meaningfulness of such instruction by couching it within a realistic application context from the beginning. Programs built around Dewey's notions of reflective thinking, Bruner's notions of disciplined inquiry, or various approaches to the study of social issues and problems all imply that inquiry/decision making activities will promote comprehension as well as application of knowledge, but they tend to focus on these activities rather than on the knowledge itself.

In short, most of what is available in the social studies literature on higher order thinking and problem solving concerns processes (procedural knowledge) rather than content (propositional knowledge), and the processes are often taught more or less independently of the content drawn from the
historically counterproductive behavior and make good decisions in managing one's life (as well as to help one's community or nation do the same through activities as a citizen), and so on.

Most experts writing about curriculum in social studies mention the need to structure the content around powerful concepts and generalizations and to teach integrated strands of content in sufficient depth to ensure comprehension as described above. This curriculum scope and organization goal is very difficult to achieve in social studies, however, because of its multidisciplinary nature and its attempt to address current social problems. For example, Herman (1983) reported the findings of an NCSS survey of members' beliefs about where particular content should be taught in the curriculum that included the following categories of content: anthropology, career education, citizenship education, consumer education, contemporary issues, death and dying, economics, energy education, future studies, geography, global education, history, legal education, moral education, multicultural education, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion studies, science in society, sex equity education, social psychology, and urban studies.

Even after decisions are made concerning which of these fields of content to emphasize, criteria are needed for identifying powerful concepts around which to structure the curricula. Several scholars have suggested such criteria. Armento (1986) suggested including concepts according to the following criteria: (a) commonality of use in discipline-based writings, (b) power to serve as an organizing basis for comprehending other superordinate and subordinate concepts and examples, (c) usability for application to a great range of examples, and (d) validity in terms of generally agreed upon definitions. Similarly, Taba, Durkin, Fraenkel, and McNaughton (1971) suggested that desirable concepts display: (a) validity (adequately represent ideas of the discipline from which they are drawn); (b) significance (can explain important
control, tradition, and values. The State of California suggested the following concepts as keys to the social studies curriculum in a 1974 publication: change, citizenship, conflict, culture, diversity, environment, freedom, interdependence, justice, morality, multiple causation, power/authority, property, resources, needs, scarcity, social control, and truth (cited in Fraenkel, 1980).

Key concepts within the underlying social studies disciplines include the following: (from history) change, leadership, conflict, cooperation, nationalism, exploration, and historical bias; (from sociology) socialization, roles, norms and sanctions, values, social movement, and society; (from anthropology) culture, diffusion, tradition, acculturation, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, and rite of passage; (from political science) power, social control, state, interest group, political socialization, and political participation; (from economics) scarcity, production, interdependence, specialization and division of labor, and voluntary exchange; and (from geography) location, spatial interaction, urban spatial patterns, internal structure of a city, cultural diffusion, and environmental perception (Banks, 1985).

Many social educators advocate developing curricula around powerful concepts drawn from the disciplines such as those exemplified in previous paragraphs. Other social educators (e.g., Fraenkel, 1980) accept such concepts as basic but believe that curricula designed around concepts will be too static, so they advocate designing curricula around generalizations that express relationships between concepts. Generalizations are inherently more powerful and integrative than concepts, and they have added value as key ideas around which to design curricula because they provide a basis for testing predictions or causal explanations and thus make it easier to couch instruction within problem-solving or other application contexts.
3. Decision-making studies (study an issue or problem in order to make decisions)

When curricula are organized around the study of particular cultures or societies (past or present), it may make more sense to organize the material around foci for comparison and contrast rather than around concepts per se. The Hanna (1963) list of nine basic human activities that could be used as the basis for comparing communities has already been mentioned. Similarly, Fraenkel (1980) suggests that systematic study and comparison of societies can be facilitated by applying the following list of questions:

1. Who were the people being studied?
2. When did they live?
3. Where did they live?
4. What things did they leave behind that tell us something about them?
5. What kinds of work did they do and where did they do it?
6. What objects or things did they produce or create?
7. What did they do for recreation?
8. What kinds of family patterns did they develop?
9. How did they educate their young?
10. How did they govern and control the society?
11. What customs and beliefs did they hold?
12. What events, individuals, or ideas are they especially known for, and how did these affect their lives?
13. What problems did they have?
14. How did they attempt to deal with these problems?

Fraenkel goes on to suggest that "content samples" selected for analysis should meet the following criteria:

1. Emphasize the most fundamental or theoretical knowledge possible, drawing on the most powerful concepts and generalizations that the disciplines have to offer
teaching individual concepts, but do not say much about the nature of classroom discourse or about integrating and applying networks of concepts within problem-solving contexts (see Prawat, 1988, on this point).

In textbooks on teaching strategies for the social studies, discussions of tactics for developing comprehension typically stress the importance of asking the students "comprehension questions" (as they would be classified within the Bloom taxonomy) about the concepts, generalizations, and principles that they are learning. Comprehension questions require students to (a) translate (into their own words or into equivalent terms); (b) interpret (relate things to one another, impose or change a sequence, compare or contrast, separate essentials from nonessentials); or (c) extrapolate (predict or estimate an event from a known pattern or trend) (Banks, 1985). In particular, compare/contrast questions are often recommended as ways to stimulate and assess students' comprehension of concepts, and prediction questions are often recommended as ways to stimulate and assess students' ability to apply a generalization or principle.

**Learning of Skills, Strategies, and Processes**

As noted previously, the NCSS statement on the essentials of the social studies identifies four sets of thinking skills (data gathering skills, intellectual skills, decision making skills, and interpersonal skills) each with several subcategories, and other sources of information to teachers include even longer lists of skills. Criticisms of the way skills are handled in social studies center on two problems: Skills instruction is often separate from content instruction and skills instruction is atomized into exercises on subskills without enough opportunities to "put it all together" by doing the whole task of problem solving, decision making, or critical analysis of documents (Glaser, 1984; Marzano et al., 1988).
Following Engle (1960) and Engle and Longstreet (1972), many social educators believe that teachers can address most of these goals and develop most of the skills required to achieve them if they couch their social studies instruction within a decision making/problem solving/critical thinking framework. By engaging their students in these higher order processes as they relate to citizen education goals, teachers can simultaneously link their instruction in skills and processes with their instruction in social studies content and provide opportunities for practice of subskills within a context of application to meaningful problem solving and decision making activities.

Speaking of content teaching in general (not just in social studies), Marzano et al. (1988) argued that instead of attempting to teach thinking skills by teaching dozens of discrete subskills in presumed hierarchical order, schools should define a limited number of core skills for each content area and focus on teaching these core skills in gradually more challenging learning contexts. What would be sequenced from easy to difficult would not be a broad array of discrete subskills, but rather the content and tasks. Early instruction would feature relatively easy tasks built around concrete and familiar material, and the teacher would provide considerable modeling, coaching, cuing, and other scaffolding. Gradually, students would be encouraged to apply higher order thinking skills (critical thinking, decision making, etc.) to more difficult tasks built around less concrete and familiar material, and with less scaffolding from the teacher.

**Decision Making, Problem Solving, and Critical Thinking**

Problem solving and decision making activities are similar in many respects, although social studies educators tend to distinguish between them because of the special importance of decision making to citizen education goals. In the social studies, the term problem solving is associated with the inquiry
What problem solving and decision making have in common is that the person will become aware of a need (e.g., to solve a problem or make a decision) and will address it using what Solomon (1987) calls **rational processes**: He or she will analyze the situation, determine what additional information is needed, obtain and assess that information, and then follow through by drawing conclusions that are consistent with the information. To the extent that the person is not already in possession of the needed information (stored in memory and accessible when needed), he or she will need to read, gather data, conduct experiments, or otherwise collect and synthesize this information. In the process, the person will draw upon the various data gathering skills, intellectual skills, and decision making skills that are mentioned in the NCSS statement of essentials. Thus, to the extent that teachers couch their social studies instruction within a decision making/problem solving framework, opportunities to provide instruction and practice of the subskills involved in making decisions or solving problems will occur naturally and frequently.

So will opportunities for teaching and practicing **critical thinking**, which social studies educators define as the process of determining the authenticity, accuracy, or worth of information or knowledge claims (Beyer, 1985) or as the evaluation of evidence of argument, based on acceptable standards, for the purpose of accepting or rejecting a statement (Feely, 1983). Critical thinking is thought to be an especially important goal of citizen education because citizens need to be able to distinguish verified from unsubstantiated claims, assess the reliability of information, determine the factual accuracy of statements, distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, detect bias, identify unstated assumptions, recognize logical fallacies in reasoning, and so on, if they are to make intelligent voting decisions (as well as consumer purchase decisions or other personal life adjustment decisions).
accomplished through this approach. Beyond some optimal level of integration, social science goals, citizen education goals, and personal development goals begin to diverge, so that time allocated for activities in pursuit of one of these sets of goals is lost from the time available for allocation to the other sets of goals. Thus, besides presenting the challenge of how to adjust instruction so as to do a better job with higher order thinking goals, social studies curriculum issues raise fundamental questions about what kinds of higher order thinking goals to emphasize in the first place.

Some social educators have opposed the notion of couching social studies teaching within a decision-making framework or have criticized the arguments commonly advanced in favor of doing so. Proponents of discipline-based approaches who would like to see social studies curricula offer courses in history or in some of the social sciences are especially likely to oppose the decision making approach, because it typically leads to curricula organized around multidisciplinary treatment of diverse topics and discussion of current policy issues instead of systematic treatment of content drawn primarily from a single academic discipline. These scholars believe that decision-making approaches leave students without systematic knowledge of history, geography, and civics. For their part, supporters of decision making/topical approaches believe that courses in history and the social sciences do not provide effective citizen education because they do not ensure that the academic knowledge that they provide to students gets integrated or applied to decision making about personal or civic issues.

Cherryholmes (1980) has criticized what he identifies as positivist assumptions built into the decision making model advanced by Engle (1960) and others, especially the idea that one can make decisions inductively by first collecting objective facts in an objective manner and then integrating these facts within a context provided by one's values in order to make a reasoned decision. He
highly artificial, causing students to speculate about hypothetical countries or communities instead of studying real ones, and causing them to grapple with uninteresting problems formulated by someone else rather than to address personally identified problems in the manner suggested by Dewey. Other common complaints centered on cost-effectiveness issues. Many teachers questioned the value of trying to get elementary school students to function as "little social scientists" by generating and testing hypotheses in the manner of disciplinary experts, and even teachers who accepted this notion in theory usually complained that it was not feasible in practice because the activities often were bewildering to students or were too time consuming, difficult to manage, or otherwise impractical to make them worth the trouble. In particular, the data gathering aspects of many of these inquiry activities often involved a great deal of time and trouble for little apparent gain (students could understand the logic and basic procedures involved in conducting a particular type of experiment without having to perform all of the operations).

Finally, the recognition is developing that the programs of the 1960s identified the processes of science (i.e., the activities that scientists engage in) too narrowly with empirical experimentation. Anderson and Roth (in press) make this argument in the context of science education, noting that in addition to the time they spend carrying out experiments, scientists spend a great deal of time thinking about and discussing scientific theories and data and (like nonscientists) using their scientific knowledge to describe, explain, make predictions about, or exert control over real-world systems or events. They go on to argue that classroom discourse that is focused on applications of scientific knowledge for description, explanation, prediction, or control purposes is likely to be of more value than work on experiments for promoting meaningful understanding of and higher order thinking about science content. Most social educators would make the similar argument that classroom discourse that focuses
interpersonal skills and metacognition. The *interpersonal skills* listed in the NCSS statement are a mixed bag. Some appear to be values rather than skills (accept responsibility and show respect for the rights and property of others, recognize value in individuals different from oneself). The others range from the extremely specific (use group generalizations without stereotyping or arbitrarily classifying individuals) to the very general (work effectively with others as a group member, see things from others’ points of view). Also, most of these could just as easily have been classified as participation skills rather than thinking skills. For that reason, I will consider them in a later section on participation skills.

**Metacognition**

Social studies educators have not had much to say yet about cognitive strategies and *metacognition*, although Solomon (1987) noted the importance of teaching students to be conscious of the mental processing they use when comprehending information, solving problems, researching topics, communicating with others, or making decisions (Solomon listed these five intellectual tasks as the primary occasions for use of thinking skills in social studies). In general, though, there is every reason to believe that cognitive strategies and metacognition will be discussed with the same meanings and assigned the same importance in social studies as in other content areas. Furthermore, the emphasis in social studies on critical thinking and decision making provides a natural context for including instruction in cognitive strategies and metacognition, since critical thinking and decision making are cognitive processes calling for the kind of goals-driven strategy use for which cognitive strategies and metacognition are crucial components.

The metacognitive components of methods that have been developed to enhance students’ general reading comprehension and study skills would also apply
Hoge and Crump (1988) and Alvermann (1987) described additional frames that are frequently used in social studies texts. Alvermann also suggested ways that teachers can help their students to learn social studies content more systematically and with greater metacognitive awareness by stimulating their relevant prior knowledge and in other ways preparing them to learn, by cuing their processing of new learning through questioning, and by helping them to consolidate and extend their learning through activities and assignments that call for reflective thinking.

Cornbleth (1985) acknowledged the potential application value of cognitive research on metacognition and related topics to social studies instruction. She also cautioned, however, that the interests of cognitive researchers do not always coincide with those of social studies educators, so that it will be necessary to make sure that cognitive research findings are not applied in ways that promote teaching of cognitive and metacognitive skills divorced from discipline-based knowledge.

**Participation Skills**

The citizen education and personal development themes in social studies education create an emphasis on development of empathy with others, prosocial interactions in social situations, treating others with tolerance and respect, and working with others to accomplish social or civic purposes. There is a strong humanistic values aspect to these social participation and civic action components of social education, as well as a skills aspect. The NCSS essentials statements includes *interpersonal skills* as a subset of thinking skills as well as a category called *participation skills*. Thus, the implication is that these social participation skills and related cognitive strategies will be explicitly taught.
The inculcation approach has been dominant historically and by most accounts remains dominant at the classroom level, even though most scholarly leaders oppose it. Three alternative approaches have received a great deal of publicity and scholarly interest, although apparently they have enjoyed only limited implementation in classrooms. The first of these is values clarification (Raths, Harmin, & Simon, 1978), which tends to get lumped with secular humanism and attacked by religious and patriotic groups because it calls for teachers to limit themselves to attempts to clarify the different positions that one could take on a problem and the underlying values associated with those positions, without pushing the students toward any particular position or decision. Values clarification activities involve analysis and synthesis of information relevant to a problem or issue, so they involve higher order thinking.

The same is true of the moral reasoning approaches that have been developed based on the ideas of Lawrence Kohlberg (1975). Here, the teacher leads the class in discussions of hypothetical vignettes depicting moral dilemmas. Students are asked to give opinions about what actions the characters depicted in the vignettes should take, and to explain their reasoning. There are no "right answers," and the teacher’s goal is to stimulate the students to develop higher levels of moral judgment (as conceptualized in Kohlberg’s theory and assessed according to qualitative indicators) rather than to lead them toward a particular solution to the dilemma or toward commitment to any particular set of values.

In a review and critique of approaches to values education, Harshman and Gray (1983) note that approaches such as values clarification or moral reasoning include worthwhile elements that should be preserved, such as attempts to stimulate students to develop higher stages of thinking and to involve them actively in analysis of values and consideration of their role in decision
indoctrinate students to accept these ideas blindly, but instead present
knowledge about their historical derivation and contemporary application and
offer opportunities to discuss them as they relate to the curriculum and to
current affairs. Similarly, Kaltsounis (1987) says that recent curricula have
switched emphasis from a pure values clarification approach to a values
analysis approach that includes instruction in
the common values found in our nation's basic social contracts--the Declara-
tion of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. It is
acceptable now to advocate the development of the values embodied in these
documents as long as instruction that appeals to the rational process is
used instead of indoctrination. (p. 16)

In summary, most social studies educators stop short of complete moral
relativism and argue instead that students should be taught to make sure that
their value-related decisions are consistent with core values, especially those
expressed in the nation's basic social contracts. Furthermore, they tend to
recommend values analysis approaches in which students not only are led to con-
sider the values as well as the facts to be taken into account in decision mak-
ing, but also are required to predict the probable consequences of their deci-
sions and to justify them as consistent with shared core values and not just
with their own narrower self-interests (Banks, 1985). These elements would be
included not only in direct teaching about values but in the process of working
through role play and simulation activities, decision making activities, and
discussions of controversial issues.

To the extent that values are taught in ways that highlight their underly-
ing concepts and feature analysis of the complexities surrounding moral dilem-
mas or controversial public issues, this teaching will involve aspects of mean-
ingful understanding and related higher order thinking. The concept of jus-
tice, for example, is a complicated abstraction to begin with, and coming to un-
derstand how it has evolved over time, how it relates to other concepts, and
how it applies to a broad range of personal and civic decision making
learning. Then, in the final section of the paper, the author offers his personal responses to the material reviewed earlier in the paper and draws tentative conclusions about key features of ideal curriculum, instruction, and evaluation in elementary social studies teaching. Colleagues preparing the parallel papers on mathematics, science, literature, and the arts for Study 1 of Phase I of our research (described on page 1 of this paper) all address these same issues.

Power

The notion of power (or accessibility, competence, etc.) is applicable as a way of summing up the student outcomes that reflect the general goals of social studies education, especially if its dispositional aspects are stressed along with its knowledge and skill aspects. As exemplified in the NCSS guidelines and in the statements cited on pages 2 and 3, the general goals statements of social studies educators focus not only on accessible knowledge and skills, but also on commitment to core values and on dispositions such as a feeling of obligation to participate in social, political, and economic processes, a commitment to rational processes for gathering information and making decisions, and a tendency to behave in ways that are consistent with shared core values in addition to one's personal self-interest.

Similarly, the notion of power in applying social studies knowledge should not be limited to utilitarian applications that involve solving some well-structured problem or accomplishing some specific goal. Like science, literature, and the knowledge and appreciation aspects of the arts, but in contrast to the academic tool skills and the performance aspects of the arts, most of the content taught in social studies focuses on propositional knowledge (facts, concepts, generalizations, principles) rather than on procedural knowledge (skills, strategies, processes). Furthermore, with just a few exceptions
motivated by intrinsic interest or curiosity rather than because the information developed is needed for some utilitarian purpose, the incident is an example of a self-actualization application of social studies knowledge.

Other cognitive applications involve appreciation of social studies concepts, principles, or theories. Here the person not only engages in the kinds of cognitive activity mentioned above, but does so with intrinsic motivation and at some length, experiencing a sense of wonder, pleasure, mastery, and so forth, in the process of analyzing the situation. People who enjoy reading history and biography, following political debates, or analyzing and making predictions about emerging developments are examples of individuals who have learned to enjoy the self-actualization and appreciation applications of social knowledge.

Ideally, students will not only learn social studies content but appreciate its value for helping them to understand how the world as we know it came to be and what is occurring in it now, as well as to make personal and civic decisions. Also, students should come to appreciate their own developing understandings and insights—to enjoy and take pride in seeing how what they have learned applies to their own lives, to appreciate the development of new insights or the clarity or other aesthetic qualities of an argument they have developed, to enjoy interpreting or predicting current events, to enhance their knowledge by reading or watching programs on social issues or topics, and in general, to use what they have learned for self-actualization applications in addition to more utilitarian problem-solving applications (see Brophy, 1987, or Good & Brophy, 1987, for an approach to motivating students to learn academic content that includes consideration of these self-actualization applications).
information in order to participate in disciplined inquiry by scrutinizing arguments for logical consistency, distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information and between factual claims and value judgments, using metaphor and analogy to represent problems and solutions, developing and defending positions by referring to relevant information, and making reasoned decisions. Furthermore, these activities should both develop and reflect a complex of student dispositions that together constitute "thoughtfulness": a persistent desire that claims be supported by reasons (and that the reasons themselves be scrutinized), a tendency to be reflective by taking time to think problems through rather than acting impulsively or automatically accepting the views of others, a curiosity to explore new questions, and the flexibility to entertain alternative and original solutions to problems.

Following up on his conception of higher order thinking and its implications for instruction in social studies, Newmann (1988b) has developed a set of high inference rating instruments for measuring the degree to which thoughtfulness is observed in high school social studies classes. Seventeen scales have been developed, although the key indicators of thoughtfulness appear to be the degree to which

1. Classroom interaction focuses on sustained examination of a few topics rather than superficial coverage of many

2. Such interaction is characterized by substantive coherence and continuity;

3. The students are given sufficient time to think before being required to answer questions

4. The teacher presses students to clarify or justify their assertions (rather than merely accepting and reinforcing them indiscriminately)

5. The teacher models the characteristics of a thoughtful person (showing interest in students' ideas and their suggestions for solving problems, modeling problem solving processes rather than just giving answers, acknowledging the difficulties involved in gaining a clear understanding of problematic topics)
8. Both types of teachers felt pressure to cover more content, but the high scoring teachers experienced this primarily as external pressure and tended to resist it by favoring depth over breadth, whereas the low scoring teachers experienced it primarily as internal pressure and thus tended to opt for breadth of content coverage over depth of topic development.

9. Students identified the high scoring teachers’ classes as more difficult and challenging, but also as more engaging and interesting. Although developed for and implemented at the high school level where teachers tend to stress the academic disciplines, most of Newmann’s ideas and research methods also appear to be applicable at the elementary level where teachers tend to stress citizen education goals. Thus, Newmann’s ideas appear to be particularly rich sources of input into our Center’s work, not only in social studies but also in the other subject areas. If Newmann’s findings should be replicated at the elementary level, they would provide considerable cause for optimism because they would indicate that thoughtful, in-depth treatment that fosters higher order thinking about social studies topics is feasible in most classrooms (not just those dominated by high achievers), and that teachers with the knowledge and determination to do so can overcome student resistance to higher order thinking activities and even bring the students to the point where they see such activities as more engaging and interesting than more typical lower-order recitation and seatwork. Only limited research relevant to Newmann’s work has been done at the elementary level, but Thornton and Wenger (1988) reported observing lessons that exhibited many of the characteristics of thoughtfulness as described by Newmann, and Stodolsky (1988) reported that the quality of students’ task engagement was higher during more cognitively complex activities than during lower level activities.

Differentiation According to Different Types of Student

Except for speculating about what is appropriate for students at different grade levels (discussed in a subsequent section), social studies educators tend
1. Using projects, activities, and problems relevant to students' interests and needs as the integrating focus of instruction

2. Supporting students' productive participation in these activities by using a variety of simpler reading materials and illustrated reading resources to supplement the basic text

3. Supplying taped editions of class texts and other materials at listening centers in the classrooms

4. Using a variety of visual and other media resources available in viewing centers in the classroom

5. Using structured role playing, simulations, and a variety of hands-on manipulatives as well as firsthand community resources

She cited research by Curtis and Shaver as evidence that social studies instruction modified in these ways could have positive effects on a variety of cognitive and affective outcomes in slow learning students.

Ochoa and Shuster (1980) offered similar suggestions for teachers in mainstreamed classrooms. Separately for each of seven types of handicapped students, they presented guidelines and sample lesson plans based on the goal of applying the same instructional objectives as much as possible to handicapped students as to other students, but tailoring instructional strategies as needed to enable the handicapped students to achieve those objectives.

Special material has been developed focusing on blacks, women, or other groups or topics that have been underrepresented in the traditional curriculum, but the approach favored by leaders in the field is to adjust the curriculum for all students by incorporating new topics or content emphases into the existing structure, increasing the attention given to traditionally underrepresented groups and topics, and so on. In general, social studies educators tend to bridle at anything that smacks of elitism or separatism.

**Balance, Sequencing, and Integration Issues**

Most of this has already been covered in previous sections. Clearly, because of competition from the different disciplines for space in the
overwhelming in length and variety, yet much less prescriptive than they appear to be at first. Thus, curricula that met these guidelines probably would be better than curricula that did not, but many different kinds of curricula could meet the guidelines. Given the multidisciplinary nature of the social studies and their emphasis on citizen education goals in addition to social science content goals, perhaps this is as much as can be expected, and progress will be achieved more by assembling detailed descriptions of what good programs look like (as we will be trying to do in our research) than by developing tighter curriculum guidelines.

In any case, it is clear that worthwhile higher order thinking goals can be pursued successfully using content drawn from history or any of the social sciences, regardless of whether the content is approached with primary emphasis on disciplinary knowledge, personal life adjustment, or citizen education. It also seems likely that similar principles will apply across these approaches to the social studies in determining what makes for success in addressing particular higher order thinking goals (although the time spent on different kinds of higher order thinking goals will vary according to the program's emphasis).

**Differentiation of Content According to Grade Level**

Social studies educators believe that, with the possible exception of aspects of geography and economics, the content is not inherently hierarchical and does not need to be taught in any particular sequence. Difficulty levels reside in the levels of depth and sophistication with which topics are addressed, rather than in the topics themselves. Difficulty levels increase as one moves from the concrete to the abstract, from easily observable facts relating to familiar situations to facts about phenomena less rooted in experience, and from an emphasis on facts to an emphasis on concepts, generalizations, principles, and theories.
Like Fair, Crabtree (1983) argued that developmental considerations are critical to the social studies. She suggested that the scope of learning incorporated into social studies programs should be made expansive across at least four dimensions by simultaneously moving students (a) spatially from here to far away; (b) temporally from now to times past; (c) interculturally from the familiar to the unfamiliar; and (d) systematically from the first interactions of young children within the social system of the family to increasingly complex understandings of the social, economic, and political systems in their many interactions and linkages. Within these general trends, particular topics would be taken up at times that students appear to be optimally ready to engage them, and individual differences in readiness would be accommodated by varying the amount and nature of instructional assistance and activities. She argued that meaningful understanding of concepts and principles as well as critical thinking, decision making, and other higher order applications can be accomplished even in the primary grades, so long as instruction focuses on "micro issues" rooted in the everyday lives of children rather than "macro issues" that would require them to analyze major social, economic, or political events that transcend their experience base or the scope of their cognitive understandings. She also suggested that the childhood years are particularly important for developing core values and beliefs.

The idea that social studies involves abstractions that are not well grasped until at least the fourth grade has caused some to argue that social studies instruction should not begin until that time, and many to argue that history should not be taught until the secondary grades. However, McKenzie (1986) argued that these pessimistic notions about what can or should be taught in the elementary grades are based on early Piagetian claims that have since been disproven. He further argued that modern information processing and schema theories indicate that children must learn stories, information, and
much meaning or much likelihood of being included in permanent and powerful networks of social studies principles and concepts. Similarly, Marshall (1985) argued that even in the primary grades children can benefit from instruction in history if the material is presented primarily in the form of vivid narratives about real people rather than abstractions, and if it is organized around concepts such as courage, cowardice, oppression, resentment, victory, and defeat that children experience in their own lives.

Levstik (1986) discussed these issues at length. Taking issue with the notion that history should not be taught in the early grades because historical thinking develops slowly and requires formal operations, Levstik developed the following argument. First, the logical structures that underlie science and mathematics may not have direct analogues in history. History is particularistic, and historians seek explanations for specific events rather than general laws. Furthermore, they develop arguments in support of personal interpretations rather than seeking to establish what is objectively true through logical analysis. Thus, Kohlberg's stage model of moral judgment may be a better model for the development of thinking relevant to history than Piaget's stage model of the development of logical-mathematical structures.

Parallels between children's response to historical material and their developing sense of story and response to literature also provide reasons for optimism about teaching history in the primary grades. During the years when social studies emphasize the here and now, children's literary interests involve the distant and fantastic of adventures, fairy tales, and so on. In short, children can understand abstract or unfamiliar content if it is placed into a narrative framework and that deals with motives or thoughts that they can understand and identify with. Thus, perhaps we should analyze the development of historical understandings less in terms of scientific logic than in terms of proceeding from subjective involvement in stories of individual lives toward a
shifted over the years. Claims based on skill hierarchy notions or Piagetian stage notions have receded in favor of the idea that the difficulty level of content resides primarily in the manner and depth with which it is approached rather than in the topics addressed, as well as the notion that instruction in any particular domain should begin with the familiar and concrete before moving to the strange and abstract. In addition, the emphasis has shifted from teaching content as it is structured within the disciplines or teaching other ideas that are recognized as both powerful and basic from an adult perspective toward teaching content that is meaningful (in an operative, not just a figurative sense) because it can be linked to students’ social experiences, especially content that they find interesting because it engages their emotions or provides opportunity for identification with key persons in a narrative. Current arguments center less on what is possible to teach in the early grades than on what is worthwhile, why it is more worthwhile than alternatives, and how it can be taught effectively. While disagreeing about remedies, most contemporary scholars agree that not enough content is included in popularly used curriculum series for the primary grades (K-3), and that much of the content that is included is unnecessary because children already know it (Shaver, 1987). Some would counter the latter point by arguing that children’s knowledge of families, community helpers, and so on, although present, is overly global and intuitive, so that there is value in making it more explicit.

Assessment and Evaluation in Social Studies

The NCSS curriculum guidelines call for systematic and rigorous evaluation of social studies instruction that would (a) be based primarily on the school’s own statements of objectives as the criteria for effectiveness; (b) include assessment of progress not only in knowledge, but in skills and abilities including thinking, valuing, and social participation; (c) include data from many
at all, they tend to address only the subskills involved and not to require students to demonstrate these abilities holistically under realistic application conditions.

Summarizing what is known about evaluation in the social studies, Kurfman (1982) concluded that teacher-made tests predominate over tests that come with curricula and over norm-referenced tests, that objective tests are more common than essay tests (especially with low-ability students), that items concentrate on knowledge and skills with little attention to affective outcomes, and that social studies teachers are not sophisticated about evaluation, do not like to engage in it, and are uninventive in doing so (tests or quizzes occur at least once a week in only 20% of K-3 classes and 38% of 4-6 classes).

This assessment is an accurate description of the current situation, but it seems to take for granted that there should be a heavy emphasis on evaluation in social education. An alternative view is that in addition to considering what to evaluate and how to do it well, we also need to consider how much and what kind of evaluation should occur in social studies in the first place, working from the assumption that there is an optimal level and type of evaluation (rather than the assumption that more is better). Given that evaluation takes time, creates anxiety, and may undermine intrinsic motivation, and given that higher order thinking usually must be evaluated in terms of qualitative criteria rather than achievement of correct answers, it is just as important to avoid too much or the wrong kind of evaluation as it is to ensure that the right amount and kinds of evaluation are included. From this perspective, especially in the early grades, evaluation focused on the teacher and the curriculum (i.e., evaluation designed to assess the degree to which the program makes sense and is effective in achieving its stated goals with the class as a whole) becomes at least as important as evaluation focused on individual students' achievement.
educational psychology rather than in curriculum and instruction, and although I have studied teacher expectations and attitudes, the dynamics of teacher-student relationships, classroom management, student motivation, and relatively generic process-outcome relationships linking teacher behavior to student achievement, I have not yet focused in any systematic way on curriculum, instruction, and evaluation issues within particular subject matter areas.

Second, this literature review and synthesis effort has been just the beginning of a projected five-year program of research on key features of good curriculum, instruction, and evaluation in social studies (to be conducted as part of the research agenda of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Elementary Subjects). The conclusions summarized below will serve as tentative hypotheses to be evaluated in that research (which will include detailed interviewing and observation of teachers, followed by development and testing of guidelines for improved practice). Undoubtedly, they will be qualified and elaborated as that research progresses. Third, the literature reviewed has been mostly theoretical rather than empirical. There is very little research linking particular curriculum, instruction, or evaluation practices to measured student outcomes, let alone systematic testing of theoretically optimal programs against plausible alternatives.

Nature and Purposes of the Social Studies

I agree with most of the views on the nature and purpose of the social studies expressed in the NCSS guidelines and in the leading textbooks and journals in social education. In particular, I accept the idea that elementary level social studies should be an interdisciplinary subject that is informed by the social sciences but concerned with citizen education and life adjustment goals in addition to more narrowly construed social science goals. Especially in the primary grades, I think that an interdisciplinary focus on topics or
behavioral algorithms. Some of these are strategies for processing, organizing, remembering, and retrieving information; others are critical thinking and reasoning skills used in assessing information and making decisions; and still others are paradigms and self-regulatory mechanisms used in systematic inquiry, problem solving, or decision making. As with reading comprehension strategies and study skills, I see some value in a certain amount of direct instruction in the cognitive strategies used in social studies courses, designed to ensure that students know about these strategies, understand when and why they are useful, and get some guided practice in applying them. However, these strategies would be taught as means for learning and applying social studies content, not as ends in themselves. There would be relatively little isolated skills practice, but a great deal of strategic application of these skills during classroom discourse focused on the knowledge components of the curriculum and during follow-up activities that provided students with opportunities to apply this knowledge within critical thinking, decision making, and social participation contexts.

I believe that a good social studies program would include all five of the emphases described by Martorella (1985), although in different proportions at different grade levels and for different topics. In particular, I would favor relatively more emphasis on transmission of the cultural heritage and on personal development in the primary grades, but relatively more emphasis on teaching social studies as social science and as reflective inquiry in the intermediate grades. Social criticism elements would be included at each grade, although they would evolve from narrative and personalized approaches in the early grades (focusing on the competing agendas and motives behind the policies advocated by key figures in history, for example) toward a more formal and "macro" treatment in the intermediate grades (e.g., teaching the students to routinely consider the probable effects of a proposed policy or practice on
be taught to young children about these disciplines or topics, but whether it should be taught is another question.

To use terms favored by social studies educators, I believe that most of these content issues cannot be resolved through the problem solving paradigm but instead require the decision making paradigm—scientific information can help us to assess the relative effectiveness of different approaches to accomplishing a particular goal, but decisions about what goals to pursue in what order of priority must be informed by values as well as by information. For example, as a person trained in clinical and developmental psychology, I am aware of discipline-based content (concerning personal adjustment, moral development, child rearing, etc.) that I think is extremely important and should be taught to all students, but others who want to emphasize the civic rather than the personal aspects of citizen education would tend to oppose including this content in the social studies curriculum. Even if scientific data were available on the short- and long-term outcomes and trade-offs to be expected from exposing students to the two different kinds of social studies programs that might emerge from these different points of view, arguments about their relative merits would be waged not only on the basis of this scientific information but also on the basis of opinions on larger issues surrounding views of the ideal person, the ideal citizen, the proper roles of the school versus the family in developing values, and so on.

I am not arguing that teaching about self-concept, personal adjustment, moral development, or other content drawn primarily from psychology should necessarily be taught within the social studies curriculum. This content could just as well be included with content relating to health, safety, and other matters within a separate curriculum that might be called something like "health and guidance." I do think that such content is valuable and should be included somewhere in the curriculum, however.
many things earlier and more thoroughly if guided by systematic instruction than they would learn on their own. Similarly, stimulated by contemporary information processing and schema development theories, we have come to see how children can use situational schemas built up through prior knowledge and experience as templates for understanding information about how people in other times and places (including fictional characters) have responded to parallel situations. Thus, there is no need to start with the child in the here and now and move linearly backwards in time (for history instruction) or outwards in physical space and scope of community (as in the treatment of civics and geography within the expanding communities framework). Children can understand historical episodes described in narrative form with emphasis on the goals and motives of key individuals, and they can understand aspects of customs, culture, economics, and politics that focus on universal human experiences or adaptation problems that are familiar to them and for which they have developed schemas or routines.

Thus, proposals calling for replacing most of the current primary grades social studies curriculum with a curriculum that would emphasize history and related literature are certainly feasible from the perspective of developmental and educational psychology, probably just as much so as the expanding communities approach. It should be noted, however, that the same is true of other reform suggestions, such as those calling for comparative study of world cultures and customs (focusing on anthropology rather than on history) or for discussion of issues and problems (focusing on current environmental and social issues) as the basis for social studies instruction in the primary grades. Thus, differences in points of view about the nature and purposes of social studies (e.g., the five emphases described by Martorella) and about the relative value of the different disciplines as sources for content will remain unresolved even if the expanding communities framework should be discontinued.
great concern, especially if it included attention to the world's recent "hot spots" and the reasons for the conflicts occurring there.

Whatever content is taught, information about what the students already know (or think they know) about a topic should be taken into account in developing the curriculum. The goal would not be to teach the disciplines themselves or even networks of knowledge organized around concepts and principles seen as being the most fundamental or powerful from an expert's perspective, but instead to draw on discipline-based knowledge and any other relevant sources to address particular topics (families, farming, Mexico, etc.) in systematic ways that enable students to (a) articulate and organize their existing implicit knowledge on the topic; (b) gain perspective by being able to place what they know about the topic within larger frames of reference (coming to distinguish universal and necessary aspects from variable and accidental aspects, learning about alternatives to the familiar and about the degree to which the familiar is typical or atypical from a global and historical perspective); and (c) structure much of what they learn around important concepts, principles, generalizations, or disposition/cognitive strategy combinations that maximize their capacity to understand and respond effectively to their social experience.

The conceptual change teaching approach that has been developed for teaching science (Anderson & Roth, in press; Anderson & Smith, 1987) is also useful for teaching social studies, because students have misconceptions about social phenomena just as they do about natural phenomena. For example, most young children implicitly view the President of the United States as being much more autonomous and powerful (able to solve just about any problem by issuing directives and seeing them carried out), altruistically motivated, and knowledgeable and concerned about the problems of individuals than any president could ever be. These notions of the president as a benevolent godlike figure are gradually replaced with more realistic ideas over a period of several years.
commitment to democratic values, but not "citizenship training" that would be described more accurately as inculcation via propaganda than as critical thinking and decision making based on sound information. I support efforts to make schooling interesting and enjoyable for children and to avoid threatening their security by overdwelling on harsh realities (Nicaragua, the homeless, etc.) or anxiety-producing topics (AIDS, nuclear confrontation), but not to the extent of patronizing them with unnecessarily sanitized curricula or oversimplified and one-sided interpretations of complex phenomena.

Finally, I agree with Ravitch (1987) that well-chosen biographies and engaging accounts of historical events can make the study of history more concrete and interesting to elementary students; however, I do not share her enthusiasm for infusing myth and lore into the curriculum as well (if this is taken to mean the social studies curriculum). There is value in studying myth and lore as literature (i.e., within the language arts curriculum). Even within the social studies curriculum, it can be useful to include myth and lore as part of cultural studies. However, I question the wisdom of doing so with students in the primary grades, who can appreciate physical artifacts and customs but are not yet ready for systematic study of the philosophical and psychological aspects of cultures. Also, to the extent that myth and lore are included in the social studies curriculum, it is important to be sure that, as Ravitch intends, they are presented as fictions that tell us something about the culture under study.

If used for other, less defensible, purposes, and especially if presented as historical truth, myth and lore could have counterproductive effects on children's developing social knowledge. For example, stories about Paul Bunyan or Pecos Bill might be interesting to children, and the story of George Washington and the cherry tree might be a convenient fiction to use when teaching them about honesty, but (a) these are known fictions, not accounts of
extent that this appeared to make sense, and I would teach skills within meaningful application (decision making/problem solving) contexts and with simple but clear explanations of their roles and uses. More generally, I would want to make sure that everything in the curriculum was included for good reasons and that these reasons would be communicated to students along with the knowledge and skills themselves.

Rather than give shallow coverage to everything within a domain of knowledge, I would stress major principles and generalizations and focus in depth on a few examples chosen either because they were prototypic representations of important principles and generalizations or because they provided a good contrast to the examples that students in the United States are most likely to be familiar with. In studying a country's history, for example, I would emphasize the basic economic, social, or political forces that have shaped its development (not just a chronology of noteworthy events), linking these to discipline-based concepts, generalizations, or principles (such as colonization or modernization). Similarly, in addressing its geography I would stress the relationships between its climate and natural resources, its economy, and its location and power vis-a-vis other countries as determinants of its past history and current status, not just descriptive and statistical facts.

The key ideas around which the curriculum would be built would be phrased in terms of midrange, causal principles or generalizations (see Prawat, 1988 on this point). Thus, a generalization such as "people in different places live in many different kinds of homes, depending in part on the climate and the availability of construction materials" would be preferable to the relatively trite "people live in many different kinds of homes." Unfortunately, the latter generalization is more typical of the key ideas stressed in the curricula used in the schools (or at least, the way that these ideas are conveyed to teachers). In elaborating on the key ideas, I would want to make sure that
individualized follow-up activities or assignments. The students would get input from a variety of sources (primarily reading the text and listening to teacher presentations of content, but also from films or TV, collecting data on their own, reading source materials, and so on). Rather than moving directly from input to practice or application, however, I would expect to see elaboration on the content accomplished through teacher-student discourse designed to connect concepts to one another and to the students' experience, probe the limits and implications of the content, get the students to recognize and apply generalizations, and so on. The teacher would help students to process information through advance organizers, goals statements, or reading and study guides built around key concepts and questions that would focus their efforts and make them goals-driven. During teacher-student interaction, the teacher would elaborate on this by giving explanations using prototypical examples and cases and probing for additional examples and limits of the concepts, comparisons and contrasts, and predictions to new cases. Students would be socialized to understand that teacher-student dialogue is needed to elaborate and interpret/question/apply material—that the text is a stimulus or starting place, but teacher-student interaction is the heart of learning. In other words, classroom discourse would routinely display the characteristics of thoughtfulness described by Neumann (1988b).

Teacher-student dialogue would include or be followed by application opportunities built around questions or issues that were not just of interest to the disciplines but involved important, real, and current problems that the students could relate to. These activities would require students to paraphrase, communicate, invent, debate, or otherwise actively process and use the material, and they would include cooperative group projects and structured debates in addition to individualized assignments. Commensurate with student
Critical thinking applications would focus mostly on current content (advertising, political speeches, opinion columns, etc.) rather than on hypothetical content or past history (except in history courses or units). There would be assignments calling for students to predict the results of elections, current political crises, stock market movements, and so on (depending on what principles and generalizations were being studied), and to defend their arguments with reference to relevant historical events or discipline-based principles.

To develop citizen action dispositions, there would be at least some emphasis on keeping informed of current news and issues and on getting to know the community (at the secondary grade levels I would extend this to include community service activities, participation in political campaigns, visits to the local council meetings or court proceedings, etc., but I am not sure that these activities would be worth the time or trouble involved for the elementary grades).

Evaluation

In these early grades, I would be at least as much concerned about evaluating the program and the instruction as about evaluating the achievement of individual students. Ideally, evaluation efforts would focus on student achievement of the major objectives, and would be accomplished by asking students to work on tasks calling for holistic demonstration of meaningful understanding of content and ability to apply it using important skills and strategies, rather than more conventional short-answer responses to questions on specific knowledge items or subskills.

Also, the information developed through such evaluation efforts would be used diagnostically rather than just for grading students. That is, the information would be used to assess progress in moving the class as a whole toward
them to describe, explain, make predictions about, and control their world—in this case, their social world). Such a conceptualization leads to an emphasis on midrange principles and generalizations as the key ideas around which to structure curricula, not only because principles and generalizations are even more powerful than the concepts considered basic to the disciplines but also because they allow one to address the content within a context of application.

The similarities are also made more obvious when attention is drawn to the importance of developing meaningful understanding of the propositional knowledge components of the content and when the skills components are addressed within the context of their roles as parts within holistic inquiry, problem-solving, or decision-making applications of propositional knowledge (rather than as hierarchies of procedural knowledge taught largely independently of propositional knowledge and developed largely through part-skills practice rather than through whole task applications). The problem formulation, data gathering, and critical thinking and reasoning skills involved in formulating and working through social studies problems or decisions appear to be quite similar to those involved in formulating and working through problems in mathematics or science. The need to make personal decisions about the implications of the outcomes of social studies inquiry activities by considering them within the context of one’s values adds an extra dimension to social studies decision making that does not exist in ordinary scientific problem solving, but very similar processes are involved in problem formulation, critical thinking about relevant evidence, inductive and deductive reasoning, projection of the probable outcomes of alternative courses of action, and so on.

There appears to be just as much reason to emphasize meaningful understanding as an important intended outcome of instruction in social studies as there is in other subject matter areas, as well as to recognize that this will involve working through networks of related facts, concepts, generalizations, and
called appreciation and self-actualization goals, and will include frequent opportunities for inquiry, problem solving, values analysis, and decision making. If content selection and development are planned from the beginning within such application contexts, and if supportive rationales and their implications for instruction are made clear to teachers, there is no reason in principle why social studies curricula built around content drawn from the disciplines or built around a multidisciplinary study of topics cannot be consistently dynamic rather than static (this tends not to be a problem with social studies curricula built around discussion of issues and problems).

Instruction in skills (procedural knowledge) would be built into such programs where it would occur naturally as part of the process of applying the propositional knowledge being learned, rather than as separate skills curricula. Some direct instruction on skills would be desirable, especially on the facets or steps involved in higher order applications such as critical thinking, inquiry, problem solving, and decision making. Task analysis information highlighting the subskills involved in any particular application also should be useful to teachers, especially as a basis for diagnosis and remediation when difficulties are encountered. However, overemphasis and misapplication of such task analyses should be avoided (e.g., separation of skills instruction from instruction in other content, proliferation of subskills taught and practiced in isolation, or overemphasis on linear relationships or hierarchies among these subskills). Skills must be kept in perspective as application tools, not ends in themselves.

Skills should be taught within the context of strategic application, which implies attention not only to the cognitive strategies involved but to the elements of metacognitive awareness and conscious self-regulation that should be involved when students learn, remember, organize, or retrieve information, think critically about that information, or apply it during problem solving or
aspects of good subject matter teaching, and follow-up activities and assignments would also be expected to require students to formulate and articulate such critical thinking.

From this perspective, critical thinking may be seen not only as a form of higher order thinking to be developed through subject matter instruction, but as a pervasive feature of the process of instruction itself. With hindsight, we can see that the "new" science and social studies programs of the 1960s erred by identifying the work of scientists too closely with the processes of empirical experimentation, to the point of installing this form of scientific inquiry as the method (not just the goal) of classroom instruction. To the extent that Anderson and Roth (in press) are correct in suggesting that instruction in science (and I would add, social studies) should focus instead on the implications of the content for description, explanation, prediction, and control, it appears that curriculum and instruction in these subjects (and perhaps in all subjects) should focus on engaging the students in critical thinking about the content as a basic and frequently used instructional method.

One form of higher order thinking that appears prominently in discussions of several other subject areas but is not emphasized much in social studies is creative thinking. Perhaps this is because of the term's linkage with the term "creativity," which popularly connotes invention or creation of some physical product. Except when integrated with literature or the arts, social studies does not lend itself well to assignments calling for creation of such products. However, creative thinking is clearly involved in social studies activities such as synthesizing a great deal of information in order to develop and defend a position on an issue, generating potential solutions to problems, or responding to speculative questions. Thus, creative thinking might be included with the other general forms of higher order thinking discussed previously.
when students are required to organize, manipulate, analyze, evaluate, or interpret information in some new way because a question or problem cannot be solved through routine application of previously learned knowledge. Another approach toward the same goal is to focus on the intended outcomes of instruction. Anderson and Roth have done this by suggesting that science instruction should be designed not only to equip students with knowledge but to provide them with the ability and disposition to use that knowledge for describing, explaining, making predictions about, or controlling their environment. Discussions among researchers at our Center on the notion of empowering students with accessible and usable knowledge as the intended outcomes of instruction represent a similar approach. I believe that one or some combination of these approaches will be suitable for conceptualizing and framing our research, in social studies as well as in the other content areas.


