SITUATIONS in which teachers find it possible to draw upon sociological studies are multiplying as new books appear to document and to deepen our previous insights. As we get into the research, a number of these situations, ones in which we may have felt ourselves pretty much at home, begin to take on a new look. Adding the social dimension sometimes puts us beyond our former frame of reference; we have to find a new focus. What it can do to a number of the common problems with which we are concerned indicates its significance for us.

If we use the problem census in new groups, we know that one of the problem centers will be that of “discipline”: how to reduce aggressiveness in some of the pupils, or what to do about tardiness and laxity in attendance. Or perhaps we find concern about a self-driving perfectionism that makes some children unduly sensitive, unbearably ready to please; or tense about competition, ready even to cheat to excel. This whole matter of learning how to behave in ways acceptable to the teacher and the school begins to appear in a new light as we find other sources of the aggressive, the competitive, and the passive besides the school situation and the private experience of each pupil.

Again, we are working together to locate the most popular and least popular pupils, “guess-who-ing” to get at the picture of leadership. We know how to gather facts and make charts, how to re-group and re-seat. Before we begin to congratulate ourselves on the results, we might stop for a moment to ask one more question. We know who approves of whom, but do we know why?

In seeking an answer, we must include a study of the community status of the pupils for we know now that it is an important factor. We are beginning to see that the dominant values in the schoolroom, our values and those of the best-liked and most-approved, are not understood or fully accepted by all pupils. We discover that re-seating and re-grouping work, not merely because those “out of it” become better acquainted with those who are “in” and therefore better liked, but also because those “out of it” learn to be liked when they have an opportunity to find out what it takes. They begin to understand and identify with the schoolroom’s middle class values.

Or, with a new program of family life education in prospect, teachers are beginning to study the homes from which their pupils come. They discover families in which the father is a marginal member; other families with the father very much at the center, deciding alone what shall be done and enforcing his will in ways that may strike the teacher-observer as degrading; and families where the father and mother assume, or try to, the role of older brother and sister. They find certain issues—how much allowance? how late the date? how soon to drive?—stir the indignation and imagination of some 16-year-olds, yet seem remote and even
academic to others who may have been earning their own spending money for years or dating since they were twelve or growing up in families where there are no cars. Teachers begin to see that dealing with common concerns of family life will require broadening the base.

Groups like those above that have felt something missing in their attack upon school problems now have added the social dimension to the biological and psychological. Robert J. Havighurst’s analysis in Developmental Tasks and Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948; 86 pp.) illustrates this trend. The current literature of cultural studies runs from a best-selling novel, John Marquand’s Point of No Return and an essay in Life (September 12, 1949), to the first reports from the Committee on Human Development at the University of Chicago.

Be Sure to Read . . .

AWARENESS OF SOCIAL CLASS. Celia B. Stendler, associate professor of education at the University of Illinois, observes in a study of Children of Brass-town (Urbana, Ill.: Bureau of Research and Service of the College of Education, University of Illinois) that awareness of social class is developed by children before they leave the elementary school. The study was carried on in an industrial community of 15,000 population located in northeastern United States.

Results of the comparison showed that to first graders the terms “rich” and “poor” are meaningless in the adult sense. The six-year-old tends to attribute everything good and desirable in his eyes to the rich, and everything bad and undesirable to the poor. Likewise, he romanticizes occupations of “community helpers” such as the mailman, the milkman, the fireman.

By the time they had reached the fourth grade, some children were beginning to show an awareness of symbols which are economic in origin. The two upper grades, Mrs. Stendler found, were very much like adults in their ratings. While emphasis was on economic symbols, the students were beginning to note that there may be a disparity between place in society and income.

Mrs. Stendler’s conclusion is that parents and teachers of school children should be realistic in their approach to problems of social class because it was evident from the study that the children are meeting these problems. For this reason, she believes that the children should have intelligent guidance based on a realistic concept of social and economic levels of American life.

YOUTH AND SOCIAL STATUS. Robert J. Havighurst and Hilda Taba in Adolescent Character and Personality (New York: John Wiley & Co., 1949; 315 pp.) examine the character reputation of Prairie City 16-year-olds. This report reveals a correlation between reputation and social status but, more important, it stresses the fact that social origin is less significant than a whole-hearted acceptance through the school of the dominant middle class values. A chapter defining community factors in relation to character formation contains the most forthright delineation of value differences among classes that the reviewer has yet seen.

INSIDE ELMTOWN. Arthur B. Hollingshead, in Elmtown’s Youth: The Impact of Social Classes on Adolescents (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1949; 479 pp.), turns an analytical eye upon the school as a middle class institution, describing first the social setting, then the students who are in school, and finally the Elmtown adolescents who are not in school. The description of student attitudes and behavior in terms of cliques and dates, religion, jobs and ideas of jobs, and recreation and “tabooed pleasures” is complete and convincing. The most useful part of Elmtown’s Youth may well be the 120-page section describing those who for one reason or another leave school before graduation. Elmtown’s Youth will probably become a basic reference for helping teachers to see the crucial importance of the social dimension in adolescent behavior.


OTHER MATERIALS FOR DEVELOPING SOCIAL INSIGHTS

SOCIAL STUDIES. Based on the Stanford Social Education Investigation, Education for Social Competence by I. James Quillen and Lavone A. Hanna (Chicago: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1948. 572 pp.) is a textbook in curriculum and instruction in secondary school social studies that is useful beyond its field. The chapter on the behavioral statement of objectives has been badly needed, as has the account of unit-teaching. This latter topic is shored up by a report of problem-solving, topical, and chronological approaches. The section on evaluation—chapters dealing with the concept, devices, and use of data—is compact and widely applicable.

DEMOCRACY. An extensive and annotated list of materials—books, articles, films, and recordings—organized around the title, Appreciating Democracy, marks a monograph prepared by Frances Hall Adams (Los Angeles, Calif.: Division of Secondary Education, Los Angeles County Schools. Curriculum Monograph SS-561, 1949. 109 pp., mimeographed). Suggested introductory and developmental activities are included.
UNITED NATIONS. *Building the Peace* tells the official story of the first four years of the United Nations (International Documents Service, Columbia University Press, New York: Published by the United Nations Department of Public Information, 1949. 36 pp.). A factual account, the report deals with programs for peace and security, economic and social problems, dependent territories, and world law.

HUMAN RELATIONS. John Gassner in *Human Relations in the Theatre* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1949. Freedom Pamphlet Series. 50 pp.) examines the contributions made to the understanding of minority groups by the stage, and comments upon a number of socially-oriented plays.

OTHER NEW MATERIALS

SPANISH READERS. A series of seven pamphlet readers in Spanish have been written by Ann Nolan Clark for the cooperative education programs being sponsored by the Institute of Inter-American Affairs and certain Central and South American countries. Two of these pamphlets are pre-primers (*Linda Rita* and *Juan el Poblano*), four are first grade readers (*El Buey que Queria Vivir en la Casa*, *El Cerdito que Fué al Mercado*, *Los Patos Son Diferentes*, and *La Gallina que Queria Ayudar*), and one is for the third grade (*En el Camino de la Escuela*). A limited supply is available (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1948-49).


NEW FILMSTRIPS

Jam Handy (2821 E. Grand Boulevard, Detroit 11) has added to its Science Adventures Series for later elementary and junior high school classes a group of seven slidefilms on *Water Life*. In color, these combine photographs and drawings, with the strips running from 52 to 68 pictures. Number 5 of this sequence is *Keeping an Aquarium*, dealing with the choice of an aquarium, preparing and planting, animals for the aquarium, and caring for and watching an aquarium. A bargain offer is being made this year by Curriculum Films, Inc. (41-17 Crescent St., Long Island City 1, N. Y.), with 93 filmstrips in color in group prices that bring the cost down to $1.59 each. Group 1 includes five sets entitled *The Country Community*, *City Adventures*, *Nature Study Stories*, *The English Colonies*, and *The Spanish Explorers*. Group 2, for both elementary and secondary use, is made up of three sets with four strips each of great American presidents, authors, and inventors. Group 3 has five sets: *Story-Time Picture Tales*, *American Folk Tales*, *Elements of Art*, *Eskimos of Alaska*, and *Work and Play with Janet*. 