

# Significant Books in Review

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**Studying Your Community.** By Ronald L. Warren. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1955.

Since public schools have become increasingly aware of their role as social institutions, studying the community—which is the immediate social construct to which the school responds as a social agent—has come into major focus in American education. The “community school” concept, use of community resources, the community as a laboratory for learning, and the social diagnosis of community forces have all been added to the framework of our educational philosophy. Perhaps the least amount of attention has been given, however, to community social diagnosis as a research tool in educational planning. Ronald L. Warren’s book, *Studying Your Community*, is, therefore, a welcome addition to this neglected area of professional investigation.

Probably its greatest values will be found in two fields of educational research: (a) in the area of school planning for total community needs, usually undertaken by school boards or administrative groups seeking to establish a frame of reference in which to organize a school system that responds to local social and ecological conditions of the school district; and (b) in teacher education for those who believe that a study of the community at firsthand is a vital part of the learning process in

training teachers. Warren apparently has compiled his book with an eye to its use by lay citizens and by professionals from various fields, rather than restricting his study to a scholarly matrix understood only by sociologists or community planners. His volume, therefore, can be easily understood and assimilated by those carrying on action research at the local level. Educators will welcome this book, therefore, as a handbook that is written in simple language and which sets up guidelines for specific studies in such fields as health, recreation, religious activities, and communication, as well as education itself.

Warren cautions his readers who are specialists in any of these fields that each may find shortcomings in the outline of factors to be considered within his own area. He states, quite frankly, that the book is an attempt to explore the socio-economic dimensions of the total community, and each specialist using this handbook on his own must pursue those interests that are beyond the research framework of any particular chapter. In this respect, educators might quarrel on several specific scores with the author’s treatment of education in the community. His list of educational references are imbalanced, for example containing nothing specifically in elementary education, and ignoring such definitive statements of policy in

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## \*YOUTH FACES AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

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secondary education as *Education For All American Youth*. Educationists may also wish to qualify such statements as the generalization the author makes about reasons for the teacher shortage, basing his conclusions on the salary differential rather than upon the total conditions of teaching which are equally important in driving teachers into other lines of work. (p. 99.) In defense of the author, who is a sociologist by profession, his chapter on education, however, is objective and quite comprehensive within the purposes for which it was written. In tracing changes of American education, for example, he does not allow himself to be trapped by faddists or emotional attacks on the public schools. His generalizations about public education in this country are, on the whole, sound and logically developed.

Perhaps the most useful part of this book is to be found in the questions that Warren has developed as guides to community research for the various areas he covers. These questions can be adapted to local surveys and will help survey teams to get an overview that they might otherwise miss. Some chapters, such as the one on health, contain over 250 questions on the subject; the chapter on education contains nearly 200. Added together, the questions in each section come to well over 1000 items which those interested in community surveys can use as guides to research.

Finally, this book has been written for the kind of "action research" which educators so often find applicable to educational planning. The author states this purpose throughout the entire volume, but perhaps he best sum-

marizes the research objectives of community surveys at the end:

Knowledge about the community has value if it is used only as an aid in the normal discharge of the duties of citizenship; or it may lead to more definite, enterprising action toward community betterment. In any case, the survey is not an end product; it is a tool to work with. The end product is a healthy, vital, growing community whose citizens are alert to its needs and possibilities and active in building the type of community they want. (p. 307.)

Since educators are firmly committed to social change in exactly as positive a sense as this, *Studying Your Community* provides them with a thoughtful and well organized research guide by which such an objective can be more fully realized. It is a goal that can be hoped for, especially by educators who believe in community diagnosis as a means of improving public education

for its children and the citizens of the community who are served by the schools.

—Reviewed by JEROME G. DISQUE, professor of education, San Francisco State College, San Francisco, California.

**Values of Future Teachers.** By Fay L. Corey. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1955. 139 p.

This book contains material which is both comforting and disconcerting to the interested reader. Packed into the 139 pages are a great many provocative findings concerning the responses of a large number of preservice teachers attending nine state schools of education.

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teachers . . . actually are and how they relate to accepted values which noted educators consider imperative to foster. . . ."

To obtain evidence, a 112-item questionnaire was administered to students. This instrument was designed to elicit responses in ten value areas considered essential to the democratic way of life. In addition, twenty students attending Cortland State Teachers College were selected to participate in a series of tape-recorded discussions.

The major finding, reported in percentages, is that the majority disagree with items which are essentially "socialistic" and "Godless." Evidence is presented to indicate that many of the students appear to be struggling with fears which tend to inhibit the desire to examine controversial issues critically.

There is also evidence suggesting that some of the teacher trainees support views which are basically authoritarian and undemocratic. Data are also presented which indicate that there is considerable variation between what students say and what they do.

On the negative side, one may raise many questions about the techniques of the study and the analysis of results. The items on the questionnaire do not appear to be characteristic of attitude items, but rather seem to be similar to those on opinionnaires. Another factor of concern to this reader is the feeling that many of the items appear to be acceptable to the majority largely because they are verbalisms.

In the report of the findings there are several puzzling items related to procedure. In some instances the author

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indicates that a "slight" majority agreed on an item. In one case the "slight" majority turned out to be 70% of the sample. In the same case the "undecided" and the "disagree" responses were combined and called the minority opinion. Are we to assume that those who took a definite stand and those who were undecided are really "birds of a feather"?

In the conclusion it is pointed out that for every statement there is a minority opinion. This seems to cause some concern for the author. Are we to suppose that Dr. Corey would have desired 100% uniformity of opinion for each statement? Is this consistent with the value, "Intelligence and Freedom to Think"? It seems that in her earnest desire to have all students accept the

democratic values the author may have neglected the worth of the nonconformist and status-quo-oriented individuals.

It seems possible that much of the variability in response might be explained in terms of item construction and the limitations of paper and pencil tests of this nature.

It should be pointed out that this book is well worth reading. For teachers, administrators and lay people concerned with any aspect of education there are the challenges, "Are we doing a good enough job? What more can we do?"

—Reviewed by MARVIN TAYLOR, professor of education, Queens College, New York, New York.

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