DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 697 TM 870 084

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TITLE	National Assessment of Values and Attitudes for Social Studies.
PUB DATE	Aug 86
NOTE	29p.; One of 46 papers commissioned by the Study Group on the National Assessment of Student Achievement and cited in Appendix B to their final report "The Nation's Report Card" (TM 870 049). For other papers in this group, see TM 870 050-094.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Attitude Measures; *Citizenship Education; Decision Making; Definitions; *Educational Assessment; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; National Surveys; *Social Attitudes; *Social Studies; *Student Attitudes; Testing Programs; Test Validity; *Values
IDENTIFIERS	*National Assessment of Educational Progress

ABSTRACT

Three key terms--social studies, values, and attitudes--are discussed in relation to a national assessment in social studies. Definitions of these terms will affect decisions about what and how to assess. Two major approaches define social studies as: (1) social sciences simplified and adapted for pedagogical purposes; or (2) that portion of the school curriculum which is focused specifically on citizenship education. Curricular and assessment implications of choosing a definition become clearer when the objects of assessment--values and attitudes--are defined and linked to a definition of social studies. The citizenship education role of social studies should not only be acknowledged, but taken as the centering concept in a national assessment. Acceptance of that perspective, along with the careful definition of values and attitudes, suggests significant and feasible areas of assessment. Careful analysis of prior National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) work and the consideration of measurement alternatives can produce results which are more meaningful, useful, and valid than those from prior NAEP social studies assessments. (LMO)

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National Assessment of Values and Attitudes

For Social Studies

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Paper commissioned by

THE STUDY GROUP ON THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

1986

SO 018 084

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF VALUES AND ATTITUDES FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

Position Paper
for the
Study Group on the National Assessment
of Educational Progress

by

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August 1986

Questions about what to assess in regard to values and attitudes as part of a national assessment in social studies raise difficult issues. Discussion of the meanings of the three key terms--social studies, values, and attitudes--will help to illustrate at least some of the perplexities.

Defining Social Studies

One of the ironies of American education is that although the term, social studies, is widely used among professional educators in discussing elementary and secondary education, few of the persons who graduate from our high schools can define very precisely the meaning of social studies. This situation is in rather stark contrast to that with, for example, mathematics, science, and English. Those curricula have clear connections to academic disciplines and course labels--such as algebra, biology, or American literature--indicate subdivisions of academic disciplines, recognized by the lay public as well as university professors. By comparison, the courses which are taught within the social studies curriculum (such as U. S. history, world history, civics, government, economics, sociology, law-related education, and problems of democracy) have no clear connections to an overarching academic discipline. Some courses have social science labels; history courses may be categorized as a social science or one of the humanities, depending on the course and the bent of the categorizer; some courses have labels that fit no accepted academic category. As a consequence, the rubric, social studies, has a great deal of ambiguity in meaning among professional educators and very little currency on university campuses or among the lay public.

How best to define social studies is a matter of continuing debate among professors of social studies education. Although there are those who say that it is not worth worrying about how to define the term, others argue that the definition which one accepts has important implications for what is taught in school and for what student outcomes one considers worthy of assessment. Hopefully, the validity of the latter position can be illustrated by considering two approaches to definition and their implications.

It is probably not a great oversimplification to say that there are two major approaches to defining social studies. One approach is to define the social studies as the social sciences simplified and adapted for pedagogical purposes. That definition has largely guided textbook publishers. And, because the use of similar textbooks is prevalent, comprising a locally accepted national curriculum, that definition is pervasive, at least implicitly, in schools. The other approach is to define social studies as that portion of the school curriculum which is focused specifically on citizenship education (with the recognition that other courses and the total school, as well as the family, media, and other influences outside of the school have great impacts on the citizenship potential of the child). That definition is implicit in the position of the National Council for the Social Studies that citizenship education is the central purpose of social studies, and it is widely accepted in writings, both publications and local curriculum guides, by social studies professionals.

The first definition does not exclude citizenship education. Rather, those who accept it assume that students who are taught courses based on the social sciences and history will be more knowledgeable adults and better citizens. Nor does the second definition exclude an important role for the social sciences and history in social studies. In fact, its advocates assume that these academic areas have important contributions to make to citizenship education, although they are not the exclusive sources of the curriculum. There is a significant difference, however. With the social studies as the social sciences simplified and adapted approach, the starting point for the social studies curriculum is the academic disciplines, with citizenship education largely implicit. With the social studies as citizenship education approach, the explicit starting point is analysis of the needs and demands of citizenship education, followed by consideration of the contributions that the social sciences and history can make--along with the humanities, including philosophy, and other areas such as legal studies and semantics, as relevant. The curricular and assessment implications of choice of a definition of social studies become clearer when the objects of assessment, values and attitudes, are defined.

Values and Attitudes

To begin with, it should be clear that the word of concern is "value" as a noun, not as a verb (i.e., to "value" something). Also, people sometimes confound that which is valued and the reasonings for valuing it, defining values as those things regarded as important or desirable. A more suitable definition, which will be used throughout this paper, is the following: Values are our principles or standards for judging worth. For example, honesty is a value. It is a standard that we use to judge our behavior and the behavior of others. Freedom of speech is a value. It is a standard by which we, and ofttimes the courts, judge governmental policies and the behaviors of government officials.

Values are, in educational parlance, both cognitive and affective. That is, despite a tendency for people to think of values as being "only feelings", they have an intellectual as well as an emotional aspect. Persons can define what they mean by a value such as "honesty", argue about whether one another's definitions are appropriate and functional, and debate whether a person has applied the value appropriately in making a decision about how to behave (e.g., in reporting income on an income tax form) or in judging the behavior of someone else. In doing so, people are using intellectual processes to deal with the intellectually knowable; that is, they are attending to the cognitive aspects of values. At the same time, by the very nature of being standards or principles of worth, values have emotion and feeling attached to them. Generally, it is good to be honest, and honesty evokes positive feelings. Likewise, freedom of religion is typically viewed as positive, something about which one feels good (especially when it is his or her religious practices which are tolerated by others).

Values can be sorted into different categories. Some people talk, for example, in terms of economic, political, social, and religious values. Another fruitful set of categories is that of moral values--those used to judge the rightness or wrongness of aims and actions; aesthetic values, which are used to judge beauty; and, performance values, which are used to judge whether functioning is acceptable (such as judging a watch against a standard of accuracy).

Like "values", the term "attitudes" is a part of common parlance, and is used variously there, as well as defined in various ways by psychologists and sociologists. A common, and functional, definition is that an attitude is a predisposition to respond to a referent (e.g., an object, person, group of people, idea) based on one's values and beliefs. We, therefore, have attitudes toward referents. For example, one has attitudes toward foreign autos, toward President Reagan, toward Democrats or members of particular ethnic groups, toward communism, and so on.

Values are central elements in our frames of reference; attitudes are less fundamental and more numerous. One of the more insightful writers in the area of values and attitudes, Milton Rokeach, has suggested in his book, The Nature of Values, that while we may have dozens of values, we are likely to have thousands of attitudes. And, values tend to shape attitudes, rather than vice versa. Although attitudes are important in citizenship education, they are not as significant as values.

Linking Definitions

From the "social studies as the social sciences simplified and adapted" point of view, values are not central ingredients of social studies. Knowledge is central. Values are objects of study (e.g.: How do values affect decision-making? How have American values changed over the years? What factors affect the construing of basic constitutional values by the Supreme Court?). They are also of interest as they influence social science and history (e.g., the effects of investigators' values and community values on the outcomes of research). An exception would be historians who view history as one of the humanities, as well as--or even, rather than--an empirical discipline akin to the social sciences. From the humanities stance, there is concern, for example, with whether students have a sense of the historical roots of the democratic commitment to human worth and dignity and to the basic constitutional values that accompany that commitment.

From the "social studies as citizenship education" point of view, values take on a different significance. Values, particularly moral values, are seen as important because they are an essential ingredient in political dialogue and reasoning. They are fundamental elements in an adequate framework for arguing about and justifying our decisions to support or oppose proposed or enacted public policies and about how to behave in our relationships with our neighbors. Interest in that aspect of values, along with interest in having students understand the role and impact of values in the society's political, economic, and social life (which is of interest, too, from the "social sciences adapted and simplified" stance), is primarily cognitive in orientation.

The affective, or emotive, aspects of values, which are likely to get little attention from the social science perspective, except as objects of study, are crucial from the citizenship education perspective. To begin with, common commitments to values provide a context for meaningful conversation and debate about central societal issues. If people lack common value commitments--if they do not share feelings in regard to central principles and standards--there is little basis for agreement or even for productive disagreement, and there will not be direct and meaningful confrontation and discourse on issues of mutual significance.

The emotive component of values serves another, even perhaps in the long run more significant, function. As Gunnar Myrdal pointed out in his classic study of the "negro" in America, An American Dilemma, commitment to values is the "cement" that holds the society together--just as common value commitments are the glue for more personal relationships, such as sound marriages. Indeed, Myrdal referred to the "American Creed"--those basic values of democracy which have particular significance in our constitutionally-based society.

The values in the Creed--such as equal protection before the law, due process of law, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, press, and assembly, along with others such as domestic tranquility (law and order), the common defense (national security), and individual responsibility--capture the essence of a society in which the ultimate value is respect for the worth and dignity of the individual. The basic values in the Creed define what we mean in this society by human worth and dignity. That is, persons treated according to the values are treated with dignity. The basic values are also instrumental to human worth and dignity, in that a government that abides by those values will find it difficult to infringe upon the dignity and worth of individuals by arbitrarily denying them life, liberty, or property.

Cognitive understanding of and ability to apply basic democratic values and affective commitment to those values are crucial ingredients of democratic citizenship. Both are, therefore, of prime interest from the "social studies as citizenship education", as contrasted with the "social studies as social sciences", point of view.

Values as Criteria for Decisions

There is a naive notion that the path to human dignity would be obvious and easy to follow if we would simply clarify our basic values and their relative importance. That is not the case, however. The values themselves defy easy definition--as attested to by the history of the U. S. Supreme Court in attempting to construe such values as freedom of speech and equality of opportunity. People who come from different backgrounds, and thereby have different frames of references--a desired state of affairs in a democracy--will define the basic values differently. Continuing debates over the meaning of values such as freedom of religion are obvious examples.

Equally important, the basic values--like the values in our personal ethical structures--cannot be arranged in a neat hierarchy that will evoke broad consensus or have stability over time. Moral values conflict with one another when applied to specific situations. For example, honesty and compassion often conflict in our own lives. On a fairly trivial level, note how often we do not tell others what we think of their new clothes or hair styles to avoid hurting their feelings. In the societal sphere, promotion of freedom of speech may come at the expense of peace and quiet or orderliness; freedom of the press may conflict with national security (national defense), as in the Pentagon Papers case. Not only do the values conflict--in the sense that when used as criteria, they lead to different decisions--but just as persons with different frames of reference will disagree over definitions, so will they disagree over the weightings to be given different values in arriving at decisions. In a pluralistic society which values diversity, it is inevitable and desirable that there will be disagreements over how to define values and over which values ought to be given precedence in our pursuit of the optimization of human dignity.

Implications

How key terms--social studies, values, and attitudes--are defined will affect decisions about what to assess and how to assess it. What is deemed relevant in an assessment will depend on whether the judgment is premised on a conception of social studies as "the social sciences simplified and adapted" or as "citizenship education" (or on some other conception). As implied above, if the purpose is to determine whether students have learned, and adults retained, social science and history knowledge, the role of values assessment will be slight. What attention is given to values will be in terms of understanding their influence on human behavior, including that of social scientists and historians. (There might be some assessment of comprehension of the historical roots of our society's basic value commitments, an area important, too, from the citizenship perspective.)

Assessment of attitudes would focus on views of the subject matter of social science and history. On the other hand, if the purpose of assessment is to determine whether students have been prepared, and adults continue to be prepared, to function as informed, committed, and thoughtful citizens, then the basic values of our democratic society must be a major consideration in assessment. Attitudes are relevant, too, as they are related to the application and fulfillment of the basic values.

The remainder of this paper is based on the latter position--that is, that the central purpose of social studies is citizenship education, not the teaching of the social sciences and history with possible citizenship spinoffs. Despite the fact that the commitment to citizenship education as the centering concept of social studies is often not honored in the breach by textbook publishers or the teachers who depend on the textbooks, it is the most frequently mentioned raison d'etre for social studies in recent writings about the area, including the recent effort of the National Council for the Social Studies to develop a model scope and sequence for the K-12 curriculum.

The education of citizens has historically been a societal concern, and it is no less important today. What is assessed has strong implications for what should be taught. The presence of values and attitudes, viewed from a citizenship education perspective, in the national assessment will signal their importance to educators. Judgments about the validity of assessment must, then, rest on a much broader base than what _is_ taught in social studies; it must encompass what _should_ be taught in social studies. The definition of values presented earlier has implications for what ought to be taught and assessed. Implications for assessment will be addressed directly in the following pages.

Perhaps it is too obvious for comment, but given the definition of values which has been offered, in a social studies assessment the focus should be on the principles, or standards, used in making evaluations, rather than on the outcomes of the evaluations. For example, the ability to recognize the relevance of basic values to a societal issue and to apply the values reasonably in grappling with a solution to the issue would be the focus rather than whether the person supported or opposed a particular policy or action. An exception would be extreme stands unacceptable on the grounds of any democratic value--such as that genocide is justifiable. Reluctance to assess positions on issues is particularly important in light of the society's commitment to diversity and freedom of thought and the resulting controversy over how to apply and define basic values. It is, however, reasonable to expect that citizens will be able to identify basic societal values, be aware of the historical and philosophical roots of those values, and apply the values in arriving at and justifying decisions about public issues.

As noted above, understanding and applying values are intellectual activities, reflecting the cognitive aspect of values. Assessment of the affective, emotive, side of values is important as well. That is, beyond the question of whether citizens can identify and apply the basic values of the society is the important question of commitment to those values.

Assessment of affect is a hazardous process. Valid assessment of commitment to values is particularly difficult because of a social desirability factor--that is, the tendency for test-takers to say what is socially acceptable regardless of their own particular beliefs or feelings.

Another difficulty is the nebulous relationship between stated commitments and actual behavior. A person's reported commitment to a value may not be translated into actual behavior for a number of reasons. One is the desirability factor mentioned above; the stated commitment may only reflect what the person believes he or she is expected or should say. Even more important, a person may not be totally aware of the nature of his or her commitment until faced with an actual, concrete situation in his or her own life. In a number of testimonials, people have averred that the values of our democratic society did not take on real significance until they lived, even briefly, in a totalitarian society. Others have affirmed, for example, that the full import of the value, due process, became obvious only after they had been arrested and tried on a charge themselves, especially if they were innocent. It is interesting, too, the number of people who discover the importance of the values that protect minority rights when they are no longer in the majority on a significant issue.

Such reality of experience is difficult to build into test items. Moreover, care must be taken not to fall into the fallacy of believing that how one acts or, as is usually the case in assessments, how one says he or she will act actually indicates what the person does not believe, as well as what the person believes. Because of social desirability or lack of experience, self-reports may not reflect actual commitments. Moreover, the conception of value conflict touched on lightly above suggests that in making an important decision about proper policy or action, we typically choose between important values rather than simply identifying the one value which is applicable and then arguing or behaving consistently with it. The stated decision, unless qualified in terms of the values not supported, reveals nothing about values to which the person is not committed.

If a respondent to an assessment item supports the right of the New York Times to publish the Pentagon Papers, it does not mean that he or she necessarily denies that national security is an important value. Rather, all we know is that in this particular case, a decision consistent with freedom of the press was made. Why can we not be certain that the person is denying the importance of national security? First, the respondent may not have seen the relevance of that value, perhaps because he or she focused immediately on freedom of the press as the determining principle. Or, having perceived the relevance of both values, the respondent may have accepted national security as a basic value, but decided that freedom of the press had predominance in this case. That judgment might legitimately be based on factual assumptions about the past, present, or future. For example, it may be that the person believes that military secrecy in the past has deprived the citizenry of their right to know about important matters when that knowledge would not have threatened the national security. A pertinent assumption about the "present" would be that the information in the Pentagon Papers presented little threat to national security. Assumptions about the future that might be germane include, for example, that allowing this exercise of free press would not set a dangerous precedent because similar situations are not likely to occur in the future; or, that the consequence of not allowing this exercise of freedom of the press, even with some threat to national security in the present situation, would be decreased potency of the rights that protect dissension, to the point that the very viability of our democratic society might be threatened.

In assessing commitment, then, as in assessing the ability to apply values in making decisions, it is important that the assessment not be based on facile, over-simplified assumptions about the nature of values and their relationship to thought and action. Opportunities should be provided for respondents to indicate or explain the reasons for their responses to an assessment item, even including the opportunity to indicate that their response may have been influenced by social desirabilty.

Moving from values to attitudes, the definition presented above also suggests complications in assessment. Consider that while there are probably dozens of values, the number is reduced when limited to basic values. Although there is not likely to be total consensus on which values are basic to our society, a fundamental core of values that all should accept can be identified. The number of values in that core (the "Creed") probably is a dozen to two dozen, depending on who does the listing and the levels of abstraction used. This narrowing of universe makes assessment somewhat easier. However, if each person has literally thousands of attitudes, perplexing problems of assessment are presented. By what criteria should attitudes be chosen for assessment? Should explicit assumptions about the acceptability of certain attitudes underlie the development and the scoring of assessments?

A focus on citizenship education results in a potentially broader range of pertinent attitudes than would acceptance of the "social studies as social sciences" orientation. From the latter perspective, attitudes toward the knowledge and the inquiry processes of social science and history would be of primary, perhaps exclusive, interest. From the citizenship perspective, a broad spectrum of referents from the social, political, and economic spheres of society would be pertinent. Nevertheless, recourse to the notion of values in a democratic context touched on above can provide some guidance in making decisions to narrow the scope of attitude assessment.

To illustrate, past NAEP assessments have included social distance items to assess attitudes toward minority groups. Respondents were asked questions such as whether they would be willing to have a person of a different race as their barber or beauty operator, come to their church or synagogue, live in their neighborhood, sit beside them on a train or bus, and so forth. Are such assessment items justified? In a society which values diversity, they are in that they gather information on attitudes toward those who are different from ourselves. In a broader sense, too, in a society which values human worth and dignity, such items are warranted as indicators of the extent to which persons are accepted regardless of their minority status. More specifically, human dignity can be thought of in terms of equality of opportunity in the social, political, and economic spheres. The willingness of people to allow into their segments of those spheres those who are different could be an important determinant of the extent to which equal opportunity, and thereby dignity, is available to minorities, including the handicapped.

A reasonable assessment strategy would be to develop separate social distance items in the social, economic, and political domains, rather than intermixing the two as in prior NAEP items. That is, one social distance scale might reflect willingness to interact socially--with items ranging from whether or not one is willing to sit on the bus next to a member of a minority group (including disabled persons in that classification), have such a person as a neighbor, have such a person as a member of one's family. (The ordering of such items into a social distance scale is a technical matter to be addressed during test development.) In the economic domain, items could range from willingness to have minority group members perform menial jobs to willingness to have them in significant economic positions, such as the president of one's bank. In the political domain, the items might range from willingness to let minority group members vote to a willingness to have a minority group member as President of the United States. Based on the commitments to diversity and equal opportunity in our society, it would be reasonable to hope that assessments over time would show movement toward greater acceptance of, and thereby greater opportunity for, minority group members.

Attitudes toward minority groups, including minority religions, are a fairly obvious element for assessment in our democratic society. Examples of other attitude referents that might be worthy of assessment efforts are the role of the military in governmental decision-making, the judicial system as a protector of minority rights (a commonly misunderstood, and thereby negatively appraised, role), and separation of powers and checks and balances in government. In each case, it is reasonable to assume a valued direction of attitude: military involvement in civilian decisions should be limited; having one branch of government dedicated to the protection of minority rights is essential, in a society committed to human dignity, to offset the potential tyranny of the majority; separation of powers and checks and balances are important protections against hasty decisions and, more fundamentally, despotism. Other referents which are widely agreed upon as essential to the long-term maintenance of a democracy as we know it can be identified. As in past NAEP social studies citizenship assessments, the delineation of basic values and identification of critical attitudes for assessment is a task for a spectrum of scholars, professional educators, and lay citizens.

Feasibility

Is it feasible to assess values and attitudes in a national assessment of educational progress? The answer, of course, depends upon considerations of test validity, as well as upon the prospects for resolving economic and political constraints that might be involved. The experience with social studies-citizenship objectives in the 1969-76 NAEP assessments provided evidence that such assessments are economically and politically feasible (although that citizenship-social studies objectives were considered such a low priority that they were dropped from NAEP assessments after 1976 indicates some potential problems). The major concern on the following pages is with test validity as a justification for assessment and its interactions with economic and political feasibility.

Validity

As with other terms that are used to refer to potentially powerful concepts, test validity is used in various ways. However, the central question in regard to validity is, does the test yield consistent (reliable) information which is appropriate, meaningful, and useful in drawing the kinds of inferences of interest to the potential test score users. Obviously, then, tests do not have validity per se; aside from consistency of measurement (reliability), validity is a function of the relevance of the data produced with the test to the uses to which those data are to be put. Validity and feasibility are related because the feasibility of developing and carrying out assessments depends first of all on the judgment that the data will be relevant.

How about the relevance dimension of validity, then, in a social studies assessment of values and attitudes? If the relevance expected is that the assessment results will allow conclusions as to the values and attitudes that students and adults actually hold, that is not likely. Given the problems of testing already alluded to above, such assessment would be possible only if we could monitor the thoughts of individuals directly, which is neither technically nor ethically feasible. What we can strive for, then, are reasonable indicators of attitudes and values.

Prior NAEP assessments have produced evidence that relevant indicators of values and attitudes can be obtained. Consider the following, keeping in mind that commonly there are disparities between what people profess to be morally right and their actual behavior, and that the former is usually an overestimate of the latter: Is it not disturbing to know that on 1969-70 NAEP social distance items, 43% of 17-year-olds and adults said they would not be willing to have a person of a different race as a dentist or doctor, represent them in some elected office, sit at a table next to them in a crowded restaurant, and stay in the same hotel or motel?[1] Is it comforting to know that in a 1976 assessment with somewhat different items, 32% of 17-year-olds still said that they would not be willing to have a person of another race as their barber or beauty operator, come to their church or synagogue, live in their neighborhood, sit beside them on a train or bus, and vote in national elections.[2] Whether the difference from 1970 to 1976 is a function of the particular social distance items or reflects a real change in attitude is not known. But the relevance of the information to the conception of citizenship education sketched earlier is clear, because such information is discomforting in a society committed to human worth and dignity and, not just incidentally, to diversity.

Similarly, when 17% of 17-year-olds respond positively to the question, "Should the President have the right to stop the radio, television, and newspapers from saying bad things about him?"[3], or, when 14% of the 17-year-olds report that they do not believe that the President of the United States always has to obey the laws of the country[4], that is a matter of grave concern—and, therefore, relevance—in a democratic society. And, when 24%

of 17-year-olds do not support the right of a person who believes there is no God to express his views publicly,[5] that is relevant as a serious indication of lack of tolerance and respect for diversity, and a lack of appreciation for the basic societal values of freedom of speech and religion.

Assessments of knowledge of values can also be relevant, in the sense of raising important citizenship issues. In an item for the 1971 NAEP assessment, 17-year-olds and adults were told: "The Supreme Court ruled that it is unconstitutional to require prayer and formal religious instruction in public schools". They were then asked, "What was the basis for the Supreme Court's decision?" Four choices were provided: "(1) The requirements violated the right to freedom of speech, (2) there was strong pressure put on the Supreme Court by certain religious minorities, (3) religious exercises violated the principles of separation of church and state, and (4) every moment of the valuable school time was needed to prepare students to earn a living". Only 49% of the 17-year-olds and 52% of the adults selected the correct response, number 3; 25 and 29%, respectively, indicated that they thought the decision was due to strong pressure by religious minorities.[6] The misunderstanding of the role of basic values in the judicial process has important implications for social studies.

This sampling of results from earlier assessments indicates the potential meaningfulness and usefulness of social studies assessments of attitudes and values. Evidence of lack of knowledge about and commitment to constitutional rights has come from other studies over the years, and undoubtedly will come from others in the future. Nevertheless, because understanding and commitment to basic values is crucial to the functioning of our democratic society, the periodic assessment of attitudes and values as part of a National Assessment of Educational Progress program merits serious consideration. One important outcome of such assessments is the potential for drawing the attention of professional educators and the general public to citizenship education needs, of potent relevance in a democratic society. And, indicators from the type of assessments previously used by NAEP are not so difficult to obtain as to raise serious economic or political feasibility barriers.

In fact, the feasibility of assessing attitudes and values in social studies will be markedly enhanced by the use of prior NAEP experience. As was pointed out in a 1975 NAEP report, National Assessment in Social Studies Education, prepared by a National Council for the Social Studies study group, there was much to commend in the NAEP assessments in social studies and citizenship, as well as much to learn from the flaws. Cautions include the need, if valid inferences are to be drawn, to examine carefully underlying assumptions about the connections between assessment items and underlying values or concepts. For example, the purpose behind one item was to get an indication of support for the principle espoused in the Declaration of Independence that there should be equal justice for all. The question asked, "Should unfair laws be changed?"[7] hardly seems to be an adequate indicator of support for the principle of equal justice.

Another NAEP item illustrates that although relevance as a basic element in test validity emphasizes interpretation--that is, the inferences to be drawn--the judgments about items and acceptable responses made during test development can restrict the inferences that will be drawn and, thereby, affect relevance and validity. In one assessment, students were asked to agree or disagree with the statements, "A lot of elections are NOT important enough to vote in" and "It is important to vote even if it looks like your candidate does NOT have a chance to win". The "desirable" response to the first item was "disagree" and to the second item "agree"; and it was reported that 68% of the 17-year-olds answered both "acceptably", with the number of "unacceptable" responses a likely indication of citizen disillusionment.[8] However, the item may leave much to be desired in terms of relevance. The phrasing, as well as the interpretation, appears to be a perpetuation of what many would argue is a naive notion that voting is the central and most powerful means for citizens to exercise power. And the item seems not to take into account the argument that like any responsible political act, voting should be thoughtfully deliberate, not just automatic, behavior. From such perspectives, deciding not to vote is not necessarily an irresponsible dereliction of duty. Whether a person ought to vote in an election he or she regards as meaningless or whether not voting is a justified type of protest are serious ethical questions posed in recent elections. Some would even argue that the emphasis on voting as the central thrust of citizenship distracts citizens from the real channels of power, anesthetizing them via a facade of meaningful participation.

The point is that, as mentioned earlier, judgments of acceptability of responses must be based on careful rationales because they have implications for how items are to be stated as well as interpreted. That is, clarity about the types of inferences to be drawn is critical to the development of valid assessment items. Note, for instance, that an effort to find out why students agreed or disagreed with the statements on voting might have provided valuable evidence as to whether the results indicated disillusionment, recognition that whether or not to vote is itself an important political-ethical question, and/or enlightened insight into the limited role of voting in the political process.

Many NAEP social studies-citizenship items did request reasons. For example, on one item that asked whether people should be allowed to picket in protest of a rock concert or to picket a police station to protest reported police brutality, respondents were also asked to "please give a reason for your answer".[9]

As noted in the earlier Implications section, an individual's decision not to support a basic value--such as the right to expression through picketing--in a particular situation might be based on legitimate concerns. Appropriately, NAEP included in the summary of reasons for supporting or opposing picketing what were labeled as "conditionals"--that is, conditions under which the respondent supported or did not support the right to picket. Included, for example, were a concern for public safety and the stipulation that legal permission to picket should be obtained.

Alternatives

Prior NAEP experience in developing items provides a valuable resource that enhances the economic feasibility of future assessments of values and attitudes in social studies. Indicators of values and attitudes such as discussed above provide usable prototypes for a new round of assessments of attitudes and values in social studies. Yet, other alternatives, at least one of which is from NAEP, are worth exploring.

If, for example, the objective is to determine the extent to which young people and adults have integrated basic values into their own cognitive structures, a means of assessment that taps the independent use of values in thinking is necessary. Multiple-choice or other such test items will not do. A plausible alternative, however, is to ask the respondent to write essays which are then coded for indications of ability to use basic values in reasoning. NAEP's primary-trait writing assessments could provide a model here.

In primary-trait writing assessments, prompts are given that provide the writer with a topic and a context, that is, a specified role, purpose, and audience. The writing samples obtained are scored using scoring guides which define the context set for the writer, provide a general rationale for scoring, and then provide a set of scoring categories. The following item from the 1978-79 NAEP writing assessment suggests the possibilities for assessing attitudes and values:

> Recreation Center
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> Some high school students have proposed converting an old house into a recreation center where young people might drop in evenings for talk and relaxation. Some local residents oppose the plan on the grounds that the center would depress property values in the neighborhood and attract undesirable types. A public hearing has been called. Write a brief speech that you would make supporting or opposing the plan. Remember to take only ONE point of view. Organize your arguments carefully and be as convincing as possible. Space is provided below and on the next three pages.

Prompts could be written that call more clearly for application of basic values, and instructions might even be written to focus attention on values. Writing samples would be coded in more detail than the single holistic score obtained for writing assessments. Attributes to be scored would include demonstrated knowledge of basic values and recognition of their relevance to the issue, apparent commitment to the values, identification of conflicting values, and the soundness with which value dilemmas are resolved.

In terms of feasibility, the use of such items would be especially efficient if the writing samples to be coded in a social studies assessment for evidence vis-a-vis attitudes and values were also those to be coded for assessment of writing performance. Also, within a social studies assessment, individual items--essay or other types--could serve multiple purposes.

Values and attitudes are not separate and distinct parts of the social studies curriculum; they are elements of discourse and thinking, as well as an area of knowledge. They could and should be incorporated into assessments of knowledge, thinking, and discourse to the extent possible. Multiple use of items is a paramount consideration in a feasible plan for developing and administering assessments.

Multiple use is an even more important feasibility consideration in other assessment alternatives with high potential for relevance, but with potentially high costs. For example, the use of interviews, as has been done in some NAEP assessments, should be seriously considered in social studies. Interviewing provides the flexibility to explore and determine more adequately the reasoning behind responses—an essential element of relevance for a citizenship-oriented assessment. Moreover, interviews are an excellent means of ascertaining whether individuals refer to basic values when taking stands on public issues and the extent to which attitudes on issues are consistent with basic values. In particular, the unstructured interview provides opportunities to explore commitment and to probe the extent to which the interviewee recognizes relevant conflicting values and can relate those values to factual beliefs in arriving at a warranted decision about an issue.

Although interviews provide greater opportunity than do written assessments to ask questions that get at the respondents' commitments and reasoning, the presence of the interviewer is still a limiting factor. Another approach to assessment which deserves serious consideration comes from the area of naturalistic research. Here the emphasis is on gathering data in natural settings. For example, rather than asking young students what they would do if they heard one child making fun of another because of his or her religion (as one NAEP assessment item did[10]), children would be observed to determine what they do when faced with similar situations on the playground or elsewhere. For such assessments, small samples, carefully and systematically selected, would be necessary for even marginally economic feasibility. The considerable amount of time and effort necessary to develop adequate observational instruments and to train observers is also a feasibility consideration.

Particularly relevant information for the assessment of values and attitudes in social studies might be gathered from everyday conversations in natural settings such as restaurants, bars, and at work where people discuss informally, and often heatedly, public issues of direct concern to them. Participant observers might engage in and record such discussions, either writing down what went on from later recollections or recording the interchanges openly or surreptitiously. Observers wired for sound might also record the conversations which frequenters of bars and restaurants often overhear from nearby stools, tables, and booths.

Ethical considerations of privacy and informed consent would need to be addressed, but they are not insurmountable. Full after-the-fact revelation, somewhat along the lines of that on the Candid Camera television program, would be necessary, with assurances of anonymity in obtaining signed permission to use the recordings to obtain data.

The data from such naturalistic assessments would yield particularly interesting results in regard to the place of values in daily discourse and the attitudes expressed in informal settings. In addition, such data could be used, with matching of subjects across assessments, to provide evidence on the extent to which the opinions expressed on multiple-choice paper-and-pencil tests or stated in essays reflect values and attitudes accurately as they are likely to be represented in informal, nonassessment-obtrusive conversations.

Naturalistic assessments would be particularly appropriate with adults to whom access for assessment is not as feasible as it is with young people who are in school. Moreover, adults should be a major assessment target because the point of social studies education is not in the long run to affect what 9 or 13 or even 17-year-olds think or believe, but to have an influence on how they think and believe as adult citizens.

From that context, another alternative to assessment that should be considered is what has come to be called the "scientific poll". With sophisticated sampling techniques, polls require relatively small samples to yield reliable data, and so may well be an economically feasible means of assessing educational progress. Pollsters do on occasion attempt to get at the respondents' perceptions of relevant values, the feelings of importance attached to the values, the extent to which they see the values as relevant to issues, and their attitudes toward public issues and public issues-related referents. The use of polls as part of a National Assessment of Educational Progress in the area of values and attitudes in social studies would be particularly appropriate to determine continuity in adults' values and attitudes over time, with questions adjusted to reflect issues of current concern to the society.

Conclusion

The citizenship education role of social studies should not only be acknowledged but taken as the centering concept in a national assessment. Acceptance of that perspective, along with the careful definition of values and attitudes, suggests significant and challenging, but feasible, areas of assessment. Prior NAEP work should not be ignored; careful analysis of that work and the consideration of other alternatives can produce more meaningful and useful, and therefore more valid, results than those from prior social studies assessments. Political and economic constraints present no insurmountable threats to feasibility, as prior NAEP efforts indicate. The values and the attitudes of the populace are crucial to the democratic quality of life, to the intelligent and productive resolution of issues, and even to the very survival of the society itself. Not to include them in a social studies assessment, or to continue not to have a social studies assessment at all, would be unfortunate, even reprehensible.

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[1] NAEP. *1969-70 Citizenship: Group Results for Sex, Region, and Size of Community*, 1971, p. C-7.

[2] NAEP. *Changes in Political Knowledge and Attitudes, 1969-76*, 1978, p. 19.

[3] NAEP. *Education for Citizenship: A Bicentennial Survey*, 1976, pp. 18-19.

[4] Ibid., p. 26.

[5] NAEP. *Changes . . ., 1969-76*, p. 13.

[6] NAEP. *Political Knowledge and Attitudes, 1971-72*, 1973, pp. 29-30.

[7] NAEP. *Education for Citizenship . . .*, p. 19.

[8] Ibid., p. 17.

[9] NAEP. *Political Knowledge . . .*, pp. 33-37.

[10] Ibid., p. 8.