

# Unraveling Conflicting Interpretations of the 1916 Report on Social Studies

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## Abstract

This article explores the numerous, divergent interpretations of the *1916 Report on Social Studies*. Upon close examination of the trilogy of reports and the various interpretations, it argues that the 1916 Committee as a group overcame the multiple influences of social movements and critical issues of the era by directly applying John Dewey's educational philosophy and principles in the final recommendations for social studies to a degree not yet recognized by contemporary scholars.

## Introduction

Over time scholars have developed a number of divergent interpretations of the *1916 Report on Social Studies*. My goal in this article is to unravel these conflicting interpretations. For instance, Fallace (2009) recently stated that the *1916 Report on Social Studies* was simply a "Dewey-inspired document" while at the same time he expressed his belief that the ideas in the *Report* "did not originate with Dewey" (p. 618). On the other hand, Ravitch (2000) argued that the newly created social studies of 1916 revolved around a notion of social efficiency defined as "teaching students the skills and attitudes necessary to fit into the new social order" (p. 127). Close examination of the *Report* and the differing interpretations reveals an underlying question: Which scholarly interpretation most accurately captures and explains the intent, goals, purposes, and influences on the 1916 Committee? Pursuing the answer matters because our definition for social studies may hang in the balance along with our beliefs about a preferred future for the field.

The answer to this question runs contrary to the beliefs of some contemporary scholars. That is, the *1916 Report on Social Studies* may not be merely Deweyan or social efficiency inspired. In fact, over their tenure, the 1916 Committee may have cohesively combined a unique blend of philosophical views and concerns that was representative of multiple ideological camps that struggled over the American curriculum during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond. My path to this belief started with the recognition that the *1916 Report on Social Studies* is a trilogy of three separate reports. Moreover, it may be that only the third and final report, commonly known as the *1916 Report on Social Studies*, was consistent with the intent and the defining principles that were promoted by the entire membership of the 1916 Committee that I believe directly embraced Dewey's educational philosophy.

## The Three Reports

In reviewing the three documents that comprise the trilogy of reports that is commonly known as the *1916 Report on Social Studies*, each report is indeed a separate and distinct document published at different times over a three-year period. It is important to recognize this distinction. Contemporary scholars tend to analyze these three reports as one package under the singular title of the *1916 Report on Social Studies*. However, when each of the three reports is treated as a stand-alone document, each is unique. The differentiation in the three reports stems from the individual composition of the committee membership involved in the production of each report.

The 1916 Committee was one of a total of 10 subject committees formed in 1912-1913 under the umbrella of the Commission for the Reorganization of Secondary Education. As such, this Committee was charged with identifying social studies as a course of study and defining social studies as an entity for education. Indeed the 1916 Committee was assigned the sole purpose of developing formal recommendations for the creation and establishment of social studies as a subject for secondary education. However, unlike the case in the earlier social studies reports, the full complement of 21 educators and educational administrators nominated to serve on the 1916 Committee sat in place to issue the third and final report in the trilogy of reports. The first two reports in 1913 and 1915, respectively, were the products of two separate, specifically limited membership sub-groups. The differences in the membership delegated to issue the three individual reports to the CRSE as well as the timing of each report ultimately published under the social studies subject committee becomes acutely important. This distinction aids in reaching an understanding of the 1916 Committee's final recommendations for social studies issued to and accepted by the CRSE as the *1916 Report on Social Studies*—the third report published in 1916.

Before proceeding further with this argument, it will be helpful to provide a brief description of each report. First, the 1913 Preliminary Statement lists Thomas Jesse Jones as its author. However, it was not written in its entirety either by the appointed chairman, Thomas Jesse Jones, or by the entire group that was to become known as the 1916 Committee. Instead, it represents a package of original text statements provided by four noted individual 1916 Committee members—J. Lynn Barnard, William A. Wheatley, James Harvey Robinson,

and Henry R. Burch—compiled by Jones as the chairman along with his own statements. Each of the contributing members presented their preliminary thoughts on four different social studies subjects. The first report is a preliminary statement issued in the same vein and at the same time as the preliminary statements from the other subject committees of the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE).

Second, the *1915 Report on Community Civics* was intended to be a special study of one subject from the several social studies subjects. This report was limited in scope to the subject of community civics. It is a written summary of a study conducted by a small, specifically appointed special committee of four members consisting of one existing and three future 1916 Committee members—J. Lynn Barnard, F. W. Carrier, Arthur W. Dunn, and Clarence D. Kingsley. Their report: (a) presented detailed examples of approaches for the teaching of community civics, and, (b) emphasized the importance of this subject in the curriculum to that era of expansive population growth due to the influx of immigrants. It was published as a stand-alone report, upon CRSE approval in 1915, to serve as an aid to teachers nationwide.

Third, the *1916 Report on Social Studies* was designed, prepared, and finalized by the entire 1916 Committee. It presents the 1916 Committee's overall recommendations for the teaching and learning of the newly created social studies in secondary education. The third and final report is the only report that fully addressed the charge for the 1916 Committee from the CRSE. Ultimately, this was accomplished by presenting the educational philosophy and principles of Dewey with those of the established ideological camps of the era.

Thus, the full 1916 Committee, as one cohesive group coming from diverse

backgrounds, reached a revamped and common philosophy that was much more Deweyan in its approach to the teaching and learning of social studies in the third and final report than was evident in the first or second reports. The 1916 Committee clearly stated at the outset of the third report that a new definition, perspective, and approach was needed in order to formulate their recommendations. One significant reason stemmed from the 1916 Committee's rationale that social studies was uniquely different as a subject among all the other subjects assigned to the various CRSE committees. The 1916 Committee stated: "The social studies are understood to be those whose subject matter relates directly to the organization and development of human society, and to man as a member of social groups." As a result, the 1916 Committee argued: "from the nature of their content, social studies affords peculiar opportunities for the training of the individual as a member of society" (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 9).

The operational philosophy for the Committee's recommendations resulted from a combination of multiple personal and philosophical influences that embedded elements of social efficiency, social meliorism, social reconstructionism, humanism and developmentalism in the third and final report. Their carefully crafted recommendations for the future of social studies encompassed principles grounded by a concerted intent to develop over the students' successive school years a higher order of thinking to meet their interests and to increase their content knowledge base. This combined approach would allow them to more completely fulfill their lives in the community. The *Report* was not a "how to" primer. Instead the 1916 Committee provided a principle-based framework. They challenged teachers to adapt

new principles designed for the teaching and learning of the newly created, unique subject of social studies. The foundation for their recommendations solidly rested in Dewey's three-prong approach to first start with a problem or topic of interest carefully identified that would meet the student's interest as well as represent a topic or problem that be of significance to society. The ideological spectrum which enveloped the 1916 Committee can be considered the platform for their educational philosophy and pedagogy which originated from and evolved under a strong influence from John Dewey, directly and indirectly. Several scholars have published direct statements on Dewey's strong influence on the 1916 Committee. Saxe (1991) stated: "Most, if not all, the selected philosophical points that appeared in the report were specifically drawn from his writings" (p. 168). In addition, Evans (2004) stated: "Probably the single most important influence on the committee was John Dewey" (p. 22). John Dewey's influence became part of an intentional design that acted as an overlay and counterforce to the numerous other individual and societal influences that impacted the 1916 Committee. Dewey's influence was therefore much more substantively direct, as well as indirect, than simply to provide the 1916 Committee with "credence and coherence" (p. 618) as Fallace (2009) suggests.

### **Context**

Undoubtedly, the 1916 Committee was confronted by numerous concepts advocated by influential interest groups during their era. These social concepts represent issues that impacted each of the three separate reports to varying degrees. It becomes important to note that the spectrum of ideologies—social efficiency, social meliorism, social reconstructionism, humanism, and developmentalism—influencing the 1916

Committee was driven by concern over significant societal changes in the United States and other areas of the globe prior to and throughout the 1916 Committee's tenure. The number of societal reactions to unforeseen challenges can be viewed as both an extremely varied and a frenetic response to immigrants literally flowing into the country, expanding urbanization, industrialization and the resulting transformation of American institutions, as well as impending war. The multiple interest group movements were developed by society in what might be described as a coping mechanism. In particular, citizens were facing significant problems that were by-products of the rapid industrialization, wealth concentration, and industry's ruthless exploitation of natural resources. Coupled with inefficiency and corruption in government at all levels and the incredible growth that added to the already increasing complexity of political and social problems in urban areas was a growing fear that the American middle class would adversely react to these intense problems (Kliebard, 2004; Callahan, 1962). Both as individuals and as an educational work group, the 1916 Committee shared many of the same deep concerns as these various groups.

A major factor during this era was that industry was under increasing pressure to counter Germany's industrial success. The industrialists were thrust into quick action to move the United States into the top competitive position in the world in industrial development and expansion (Kliebard, 2004). Growth in industry precipitated growth in urban populations as citizens migrated from rural areas in search of new jobs. In tandem with this impact was the increasing tendency for the African American population, also seeking a new life and a new way of making a living, to migrate from the south to the industrial northern

cities. Growth in cities was further exacerbated by the tremendous impact of immigrants from countries in southern and eastern Europe. The immigrant population created widespread concern among many about methods of Americanizing this massive influx of people in order to address fear of their different cultures and beliefs. The population changes caused by citizen migration and immigration from foreign countries created a concern to provide "youth with the skills that were required by industry and commerce" (Kliebard, 2004, p. 130). The United States, as a nation, was tremendously affected by both the immigration and migration population movements (Kliebard, 2004; Cremin, 1961).

At the same time, the threat of entering into the war in Europe loomed overhead. The steps needed to prepare for a world war became a concern for government, industry and business, as well as private citizens over an extended time frame. The United States did not enter World War I until 1917. This was after the 1916 Committee concluded its work and published their recommendations. However, the pending war almost certainly represented an impact on their educational planning.

Thus, immigration, urbanization, industrialization, and the threat of war were the modern problems of the era. Educational leaders wanted the schools to step in and help address these significant issues while at the same time helping to keep, in general, the status quo of liberal capitalist democracy (Evans, 2004). As a result, the 1916 Committee was confronted with critical social problems emanating from the rapidly changing social, political, and industrial environment of their era.

## Effects of Influence

From different vantage points, the societal influence groups of the era, that is, social efficiency advocates strongly entrenched in the steel and railroad industries as well as the National Municipal League's chapters; social meliorists exemplified by the likes of Lester Frank Ward; social reconstructionists who were influenced by positions that would soon be championed by Harold Rugg; humanists looked to leadership from those who supported tenets of western education; while developmentalists followed G. Stanley Hall. These interest groups addressed the various critical problems of a society that was changing at a rapid pace. How influential were these groups on the 1916 Committee? Indeed, what constitutes influence? Influence is not limited to a linear cause and effect hierarchy. Versions of influence can be generated from peers, mentors, leaders, political representatives, and interest groups of all types. It seems reasonable to speculate that any individual or group subjected to outside influences potentially affecting their beliefs might be swayed in one direction or another. A key question to address is: Does a single influence, or a selection of multiple influences, provide value and a positive effect on projected outcomes? The challenge for educational historians is to determine which, if any, particular leader, interest group, peer, colleague, or governmental entity influenced the 1916 Committee's deliberations and ultimately their recommendations in the *1916 Report on Social Studies*.

For instance, a theme of connectivity has been used by some scholars to trace the academic background of Clarence D. Kingsley, Thomas Jesse Jones, W. A. Arey, Arthur W. Dunn and S. B. Howe to sociologists Franklin H. Giddings, George Vincent, and Albion Small (Lybarger, 1981; Nelson, 1994). All these identified 1916

Committee members, except Dunn, studied under Giddings at Columbia. Dunn was a student of both Vincent and Small at the University of Chicago. Dewey was also influenced by Vincent and Small (Cremin, 1961). The more influential Jones, Kingsley and Dunn—leaving out Aery and Howe—are thought to lend a sociological outlook to the 1916 Committee. Nevertheless, the 1916 Committee looked favorably to Robinson and his views of the new history. Robinson wanted the 1916 Committee to rethink, reexamine, experiment, and utilize their collective initiative to be able to develop the newly created social studies (Saxe, 1991).

A critical question to pose regarding the 1916 Committee's work is: How influential were Thomas Jesse Jones, as Chairman, and Clarence D. Kingsley, as both overseer of the CRSE and a 1916 Committee member, in preparing the reports of the 1916 Committee? A follow-up question becomes what other 1916 Committee members may have had a significant influence on their deliberations? The ultimate question then becomes which 1916 Committee members most influenced their final recommendations for social studies in secondary education? In addition, what about the influence of Dewey as a non-member?

The 1916 Committee members strived to create a final document that was both practical and flexible—one that would become a tool for teachers (Evans, 2004). As a group, these developers of the newly created social studies gave a voice and an emphasis to many issues of concern that had been arising from the various social reform movements for decades prior to the work of the 1916 Committee. It is unfortunate that no known notes or records of the 1916 Committee members' discussions or deliberations exist to reveal more personalized insight to their actions and interactions.

Thus, speculation on various types of potential influence may partially explain why the *1916 Report on Social Studies* has suffered from numerous interpretations over time. The variety of interpretations may have exacerbated a commonly expressed belief that the *1916 Report on Social Studies* is, at best, inconsistent. Thus, while considered seminal in social studies education, it is not understood in a uniform manner among scholars.

### Schools of Interpretation

For this article the work of nineteen scholars who have written interpretations of the *1916 Report on Social Studies* or the societal conditions that influenced the 1916 Committee's thoughts were identified and analyzed. These scholars were then placed in appropriate schools of interpretation relative to their view of the *1916 Report on Social Studies* and the social impacts of the era. The schools of interpretation I have identified include: celebratory historians, revisionist interpretations (social efficiency, Dewey and Robinson school, multiple influences, neoconservatives), and post-revisionists. First, the *celebratory historians* school of interpretation (Tryon, 1935; Wesley, 1937) held that each and every development in education represented progress. In turn, the *1916 Report on Social Studies*—the document that created the new subject of social studies—was, in their opinion, considered the cornerstone of progress in social studies education. In addition, they believed the subject of history was the primary avenue to find solutions to current problems and to prevent repetition of past mistakes.

Second, several revisionist interpretations have been identified in this study. The four separate revisionist interpretations are: social efficiency, the Dewey and Robinson school of interpretation, multiple influences, and the

neoconservative revisionists. No significance is attached to the sequence of these interpretations. Each revisionist interpretation stands on its own. Within the *social efficiency* school of interpretation (Callahan, 1962; Krug, 1964; Lybarger, 1981, 1983, 1987; Kliebard, 1994, 2004), one prominent group of curriculum historians, some based at the University of Wisconsin's consortium of educators, has argued that principles of efficiency, centralization, and decision-making were significant influences at the time of the 1916 Committee. Indeed, some have specifically indicated that the *1916 Report on Social Studies* itself represented a social efficiency oriented point of view.

Another group of curriculum historians identified under the *Dewey and Robinson* school of interpretation (Hendricks, 1946; Saxe, 1991; Correia, 1994; Evans, 2004) have argued that the influence of John Dewey and James Harvey Robinson should not be overlooked in the *1916 Report on Social Studies*. They argue that Dewey's principles of education and Robinson's concept of new history are very prevalent in the Report.

Yet another group of educational historians has argued that *multiple influences* (Cremin, 1961; Jenness, 1990; Whelan, 1991, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 2006; Nelson, 1994; Fallace, 2009) were swirling around the 1916 Committee. These scholars embrace a spectrum of ideas not necessarily held in a prioritized sequence. They focus upon social efficiency and other social movement ideas of the 1916 era, Dewey's ideals, and Robinson's new history.

The final revisionist school of interpretation, the *neoconservatives* (Ravitch, 1978, 1985, 1989a, 1989b, 2000; Hertzberg, 1981, 1989), consists of historians who question the value and validity of interdisciplinary or progressive social studies. They argue that the

*1916 Report on Social Studies* undermined and adversely affected the teaching of traditional history. The *neoconservatives* believe that social studies is not useful, promotes social efficiency, and is utilitarian.

Third, other historians, the *post-revisionists* (Westbrook, 1991; Tyack and Cuban, 1995), have done related work. Although they have not directly addressed the *1916 Report on Social Studies*, their work is of interest because their approach challenges traditional and celebratory thinking as well as revisionist interpretations and develops new schools of thought.

The scholars described above have provided a widely divergent discussion of the *1916 Report on Social Studies*. The scholars within the various schools of interpretation address theories and ideas on the meaning and intent of the work of the 1916 Committee as well as the social and political issues of the era. Moreover, the various scholarly interpretations run a wide gamut ranging in tone from soft to hard, from enthusiastic to radical. In the remainder of this article, I intend to make sense of these conflicting schools of interpretation and offer a few insights on the potential for a new interpretation of the *1916 Report on Social Studies* for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Social Efficiency, Multiple Influences, or John Dewey?**

As discussed above, a large segment of contemporary scholars believe that social efficiency was the dominant ideology that influenced the 1916 era (Callahan, 1962; Krug, 1964; Lybarger, 1981, 1983, 1987; Kliebard, 2004). I agree. However, it does not necessarily follow that the 1916 Committee as a group was influenced by this single ideology to the same level and extent as the society of the day. As

previously outlined, the 1916 era was replete with other prominent ideological concepts. As Kliebard (2004) pointed out, the various persuasions of 20<sup>th</sup> century reformers—social efficiency proponents, social meliorists, social reconstructionists, humanists, and developmentalists—possessed one common idea: schools needed to change in order to deal with the impacts of industrialization, tremendous growth of cities, and wide spread immigration. To some extent, there was agreement on the perceived types of defects existing in schools at that time. However, the different reform groups held widely divergent views on how to improve and expand education for students.

Several scholars believe a combination of then prevalent social issues and certain key individuals affected the philosophy and outlook of the 1916 Committee and its recommendations. For instance, Krug (1964) argued that at the time of the *1916 Report on Social Studies* the slogan “education for social efficiency” was understood to encompass: (a) the school as an agency of social control, and, (b) the school as an agency of social service. That is, multiple influences supported the notion that the concept of social efficiency embodied training individuals to act on behalf of the group as well as supporting Dewey’s ideal that schools act as social and community centers (Cremin, 1961; Jenness, 1990; Whelan, 1991, 1993, 1997a, 1997b, 2006; Nelson, 1994).

Historian Rogers M. Smith (1997) outlined a rather definitive view of the various definitions of progressivism. In his approach, to the right of the progressive group were individuals like William Howard Taft and Herbert Spencer who (a) promoted economic individualism on pragmatic grounds, and (b) supported scientific management. The center of the progressive spectrum was identified in Theodore Roosevelt’s New Nationalism and

Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom. To the left were individuals, such as John Dewey, who, Smith indicated, were known as democratic progressives. Smith suggested Dewey was cautious of New Nationalism and "its efforts to herd people into big, efficient organizations, scientifically managed by strong leaders" (p. 420).

At the same time, the differences between Dewey and Snedden were distinct (Krug, 1964; Hertzberg, 1981, 1989; Westbrook, 1991; Kliebard 1994). Though Dewey used many of the same common administrative progressive terms such as "social efficiency," Dewey had vastly different definitions (Westbrook, 1991). Dewey's very divergent stance can be noted in his own statement: "It must be borne in mind that ultimately social efficiency means neither more nor less than capacity to share in a give and take of experience" (Dewey, 1916, p. 141).

Also, there were several key influential 1916 Committee members. Out of the 21 members, a short list of names appear most influential—Clarence D. Kingsley, Thomas Jesse Jones, Arthur W. Dunn, J. Lynn Barnard, James Harvey Robinson, and William Mace. Analysis of the available evidence leads to the conclusion that they each had various roles and levels of participation on the 1916 Committee with differing types and degrees of influence. The most notable and most influential individuals were Robinson and Dewey as evidenced by their level of direct and indirect input in the *1916 Report on Social Studies* (Jorgensen, 2010). The 1916 Committee members adopted a decidedly historical approach. Indeed, it was Robinson who was instrumental in separating the 1916 Committee from any outcomes of the Committee of Seven and led them to create a new approach to social studies (Saxe, 1991). John Dewey, not

actually a member, needs to be included due to his influence on the deliberations of the 1916 Committee, as noted by several scholars (Westbrook, 1991; Saxe, 1991; Whelan, 1993; Evans, 2004). Dewey's influence is also evidenced in the frequency of references to his work in well over 30 key passages in the *Report*.

As one adds together the various ideological and individual influences, the combination effectively softens and reduces the idea that social efficiency as social control represented the overarching influence throughout the entire trilogy of reports. For instance, there was significant disagreement among the proponents of school reform regarding ideas on or for vocational education. This is noted in the Tyack and Cuban (1995) statement: "should educators sort out and train the 'high-minded' boys in separate schools or try to promote industrial democracy by infusing an understanding and appreciation of work in all pupils as John Dewey urged?" (p. 46). In fact, educators' disagreements on goals for education ran the entire gamut of political and social philosophy. Tyack and Cuban (1995) suggest: "Radicals or liberals may favor a traditional academic curriculum as fervently as conservatives" (p. 46). Thus, there may be sufficient reason to believe the 1916 Committee as a group formulated a view on social efficiency that diverged from some individual committee members.

The revised view held by the 1916 Committee also diverged from both the society of the era and from the view of social efficiency held by some contemporary scholars. Based on the permeating concern regarding the impact of immigrants, the influence of social efficiency concepts, and the influence of Robinson and Dewey as evidenced in the trilogy of reports, the 1916 Committee reengineered its representation

of society's concerns into what can be seen as a microcosm of Kliebard's (2004) analysis of the competing camps battling for control of the American curriculum in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Further, the *1916 Report on Social Studies* does not embody a social efficiency as social control orientation to the degree held by many modern scholars. One reason is that over the years, scholars have put forth competing definitions for social efficiency. Krug (1964), as an individual scholar, supported a very different view from other contemporary scholars. Krug's concept of two streams of understanding for social efficiency—education for social control and education for social service—represents a significant diversion from other scholars. He suggested, and I agree with his view, that the 1916 Committee understood that the term “social efficiency” involved both education for social control and education for social service. Yet, as we have seen, numerous scholars supported the view of the *1916 Report* as a social efficiency document. This view could stem, in part, from not recognizing the unique individuality of each report in the trilogy. Instead, I argue that other various and significant ideologies, as well as individual personalities that influenced the 1916 Committee, ultimately had a profound impact on the *1916 Report on Social Studies*.

As a critical outcome of this view, John Dewey was much more of a direct influence on the 1916 Committee than many contemporary scholars suggest (Jorgensen, 2010). From beginning to end, the third and final report is replete with Deweyan philosophy through three extended direct quotations and at least thirty direct references to Dewey's “immediate interest” and “immediate needs” principle (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, pp. 10-62). In addition, teaching illustrations from educators in the field

selected to be highlighted as examples by the 1916 Committee were entirely based on Deweyan principles. Dewey's ideas were readily adopted by those educators as indicated in the numerous curriculum examples both in place and in stages of development identified and used in the *Report*. More importantly, the 1916 Committee solidly embraced and repeatedly used Dewey's three-step process as the recommended foundation for the newly created social studies courses.

Throughout their recommendations the 1916 Committee consistently stressed that the three prongs of Dewey's teaching principle (a) started, whenever possible, with a problem or topic of study carefully selected in order to meet: (b) the pupil's own immediate interest, and, (c) provided a topic or problem of study that has significance to society. In doing so, they consistently maintained in a most Deweyan manner their educational theory for history and the social studies courses in secondary education through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Again, for each history course, the 1916 Committee specifically mirrored this teaching principle and recommended as an organizing principle:

- (1) The adoption to the fullest extent possible of a “topical” method, or a “problem” method, as opposed to a method based on chronological sequence alone.
- (2) The selection of topics or problems for study with reference to (a) the pupil's own immediate interest; (b) general social significance. (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 37).

Indeed, for the capstone course to be completed in the 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the 1916 Committee simply increased the level of challenge in their

three pronged teaching principle. The new POD course recommendation stressed organizing instruction, “on the basis of concrete problems of vital importance to society and of immediate interest to the pupil” (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 53).

### **Reexamining John Dewey’s Influence**

Some scholars argue that Dewey’s concept of “present growth” and “needs” was vague to the members of the 1916 Committee (Fallace, 2009; Correia, 1994). Yet, the 1916 Committee created a Dewey-based circle of recommendations that were consistent and reflective of his public presentations, as well as Dewey’s publications (1897, 1899, 1910, 1916). This circle of ideas started with Dewey, followed Dewey’s precepts throughout the Report, and led back to Dewey to complete their recommendations. The circle began early in the *1916 Report on Social Studies* in “*The point of view of the committee*” section. There, in the third item, the 1916 Committee stated: “One principle the committee has endeavored to keep before it consistently throughout this report because of its fundamental character. It is contained in the following quotation from Prof. Dewey:” (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 10). The full Dewey quotation that followed on page 11 included his “needs of present growth” principle. The circle back to Dewey’s principle was completed on page 40 of the *1916 Report on Social Studies* under the section “*To what extent and in what ways are college requirements and life requirements mutually exclusive?*” (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 40). At this point, the 1916 Committee referenced their intent to repeat the entire Dewey quotation from page 11 as a restatement and wrote:

If we could really believe that attending to the needs of present growth would keep the child and teacher alike busy and would also provide the best possible guarantee of the learning needed in the future [in college or elsewhere], transformation of educational ideals might soon be accomplished, and other desirable changes would largely take care of themselves (Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 40).

By the conclusion of the *1916 Report on Social Studies*, the conceptual trail from Dewey to Mace to Dewey to Robinson to Dewey consistently circles around Deweyan ideas. After all, a document that puts faith in the hands of teachers, advocates decision-making and experimentation by teachers—not school administrators—and speaks of “transformation of educational ideals” (U.S. Bureau of Education, 1916, p. 40) can hardly be called efficient. There is nothing utility-minded or efficient in these concepts written in the *Report*. Rather, much like Dewey, the 1916 Committee took some aspects of all the camps competing for their place in the American curriculum and created a unique, usable document for education reflective of Deweyan ideals.

Although John Dewey was not a member of the 1916 Committee, before, during, and subsequent to the tenure of the 1916 Committee, Dewey was regarded as a leading educator, and in particular an educational philosopher (Hertzberg, 1981; Westbrook, 1991). As a result, Dewey’s brand of principles and educational philosophy was of direct benefit to the 1916 Committee in their development of teaching principles for social studies. Rather than risk paraphrasing and making Dewey’s theory and pedagogy unclear, the 1916 Committee relied on his principles in

their recommendations and in their use of direct, verbatim quotations of his philosophy throughout the body of the *1916 Report on Social Studies*.

The *Report* was replete with reflections, examples, and recommendations the 1916 Committee deemed most advantageous for the purposes of secondary education. These recommendations cumulatively called for the adoption of a problem solution method and the selection of study topics that met both the students' immediate interests as well as social significance in the teaching and learning of social studies. Therefore, it can be argued that their ideas for formatting the new social studies were drafted straight from Dewey's educational playbook. Thus, this author supports the *Deweyan* school of interpretation.

### **Conclusion**

The *1916 Report on Social Studies* remains recognized as a seminal report on its own merit. This recognition may flow from the high regard held for Dewey throughout the various schools of interpretation. Dewey's role in the competition waged between the ideological camps of the 1916 era that were reflected in the *1916 Report on Social Studies* plays a part in the scholars' considerations. However, after almost 100 years, the extent of Dewey's role has yet to be universally recognized. Dewey provided the 1916 Committee with a direct conceptual guide to lead them through the entanglement of social efficiency ideology of their era. The numerous teaching illustrations used by the 1916 Committee in the third report alone exemplified Dewey's approach directly through examples of educators designing lessons, units, and programs for students. These examples cited by the 1916 Committee were diametrically opposite from the top down approach advocated by Snedden, Taylor, or even Bobbitt. As a result, Dewey's

steadfastly maintained educational philosophy became the stalwart backbone that the 1916 Committee needed to reach beyond contradictions contained in the first two reports in an uncompromising manner. Thus, in the third report the 1916 Committee created and provided recommendations that were not limited in scope to one or even two ideologies. Dewey was the strongest influence on the 1916 Committee because his concepts and philosophy provided a direct methodology to fulfill the 1916 Committee members' vision for social studies.

One reason was that the 1916 Committee relied on very different and broad-scope Deweyan notions much better suited for their plans for social studies. They stated that the newly created social studies were differentiated from other subjects due to an emphasis on social content, not on social aims. In their opinion, the nature of social studies afforded unique opportunities to educate students as members of society. The attributes of social studies did not equate directly to the narrow social aims of social efficiency only as social control. After all, Smith (1997) suggested Dewey was cautious of "efforts to herd people into big, efficient organizations, scientifically managed by strong leaders." Instead, he believed Dewey leaned toward "Jeffersonian traditions of local participatory democracy and openness to immigrants, reformulated on pragmatist premises and purged as far as possible of racism" (p. 420). Social studies was instead driven by issues based social content and Deweyan pedagogy which was designed to feed the immediate needs and interests of students.

The 1916 Committee integrated Dewey's principles into their recommendations from the beginning of the actual text of the *1916 Report on Social Studies* on page 9 through the conclusion on page 63. They applied Dewey's principles

both directly and indirectly. Extensive verbatim quotes by Dewey appeared three times. Direct reference to his “immediate interest” and “immediate needs” principles were used approximately thirty times—spanning the text from page 9 to page 63. The 1916 Committee placed an emphasis on the three components of Dewey’s primary teaching principle. They did not need to reinvent the wheel as evidenced by their own statements and repeated references in the *1916 Report on Social Studies* to the students’ needs of present growth coupled with immediate needs and interests. This was the 1916 Committee’s philosophical and pedagogical framework. In his discussion on this point, Lybarger (1981) concluded: “Committee members called the adoption of such a principle ‘a new and most important element’, and claimed the work of John Dewey as warrant for their principle” (p. 177). This emphasis became the central theme of the 1916 Committee’s recommendations.

Dewey’s concepts and principles were usable, doable, and practical. That is, the Deweyan ideas amassed in their arsenal allowed the 1916 Committee to publish recommendations that were already having a positive effect on teaching. This was evidenced in the dozen or so illustrations in the *Report* which presented Deweyan based teaching programs from a variety of different schools in diverse geographic locations.

Indeed, the *1916 Report on Social Studies* retains its status as a seminal educational document, primarily because of the continuing influence and relevance of John Dewey’s philosophy and principles for education. In short, Dewey’s ideas have stood the test of time. As a result, the *1916 Report on Social Studies* represents an endorsement of direct application and continued use of Deweyan principles.

Therefore, educators today may benefit from the opportunity to view the *1916 Report on Social Studies* from the perspective of this proposed Deweyan school of interpretation for several reasons.

First, the strong Deweyan influence on the 1916 Committee is of interest to scholars and teachers who are part of the Deweyan tradition. A long line of educators have continued in the Deweyan tradition and educational philosophy, including the John Dewey Society (AERA) and the issues centered community (NCSS), with a long history of scholarship and theory to practice work.

Second, the work of several contemporary scholars explores themes similar to the *1916 Report on Social Studies* and represents, in part, an extension of the 1916 Committee’s Deweyan based philosophy and an attempt to find empirical warrants for similar ideas (Newmann, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1991a, 1991b; Hahn, 1996; and Evans, 2004).

Third, the constructivist paradigm of authentic pedagogy that has emerged to some prominence in recent years has much in common with Dewey and the key principles of the 1916 Committee. The current concepts of authentic pedagogy are embodied in three key points. Specifically, the thrust of authentic pedagogy involves application of knowledge and skills in a creative, original manner, rather than a mere use of facts and information.

Fourth, many key principles and the main curriculum pattern proposed by the 1916 Committee continues to survive, although it has been challenged and modified. Issues-centered social studies continues to support notions of problem based methodology (Hahn, 1996).

Finally, contemporary recognition of Dewey’s influence may result in a renewed educational reference to the 1916 Committee’s

recommendations for the teaching and learning of social studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The social studies teaching framework recommended by the 1916 Committee was designed to both create and meet student's interest and to provide a deeper understanding of topics of significance to society. A renewal of the 1916 Committee's recommendations could motivate students and enhance efforts to make social studies more relevant and meaningful to result in improved learning experiences for today's students.

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