



## American Academy of Political and Social Science

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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The American Common School: An Historic Conception* by Lawrence A. Cremin

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rent and coming objects of interest and study in the social sciences. There are reported to be no less than five committees at work on the problem of analyzing values, supported or co-ordinated by the Social Science Research Council. It follows, then, that most people interested in any aspect of the social sciences will want to read this pamphlet.

But the uninitiated in either content analysis or in the study of values may get the impression from this pamphlet that content analysis, value analysis, and this particular method are, or at least should be, virtually coterminous. As for the present, there are in actuality a wide variety of specific methods of content analysis ranging all the way from single-symbol count to the gross categorization of very much larger units of communication, together with a variety of weighting schemes. As for the future, the question of the desirability of standardizing content analysis surely hinges on the question of what is to be achieved by making possible the comparability of various kinds of studies—a question that is not discussed in any basic sense in this pamphlet.

And even were we finally to conclude that some standard system of content analysis is desirable, it would still be necessary to demonstrate that this particular system is the one best fitted for this purpose. To answer this question one would have to know how the fifty values central to White's system were derived, and, more importantly, how effectively they would serve as categories in making cross-study comparisons. They seem to this reviewer to be at such a high level of abstraction that they would yield little if any meaningful discriminations.

The answers to the weighty questions of validity and reliability checks are given in this pamphlet not so much in the spirit of scientific inquiry and tentativeness as in the manner of an apodictical fiat. The elaborate system of symbols given in this pamphlet is only one of a variety of ways of handling categorization, and this one has the special drawback of making fairly straightforward analysis seem esoteric or even occult.

White proposes his system both for personality study and for the study of mass communications and public opinion data. Whatever the final verdict on this particular system, it is almost certain that content analysis as a general method will be employed in both these areas and that it will thus be among the several factors instrumental in bringing together in one discipline these now separate branches of social psychology.

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CREMIN, LAWRENCE A. *The American Common School: An Historic Conception*. Pp. xi, 248. New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1951. \$3.50.

*The American Common School* is a significant and scholarly contribution to the history of American education. In his book Lawrence A. Cremin presents the results of extensive research to impress his readers with the fact that our present public schools are the product of certain powerful social and political forces at work during the eighteenth century, that for many years the attitude toward such schools was cautious and controversial, and that accordingly their development was somewhat haphazard and quite slow.

Dr. Cremin pays merited tribute to individuals and groups that paved the way for the common school: men like Thomas Jefferson, Owen the younger, James G. Carter, Horace Mann, and Henry Barnard; and organizations such as the various workingmen's societies, the Free School Society of New York City, and early state boards of education.

Considering the scope of the book, the reader may feel that a disproportionate amount of space is devoted to matters of support and control. The author, for instance, discusses at considerable length the collective tradition which was firmly rooted in New England in contrast with the philanthropic attitude toward education which prevailed in some of the middle and southern states and shows how the so-called collectivistic idea finally triumphed in rate bills, school funds, and final public taxation

for the support of education. The matter of control raises the issues of centralization and decentralization. The author, on the other hand, pays too slight attention to the learning-teaching conditions that prevailed in these early schools.

Throughout the study, the year 1850 is used as a convenient point of reference. By that time, 90 per cent of the total school population in the United States was being educated in ". . . some kind of public facility." The principle of public control of the common school had become fairly well established. In Massachusetts, for instance, certain institutional patterns had been evolved for the exercise of such control. By mid-nineteenth century a majority of the states boasted some sort of chief state school officer, and every state with the exception of Arkansas had experimented with permissive tax legislation. And finally, throughout the nation, by 1850, the common schools were ". . . providing students of diverse backgrounds with a minimum common educational experience, involving the intellectual and moral training necessary to the responsible and intelligent exercise of citizenship." This latter aim seems exceedingly timely.

Certain sections of the book seem repetitious, but the topical treatment of the subject necessitates such repetition. The volume is replete with significant excerpts from important sources, and all of the material is very carefully documented. In short, *The American Common School* should serve as a source of information and inspiration for students of the history of education.

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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, EDUCATIONAL POLICIES COMMISSION. *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools*. Pp. x, 100. Washington, 1951. \$1.00.

The publication *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools* is a thoughtful analysis of the responsibility of the public schools of the nation in the development of self-reliant, humane, and understanding citizens capable of bringing to in-

dividual and world problems of the future a comprehensive measuring stick of moral and spiritual values.

The Educational Policies Commission at the outset affirms its belief that religion is an important element in American life, that it is within the province of the American public school to teach respect for all religious beliefs and to teach objectively, at the pupil's level, about religion without advocating or teaching any religious creed. The Commission states, "Knowledge of religion is essential for a full understanding of our American culture, literature, art, history, and current affairs," but affirms that the public schools must carry out the principle of freedom of religious belief as guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States.

The public school's responsibility for educating the nation's children in social and spiritual values is consistent with this nation's high level of moral responsibility as evidenced by activity in the United Nations, its aid to veterans, its scientific and medical research, the decrease in racial discrimination, and the increase in church membership. Yet, in spite of this high moral level, the fact that the individual is too easily lost in the complexities of industrial and governmental organization, the increase in an individual's leisure time, the changing pattern of home life, and the current conflicts of the world can only mean that a system of functional education must concern itself sincerely with moral and spiritual values.

The chapter on "Values" is the kernel of the publication, and an appreciation of the meaning of this chapter makes the conclusions of the following chapters sound.

The American people in general are agreed on these values: (1) The basic value of the individual personality; (2) each person's moral responsibility for his own conduct; (3) the fact that institutions have no value in themselves but only as they contribute to the moral and spiritual values of human life; (4) common consent, as exemplified in the franchise; (5) devotion to Truth; (6) respect for excellence; (7) moral equality, all persons to be judged by the same moral standards;