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THE TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES  
CLASSES OF LARGE OKLAHOMA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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BY  
ETHELBERT L. CORR, JR.  
Norman, Oklahoma

THE TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES  
CLASSES OF LARGE OKLAHOMA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

APPROVED BY

*Gleson J. Miller*

*[Signature]*

*Phil Bie*

*Chasman W. Stuart*

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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THE TEACHING OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES  
CLASSES OF LARGE OKLAHOMA SENIOR HIGH SCHOOLS

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Among the more difficult problems faced by public schools are those which are related to teaching students the skills and information required to resolve controversial issues effectively. The problems resulting are difficult for teachers and administrators.

Perhaps the initial problem is whether schools do have a responsibility to teach students how to deal with controversial issues. The first assumption of this investigation was that schools do have this responsibility. Democracy rests upon an informed citizenry capable of making decisions. Today's world seems to have an ever increasing number of issues which can be classified as controversial. The solutions to these will ultimately affect both the young and old. To be prepared for quality participation in a democracy it seems imperative that students be equipped to resolve controversial issues.

A review of related literature and research confirmed that schools

have an obligation to provide students with the attitudes, skills and knowledge to resolve controversy. "Life demands an ability constantly to deal with the controversial; therefore, the school must offer experiences to assist students in learning to handle issues intelligently."<sup>1</sup> Doctoral studies by Hall,<sup>2</sup> Lunstrum,<sup>3</sup> and Coan<sup>4</sup> supported this statement.

Richard E. Gross, writing for The National Council for the Social Studies said the following:

The free exchange of ideas is essential to the American system. In such a setting the responsibility of the schools is clear. They should provide experiences which lead to the attitudes and competencies needed by the citizen in a democratic state. The introduction into the classroom of purposefully planned studies of controversial issues which help equip youth with the means by which they may resolve the problems that beset them, is one of the most promising aspects of present citizenship education programs.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, Controversial Issues in the Public Schools (San Francisco, California: California Teachers Association, 1957), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Truman Leroy Hall, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation The Study of the Teaching of Controversial Issues in the Secondary Schools of the State of Ohio, Dissertation Abstracts, XVIII, No. 5 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1957), p. 1685.

<sup>3</sup>John Paul Lunstrum, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation An Inquiry into the Proper Role of the Social Studies Teacher with Reference to the Use of Controversy, Dissertation Abstracts, XXI, No. 9 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1961), p. 2634.

<sup>4</sup>Clark Coan, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Study of the Attitudes of Selected Social Studies Teachers and Parents of Kansas High School Students Regarding the Inclusion of Controversial Issues as a Part of the Secondary School Social Studies Program, Dissertation Abstracts, XXII, No. 7 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1962), p. 2246.

<sup>5</sup>Richard E. Gross, How to Handle Controversial Issues, How To Do It Series, No. 14 (Washington, D. C.: National Council for the Social Studies, a Department of the National Education Association, 1964), p. 1.

A number of factors cause problems when teaching students to deal with issues. Not the least of these are pressures on the schools by members or organizations within the community. The nation's news media have frequently reported instances of pressures on the schools. The pressures have often been directed at the content of the subjects taught in the schools. The work of the National Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities of The National Education Association has demonstrated the extent to which pressures are placed upon the schools. The Commission publishes annually a Criticism and Defense of Public Education Bibliography. The list has usually been a lengthy one. The Commission periodically publishes a State of the Nation Bulletin on the subject of criticisms and pressures on the schools.

A review of the Dissertation Abstracts<sup>6</sup> provided another indication that pressures have been of real concern to educators. The topic of pressures on the schools has been a frequent area of study by doctoral candidates. The topic has often been a part of the programs of local, state, and national meetings of educators. Certainly pressures on the schools have presented problems in the area of teaching students to resolve controversy.

The explosion of knowledge and technology are changing the concept of a teacher from being the primary source of knowledge to an organizer of learning situations. Interests and needs of students are

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<sup>6</sup>Dissertation Abstracts (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms).

supposedly being followed more than in the past years. More responsibility is being placed on the learner. Classes organized for these goals will likely increase the number of occasions in which controversial subject matter is introduced by students.

Questions regarding indoctrination and academic freedom in a democratic society arise when the place of controversial issues in a classroom is discussed. Also involved is the question of whether a school merely transmits information and skills from one generation to the other or whether it has a role in the reconstruction of society. Certainly the school, at least to some degree, is to be representative of the values of society. How are those values to be determined? Apparently there is no consensus in areas of controversy or the areas would not be controversial.

Those who have written regarding the inclusion of controversial issues often cited the maturity of the students as an important factor in determining what issues are appropriate for study. Hall<sup>7</sup> made that point as did Reavis.<sup>8</sup> The determination of when students are mature enough to study a particular issue is by no means an easy one. Quite likely a consensus is not possible among teachers regarding the time when particular issues should be studied and by whom. The same may be said for parents and pressure groups regarding the point at which students are

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<sup>7</sup>Hall, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup>George H. Reavis, "Controversial Issues," An Educational Platform for the Public Schools: A Statement of Educational Policy (Gary, Indiana: Alden H. Blankenship, Board of Education, 1957), pp. 20-21.

mature enough to study certain issues and problems.

Students are compelled by law to attend school. Some may question the right of the school to impose the study of controversial issues on a captive audience, but in this regard a fixed curriculum in any subject area could be questioned on the basis of the same logic.

Decisions regarding controversial issues involve values. Public school educators have value systems of their own which often make it difficult for them to instruct with objectivity in areas of controversy.

In spite of these difficulties, the first assumption of this study was that schools do have a responsibility to teach students the information and skills required to cope with controversial issues. The next question was, "How?" Some teachers may feel that the provision of a storehouse of facts and other background information is sufficient. The study, for example, of history as history may be considered adequate. Others may believe that students should be taught or guided to the correct solutions for current controversial issues. Many would proclaim the most effective means is to provide students experience in developing their own solutions to controversial issues. The development of problem solving skills and research skills as well as cultivating the practice of staying informed about the affairs of the world would be among the objectives of teachers who wanted students to have practice in dealing with critical issues.

A second assumption of this study was that the best means of teaching students to deal with issues considered controversial is to give them the experience of seeking answers to current issues. Support for this

assumption was available in the literature. The California Teachers Association proclaimed that "it is the school's task to select some of these issues for study, to give students practice in dealing with them, and to help them acquire desirable attitudes and procedures in doing so."<sup>9</sup> Materials produced by the North Central Association,<sup>10</sup> The National Association of Secondary School Principals,<sup>11</sup> and the Joint Committees of the National Education Association and Magazine Publishers Association<sup>12</sup> gave guidelines for teaching students to resolve controversial issues. All agreed that the best means for doing so is to give students experience solving current issues. Doctoral studies by Lunstrum<sup>13</sup> and Hall<sup>14</sup> agreed.

The third assumption of this study was that an important part of teaching students to resolve controversy effectively is to help them develop sound value systems. If students are to develop their own solutions to controversial issues, students will reach decisions within the framework

<sup>9</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, op. cit.

<sup>10</sup>Teaching Controversial Issues - Methods of Approach (Chicago, Illinois: The NCA Foreign Relations Project).

<sup>11</sup>Committee on Curriculum Planning and Development, Social Studies in the Comprehensive Secondary School (Washington, D. C.: National Association of Secondary School Principals, a Department of the National Education Association).

<sup>12</sup>Controversial Issues in the Classroom (Washington, D. C.: The National Education Association at the suggestion of the Joint Committee of the National Education Association and Magazine Publishers Association, 1961).

<sup>13</sup>Lunstrum, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup>Hall, op. cit.

of their value system. Consequently the school must not only provide students with an opportunity to solve controversial issues but with an opportunity to develop a worthy system of values which will be used in their pursuit of answers to current controversial issues.

There are students who exhibit purposeful and consistent behavior as they live from day to day. If we define values as those general guides to behavior possessed by people that tend to give direction to life, the purposeful and consistent behavior indicates what students value. Another group of students may be characterized by quite different patterns of behavior. Some of these are apathy, uncertainty, inconsistency, planlessness, overconformity, overdissent, or playing roles which are not real for them. Students characterized by such patterns of behavior generally have nebulous values. They have not yet found a meaningful role for their lives and are therefore unable or unwilling to marshal up their full intellectual resources for use in the game of living.<sup>15</sup>

Studies by Lerner in 1957, Whyte in 1956, Fromm in 1955, and Reisman in 1950 indicated that large numbers of people in this country fall into the confusion of values category.<sup>16</sup> This in itself suggested a need to assist students toward the development of sound values if society is to avoid confusion and perpetuate our basic value system. The attention of this study, however, concerned itself with the development of values

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<sup>15</sup>Louis E. Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1966), p. 6.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



primarily because of their relationship to the resolution of controversial issues.

The approach suggested for teaching values is similar to that suggested for resolving controversial issues. It is also similar to certain approaches suggested by Hunt and Metcalf for teaching critical thinking.<sup>17</sup>

In order to qualify as a value, Rath reserved the term for those individual beliefs, attitudes, activities or feelings that satisfy the criteria of (1) having been freely chosen, (2) having been chosen from among alternatives, (3) having been chosen after due reflection, (4) having been prized and cherished, (5) having been publicly affirmed, (6) having been incorporated into actual behavior, and (7) having been repeated in one's life.<sup>18</sup>

If one wishes to help students to develop clear values, one must help students use the process of valuing. The adult does not force his own pet values upon students. The "right" values are not predetermined for students while a subtle selling of the values occurs. The process described by Rath helps a student to develop a valuing process rather than persuading a student to accept the "right values."<sup>19</sup>

This approach does not denounce those values drawn from the Judeo-Christian ethics which are accepted, at least verbally, by the bulk of our society. Rather it demonstrates a confidence in the reason of man

<sup>17</sup>Maurice P. Hunt and Laurence Metcalf, Teaching High School Social Studies (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

<sup>18</sup>Rath, Harmin, and Simon, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

to discover the merit of such values for himself. Trump found that eighty percent of the junior high school principals in Indiana felt that character education had an equal place to all other objectives. The other twenty percent felt it had a higher place.<sup>20</sup> Yet a study by Metos indicated that schools did little to change values.<sup>21</sup>

### Need for the Study

Education has undergone an emphasis on mathematics and science during most of the decade of the 1960s. Robert Havighurst referred to this as emphasis on the instrumental aspects of education.<sup>22</sup> So frequently, and rightly so, professors and writers have ascribed the emphasis of this period to the external threat to our national security which was felt so profoundly when the Russians launched the first Sputnik in 1957.

Now our nation is being threatened seriously by internal disorders. The news media report civil disobedience, riots, student protests and active unlawful resistance to the Selective Service System. The solutions to these problems have only an indirect relationship to those areas of study which produce engineers, other scientists, and technicians.

<sup>20</sup>John Minart Trump, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Descriptive Analysis of Character Education in Indiana Junior High Schools, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVII, No. 6 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966), p. 1726.

<sup>21</sup>Thomas H. Metos, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Study of Values of Salt Lake City High School Students, Dissertation Abstracts, XXV, No. 5 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1964), p. 2855.

<sup>22</sup>Robert J. Havighurst, "Highschools for the Future," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, LII, No. 328 (May, 1968), p. 119.

Generally the solutions to our domestic problems are to be found in the social sciences. Schools should improve their offerings in these areas. Students ought to be given the skills to solve the social issues of the day.

Various programs are being developed with the aim of assisting the social studies area in the same way that science and mathematics were assisted by programs such as the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study and the School Mathematics Study Group. The task of developing such programs for the social studies is tremendously difficult. No project yet presented is making an impact like that of the science and mathematics projects.

In spite of the many new projects, social studies curriculum building is in flux and confused.<sup>23</sup> Social studies teachers need help. Too many social studies programs are dominated by history courses which have employed a chronological approach with too little emphasis on the concepts, principles, and methods of the social and/or behavioral science disciplines. An effort is needed to replace "coverage" of materials with an understanding of unifying concepts and competence in appropriate scientific methodologies. The very problems which indicate a need for a revitalized and effective social studies offering indicate how miserably the area has failed to prepare students for the complex urban society of today.

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<sup>23</sup>John I. Goodlad, Renata Von Stoephasius, and M. Francis Klein, The Changing School Curriculum (New York: The Fund for the Advancement of Education, 1966), p. 56.

Oklahoma with its sparse population has to date been spared from problems with the explosiveness and intensity of some of the more densely populated areas. Oklahomans may have some time, little though it may be, to provide students with attitudes, knowledge, and skills that will help to solve, prevent, or at least reduce many of our crucial social problems, real and potential. Students who learn to resolve current controversial issues may someday develop solutions to reduce the tensions of our land.

Previous to this investigation no definitive study had been conducted regarding the teaching of controversial issues in the social studies classes of Oklahoma. The findings of this study may provide information which could be used to make decisions that could significantly improve the quality of social studies classes. Teachers and teachers of teachers likely could profit from the information gained by this study. More importantly, the end result is improvement of social studies classes, therefore our entire society may benefit. This is why a study of this nature was needed. The answers to our social problems may very well depend upon a greatly improved job of educating pupils for effective citizenship.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which social studies teachers in large Oklahoma high schools are committed to teaching their students the means of resolving controversial issues.

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem was to determine if social studies teachers in large

Oklahoma high schools are committed to teaching their students the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to resolve significant controversial issues. More specifically the study answered the following questions:

1. Do social studies teachers in large Oklahoma public senior high schools believe that students should be taught how to resolve controversial issues?
2. What methods do social studies teachers in large Oklahoma public senior high schools believe to be the most effective for teaching their students the means of resolving controversial issues?
3. Are social studies teachers in large public senior high schools of Oklahoma providing their students the opportunity to study current controversial issues?
4. Do social studies teachers in the large public senior high schools of Oklahoma believe that all controversial issues are appropriate for study in senior high school social studies classes?
5. What controversial issues do social studies teachers in the large senior high schools of Oklahoma consider to be difficult or impossible to deal with because of community climate?
6. Are social studies teachers in the large senior high schools of Oklahoma knowledgeable of written school policies regarding the teaching of controversial issues?
7. Do social studies teachers in the large public high schools of Oklahoma believe that conditions in their schools are conducive to the teaching of controversial issues?

8. Do social studies teachers in large Oklahoma public senior high schools make a planned effort to provide students with the opportunity to develop values which will help them to resolve controversial issues effectively?

9. When considered by age, sex, athletic coaching, or as one group, do social studies of the large senior high schools of Oklahoma have similar beliefs and practices regarding the study of controversial issues in their classes.?

#### Definition of Terms

1. Controversial Issue - An issue where one or more of its proposed solutions conflicts with the cherished attitudes or beliefs of a group of individuals.

2. Social Studies Teachers - Instructors of those portions of the subject matter of the social and/or behavioral sciences particularly history, economics, political science, psychology, sociology, geography, problems of democracy, and current affairs, which are regarded by Oklahoma's State Department of Education as suitable for study in public senior high schools and are developed into courses of study, whether integrated or not, and in which both the subject matter and aims are predominantly social. Social studies teachers involved in the study held social studies certificates from the Oklahoma Department of Education.

3. Public School - A school organized under a school district of the state, supported by tax revenues, administered by public officials and open to all.

4. Senior High School - A secondary school composed of three upper high school grades: ten, eleven, and twelve.
5. Large Public Senior High School - A public senior high school with an enrollment of one-thousand or more students.
6. Attitude - A readiness to react toward or against some situation, person or thing in a particular manner.
7. Skill - A learned power of performing a task competently.
8. Knowledge - The fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association.
9. Resolve - To find an answer to or to reach a decision about.
10. Method - A systematic plan followed in presenting material for instruction.
11. Study - A careful examination or analysis of a phenomenon, development, or question.
12. Value - Those general guides to behavior possessed by a person which tend to give meaning and direction to his life.
13. Community Climate - The condition of a community as determined by the attitudes of persons and groups within the community.

#### Delimitation of the Study

The study included only three year public senior high schools of Oklahoma. The schools involved were those with a student membership of more than one-thousand. Only social studies teachers were involved in the study.

Although the nine specific questions proposed in the definition of the problem may have suggested additional questions, the study confined itself to those nine questions. No direct check was made to see if teachers used the methods they professed to believe. The study determined to what extent leading issues were being introduced in the classrooms without direct attempts to determine the specific methods of teaching.

The portion of the study involved with values attempted to determine if there was an effort to help students develop certain values. The study did not discern the details of method or content of efforts to develop these values. There was some effort to determine if social studies teachers supported some of the basic human rights which grow out of the values of democracy.

#### Design and Procedure of the Study

In order to accomplish this investigation, descriptive research methodology was used. More specifically, the descriptive research employed a questionnaire in combination with the personal interview technique.

Descriptive research is defined as "all of those studies that purport to present facts concerning the nature and status of anything."<sup>24</sup> Narrowing this description of proposed research a little more, the study may be classified as descriptive-survey-status research, which according

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<sup>24</sup>Carter V. Good and Douglas E. Scates, Methods of Research, Educational, Psychological, Sociological (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 259.



to Good is "directed toward ascertaining prevailing conditions (the facts that prevail in a group of cases chosen for study) and this method is essentially a technique of quantitative description of the general characteristics of the group."<sup>25</sup>

Initially a review and an analysis of the literature relating to the problem area was conducted. A questionnaire was developed to answer the specific questions of the problem. A group of social studies teachers was used as a jury to determine the controversial issues to be included in the portion of the questionnaire which was used to determine whether students were being provided the opportunity to study pertinent controversial issues. Once the questionnaire was formulated, it was pre-tested by administering it to a social studies staff of a senior high school. Shortcomings of the questionnaire indicated by the pre-test were corrected.

In order to attain a greater number of responses and to insure an understanding of each item, the questionnaire was administered in a personal interview situation. In a sense, editing and the follow up occurred immediately after and during the interview because all responses were examined during or after the interview so that any blank or unreadable answers could be clarified. A technique for administering the questionnaire was developed so that the questionnaire would mean as nearly as possible the same thing to all persons who were interviewed. Effort was made to avoid injecting the interviewers personal biases into the interview.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 551.

To develop a questionnaire of high quality the principles developed for constructing questionnaires were followed. Among the sources used to develop the instrument were criteria by Whitney,<sup>26</sup> Hillway,<sup>27</sup> Good and Scates,<sup>28</sup> and Schluter.<sup>29</sup>

A letter was designed to mail to each principal of the schools involved in the study. The purpose of the letter was to arrange the interviews. Where necessary a telephone call or a personal visit was made to arrange the interviews. All of the social studies teachers of each school in the study were interviewed on the same day. To avoid interrupting classes, interviews were conducted during the teacher's planning period or before or after school. Teachers were assured that the responses they made would be reported anonymously and no effort was made to compare specific schools or teachers. Teachers were not included in the study if they were absent on the day or days on which interviews were conducted in their school.

An attempt was made to include at least one senior high school in each Oklahoma school district having a senior high school of more than one-thousand students. In school districts having more than one senior

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<sup>26</sup>Frederick Lamson Whitney, Methods in Educational Research (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1931), p. 153.

<sup>27</sup>Tyrus Hillway, Introduction to Research (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), p. 190.

<sup>28</sup>Good and Scates, op. cit., p. 615.

<sup>29</sup>William Charles Schluter, How to do Research Work (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1926), p. 85.

high school of one-thousand or more students, one-third or more of those schools were selected by lot to be included in the study.

The school populations were secured from the State Department of Education. The figures utilized were those reported on the school's North Central reports which gave the enrollment of each school on October 1, 1968. All large schools as defined by this study were North Central Association members.

After all the questionnaires were administered, the responses were tabulated, studied, and interpreted. Conclusions regarding the answers to each of the specific questions of the problem were presented and recommendations were made regarding the teaching of social studies in senior high schools.

### Organization of the Study

The study consists of five chapters. In addition to the statement of the problem, Chapter I includes major divisions describing the study, its need and treatment of the data.

A review of research related to the study is presented in Chapter II. Chapter III describes the design of the study and the procedure involved in its completion.

Chapter IV is devoted to a presentation and analysis of the data. Chapter V provides conclusions based on the findings of the study, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

One of the most important aspects of any investigation is an examination of the literature and research related to the problem. An annotated bibliography covering publications of the past fifteen years which relate directly and indirectly to the teaching of controversial issues would fill more than one volume. Such a procedure would be of little value to this investigation. A more logical approach would be to review selected literature to illustrate the nature of research in this area.

A review of the dissertation abstracts included since 1953 in Dissertation Abstracts indicated that only a few studies were directly related to the teaching of controversial issues. However, a number of studies were included about related areas such as pressure groups, censorship, religion, and academic freedom in the schools. These same topics were frequently included in magazines and professional education periodicals.

Perhaps the best sources of information found concerning the teaching of controversial issues in addition to a few specific studies were publications of the National Education Association, National Council for the Social Studies, North Central Association and other professional

education organizations. These organizations generally published pamphlets which were written by specialists in the area about which they were writing.

The procedure in this chapter will be to review the literature related to questions presented in the statement of the problem. Effort will be made to show what the literature reported in each of the following areas: (1) Do schools have a responsibility to teach students to resolve controversial issues? (2) What are the best methods for teaching students to resolve controversial issues? (3) What controversial issues are appropriate for study in public schools? (4) Are teachers free to introduce the study of controversial issues in their classrooms? (5) Do teachers provide students the opportunity to study controversial issues? (6) Are school policies regarding the teaching of controversial issues desirable and to what extent do they exist? (7) Are teachers providing students the opportunity to develop values for decision making in the area of controversial issues?

Do Schools Have a Responsibility to Teach Students to  
Resolve Controversial Issues?

The studies and other literature reviewed were consistent in support of the idea that schools do have a responsibility to teach students the means of resolving controversial issues. Hall stated that the school has a responsibility to include controversial issues as a vital

functional part of the curriculum.<sup>1</sup> Lapan stressed the importance of the schools in dealing with "closed areas."<sup>2</sup>

Lunstrum's study justified the teaching of controversial issues as a necessity for society. He said controversy is inevitable in a democratic, transitional society and that a dynamic, complex culture which is uncriticized perpetuates contradictions and conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

George H. Reavis emphasized that the school's role is not to teach controversial issues, but it is rather to make suitable provisions for students to study controversial issues. Four rights of the student which should be recognized by the schools are: (a) The right to study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning which he should begin to have an opinion; (b) The right to free access to all relevant information including any materials that circulate freely in the community; (c) The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice; (d) The right to form

<sup>1</sup>Trumen Leroy Hall, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation The Study of the Teaching of Controversial Issues in the Secondary Schools of the State of Ohio, Dissertation Abstracts, XVIII, No. 5 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1957), p. 1685.

<sup>2</sup>Maureen Therese Lapan, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation An Analysis of Selected Plays of George Bernard Shaw as Media for the Examination of "Closed Areas" of Contemporary Society by Secondary-School Students, Dissertation Abstracts, XXIII, No. 5 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1962), p. 1557.

<sup>3</sup>John Paul Lunstrum, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation An Inquiry into the Proper Role of the Social Studies Teacher with Reference to the Use of Controversy, Dissertation Abstracts, XXI, No. 9 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1961), p. 2634.

and express his own opinion without jeopardizing his relation to the teacher or the school.<sup>4</sup>

A North Central Association publication said the following:

The classroom consideration of issues on which there is public disagreement is a primary responsibility of education for effective citizenship. The consideration of controversial subjects should have a central place in our educational process, since the ability to cope reasonably with differences of opinion is essential to effective living in a free society.<sup>5</sup>

This pamphlet listed several more specific benefits gained by students through the study of controversial issues. Another North Central Association publication, Points of Take-Off for the Social Studies, supported the study of controversial issues in the school in its list of aims of social studies instruction.<sup>6</sup>

The National Education Association, in Controversial Issues in the Classroom supported the inclusion of controversial issues in the curriculum. "Controversy is one tool of progress and an essential part of the educational preparation of each citizen."<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup>George H. Reavis, "Controversial Issues," An Educational Platform for the Public Schools: A Statement of Educational Policy (Gary, Indiana: Alden H. Blankenship, Board of Education, 1957), p. 21.

<sup>5</sup>Teaching Controversial Issues - Methods of Approach (Chicago, Illinois: The NCA Foreign Relations Project).

<sup>6</sup>Foreign Relations Project, Points of Take-Off for the Social Studies (Chicago, Illinois: North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, 1961), p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Controversial Issues in the Classroom (Washington, D. C.: The National Education Association at the suggestion of the Joint Committee of the National Education Association and Magazine Publishers Association, 1961), p. 1.

The Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association asserted the general premise that: "Life demands an ability constantly to deal with the controversial; therefore, the school must offer experiences to assist students in learning to handle issues intelligently."<sup>8</sup>

Perhaps the most comprehensive but yet concise writing found in this area was How to Handle Controversial Issues, a National Council for the Social Studies publication. It first justified and then concluded the school's role to be one of responsibility for the including of controversial issues in the school.

The heart of the democratic process is found in the means by which as individuals and groups we come to grips with problems, work out our differences, and make our own decisions. The free exchange of ideas is essential to the American system. In such a setting the responsibility of the schools is clear. They should provide experiences which lead to the attitudes and competencies needed by the citizens of a democratic state. The introduction into the classroom of purposefully planned studies of controversial issues, which help equip youth with the means by which they may resolve the problems that beset them, is one of the most promising aspects of present citizenship programs.<sup>9</sup>

There seemed to be no question that American schools should deal with important problems--social, economic, and political.

What Are the Best Methods for Teaching Students to Resolve Controversial Issues?

There are at least four ways that one may approach controversial

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<sup>8</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, Controversial Issues in the Public Schools (San Francisco, California: California Teachers Association, 1957), p. 5.

<sup>9</sup>Richard E. Gross, How to Handle Controversial Issues, How To Do It Series, No. 14 (Washington, D. C.: National Council for the Social Studies, a department of the National Education Association, 1964), p. 1.



issues in the schools. First, the consideration of all controversial issues could be excluded from the classroom. However, this exclusion would deny the obligation the schools have to prepare students to resolve issues unless one believed the acquisition of a set body of knowledge would be sufficient to permit students to resolve problems they will face. No studies or articles were found which supported this approach.

A second approach to teaching controversial issues is to indoctrinate students toward a particular point of view. The literature is unquestionably opposed to indoctrination. Lunstrum called for judicious, objective treatment of sharply opposing social alternatives in a non-threatening classroom atmosphere.<sup>10</sup> A decision to indoctrinate assumes that the teacher knows the right point of view. Indoctrination may chain a student to a distorted set of facts, or may render a student intellectually inflexible. If things change the student may find himself confused or on a dead-end street. Attempts to indoctrinate could backfire, and result in attitudes opposite from those intended.<sup>11</sup>

A third approach would be to simply present facts which have been substantiated. Problems for the teacher using this method may arise regarding subsequent student questions. The literature did not support this approach.

The studies and other literature overwhelmingly advocated a

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<sup>10</sup>Lunstrum, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup>Teaching Controversial Issues - Methods of Approach, p. 3.

procedure where issues were treated impartially and where students are encouraged to consider or reach decisions about issues. Schlechty<sup>12</sup> and Svoboda<sup>13</sup> both advocated problem solving teaching methods. Reavis, as has already been indicated earlier in the chapter, supported the right of a student to study issues, and to form and express his opinions.<sup>14</sup> In addition he said:

The treatment of controversial issues is objective and scholarly, with a minimum emphasis on opinion. The teacher approaches controversial issues in the classroom in an impartial and unprejudiced manner, and must refrain from using his teaching position and prestige to promote a partisan view.<sup>15</sup>

The Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association said the techniques will vary with community conditions and with the maturity and experiences of the students concerned. It is the school's task to select some of these issues for study, to give students practice in dealing with them, and to help them to acquire desirable attitudes and procedures in doing so.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Phillip Craig Schlechty, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation High School Social Studies in a Mass Society, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVIII, No. 6 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1967), p. 2147A.

<sup>13</sup>William Sylvan Svoboda, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation Negro-White Problems in the United States, Implications for Secondary Schools, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVI, No. 1 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1964), p. 536.

<sup>14</sup>Reavis, op. cit.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, op. cit., p. 6.

The kinds of learning just mentioned are thwarted if students are given predetermined solutions to issues, or if they have incomplete or biased information about them. Instead, they must understand all sides of the issues studied regardless of the desires or interests of faculty, student body or particular community groups. This responsibility for impartiality rests inescapably upon the school. It cannot be satisfied by using mechanical devices, such as that of guaranteeing equal time or equal emphasis to varying points of view. It can be met if the fundamental objective is to help students arrive at conclusions in the light of all available evidence. Nor does the responsibility of the school stop here. In addition, it must assist students to learn both the skill and the desire independently to pursue further study of significant issues.

The ability to deal intelligently with controversial issues is no simple matter, for frequently they involve broad social, economic, and political aspects. Indispensable, therefore, are materials wisely selected and presented, always with full respect<sup>17</sup> for the ideals, aspirations, and loyalties of the American people.

The most detailed writing found regarding method was How to Handle Controversial Issues by Richard E. Gross. A number of other publications referred to this writing as an authority. The most copied portion of the Gross report was that portion advocating the historical approach to the teaching of controversial issues. Through the study of similar issues found in history a detachment is possible. For an issue which may otherwise create an emotionally charged atmosphere, the historical approach may be the best technique. By viewing a problem in the perspective of years gone by, discussion may result which would have been impossible without the cooling effect of history.<sup>18</sup>

Gross wrote that in general, the program for approaching

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>18</sup>Gross, op. cit., p. 4.

controversial issues can be broken into four aspects: preparation, introduction, investigation, and culmination. He discussed each in detail. Planning and organization were deemed essential.

Among his more important points regarding the introduction phase was that the teacher must see that the class perceives the objectives in the study. The definition of words and each point of view were considered important. Students should know why the issue is a problem as well as what the problem is. The complexity of human problems should be stressed and students should be given experience in propaganda analysis.<sup>19</sup>

In the investigation phase all sides should be studied. Students should carry out research which will lead to the culmination of the study. Students must be helped to see why they hold a given position. Various types of role playing were described as promising techniques of investigation. Other techniques were also listed. The teacher should keep group discussion centered on the point at issue, help maintain calm, see that all sides have equal opportunities to present their ideas, draw the timid into discussion, and see that fair summarizations are made. The teacher's leadership in group discussion should be inconspicuous.<sup>20</sup>

In most cases, according to Gross, the class should draw individual or group decisions about the issue being studied. When possible, pupil action in the community should be a final outcome of the study of

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

some issues. A consensus, though seldom possible, is more desirable than a compromise solution.<sup>21</sup>

Techniques suggested by the North Central Association included historical approach, role playing, problem solving, case study, debate, and panel discussion. The following "dos and don'ts" were suggested:

- A. Establish with the students a set of "ground rules" for exploration of the subject.
- B. Develop a classroom atmosphere conducive to freedom of expression.
- C. Give a fair and thorough introduction.
- D. See that all sides of the issue are fairly presented.
- E. Separate fact from opinion.
- F. Encourage students to read widely on the topic.
- G. Withhold your personal opinion except under unusual circumstances.
- H. Don't generalize on insufficient data.
- I. Don't try to implant your own opinion.
- J. Foster use of facts.<sup>22</sup>

A study by Hall said a wide range of materials from which students may obtain information is necessary and that class time must be provided for investigations and discussions. Teachers were found by Hall to utilize a wide range of materials, although they seemed to overlook such materials as pamphlets, leaflets, trade journals, and other similar free and low cost materials.<sup>23</sup> Griffin, in a study about teaching contemporary world affairs, found newspapers and magazines to be the most effective news media, while radio and television were the least effective.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>22</sup>Teaching Controversial Issues - Methods of Approach, p. 5.

<sup>23</sup>Hall, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup>Paul Harrison Griffin, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation An Analysis of Selected High School Seniors' Knowledge and Understanding of Contemporary World Affairs, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVIII, No. 4 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1967), p. 1340A.

What Controversial Issues are Appropriate for  
Study in Public Schools?

According to Hall who did a study on controversial issues in the secondary schools of Ohio, the only issues that ought not be discussed in the classroom are those which involve sectarian or denominational religious beliefs, those which are not within the maturity level of the students, and those which are not of interest to students. Issues which are of concern to adolescents and about which the American people are undecided are legitimately a part of the high school curriculum.<sup>25</sup> Hall found, however, in his study that teachers in Ohio were uncertain as to which issues should not be discussed.

Criteria in the selection of controversial issues for class study were presented by Gross<sup>26</sup> and these guidelines were repeated in Controversial Issues in the Classroom.<sup>27</sup> Each of these guidelines were discussed in detail by the author. The factors a teacher should consider before making a decision to study a controversial issue in his class according to Gross are:

1. Is the issue beyond the maturity and experiential level of the pupils?
2. Is the issue of interest to the pupils?
3. Is this issue socially significant and timely for this course and

<sup>25</sup>Hall, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup>Gross, op. cit., pp. 1-3.

<sup>27</sup>Controversial Issues in the Classroom, pp. 2-6.

grade level?

4. Is the issue one which the teacher feels he can handle successfully from a personal standpoint?

5. Is the issue one for which adequate study materials can be obtained?

6. Is this issue one for which there is adequate time to justify its presentation?

7. Is this issue one which will clash with community customs and attitudes?

Vertical and horizontal planning within schools concerning the scope and sequence of issues for possible study is needed so that unnecessary repetition is eliminated and necessary reinforcement or enlargement is provided.

The California Teachers Association developed criteria for the selection of topics for study in the classroom. The criteria developed were significance, definability, determinability, emotional content, and educational contribution.<sup>28</sup> The North Central Association produced guidelines for selection of controversial issues<sup>29</sup> similar to those of Gross and the California Teachers Association.

Are Teachers Free to Introduce the Study of Controversial  
Issues in Their Classrooms?

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<sup>28</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, op. cit., pp. 8-9.

<sup>29</sup>Teaching Controversial Issues - Methods of Approach, p. 4.

The community in which a school is located will determine to a great extent the freedom teachers have to deal with controversial issues in their classrooms. The literature reviewed indicated that students should have the opportunity to study controversial issues. Yet the literature reviewed contains a great many examples of pressures directed upon the schools which have either prevented or made it very difficult for teachers to introduce certain topics in their classrooms.

Pressures have come from varying sources and have been directed at different aspects of the school program. Several studies have considered legislative pressures regarding things ranging from loyalty oaths to the prescription of curriculum. Among such studies are those by Brauer,<sup>30</sup> Bryson,<sup>31</sup> and Lehman.<sup>32</sup> The legislation enacted by a legislative body is sometimes the result of activities by pressure groups. Brauer's study called for a determination of the proper areas of curricular activity of the legislatures. "The rights of children, teachers, parents, and community are in danger of being manipulated when special interest

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<sup>30</sup>Walter Louis Brauer, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation Trends in State Legislation Affecting the Curriculum of the Public Schools, Dissertation Abstracts, XV, No. 7 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1955), p. 1196.

<sup>31</sup>Joseph Eugene Bryson, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation Legality of Loyalty Oaths and Non-Oath Requirements for Public School Teachers, Dissertation Abstracts, XXII, No. 11 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1961), p. 3898.

<sup>32</sup>Douglas A. Lehman, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation Legislative Control of Secondary School Curriculum from 1941-1953, Dissertation Abstracts, XV, No. 12 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1955), p. 2453.



groups exert considerable influence in the enactment of state curricular prescriptions. "<sup>33</sup> Lehman found in his study that within a twelve year period, forty-five organized interest groups influenced seventy-six curricular prescriptions in Pennsylvania. <sup>34</sup>

A number of studies have determined pressure activities by prominent organizations, a number of which are patriotic societies. The American Legion, The Daughters of the American Revolution, The Conference of Small Business Organizations, The Friends of the Public Schools, The National Economic Council, American Education Association, Church League of America, Employers Association of Chicago, National Association of Pro-America, The National Council for American Education, The John Birch Society, and even The Chamber of Commerce were mentioned in the literature as organizations which have applied pressures to influence the school curriculum. The stories of the means and results of some of these pressure groups in certain school systems is not only quite interesting but in many cases alarming. Pressure groups have engaged in library book censorship, text book screening, and the removal from the schools of certain topics for study. The bibliography of this study contains several studies which described these kinds of activities. Several publications by the American Library Association and the American Association of School Libraries described censorship pressures. The

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<sup>33</sup>Brauer, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup>Lehman, op. cit.

American Book Publishers Council also has published similar materials as has the National Council of Teachers of English.

The National Commission for the Defense of Democracy Through Education of the National Education Association published periodically a Defense Bulletin. The Defense Commission became the Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities in 1961. Defense Bulletins related to pressures on the schools. The National Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities has published annually the Criticisms and Defense of Public Education Bibliography. The National Education Association has also published investigation reports and State of the Nation bulletins which provided information regarding efforts to affect the curriculum. Publications of other organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, The Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'rith, The National Conference of Christians and Jews and others have frequently described pressure activities in schools. There is ample evidence from the literature that pressures have been exerted on the curriculum and in many cases the pressures exerted have been to limit the study of certain controversial issues or to have a particular viewpoint espoused by the school.

Successful efforts of pressure groups to influence what is taught, how things are taught and the teaching materials to be used, could prevent the development of school programs which encourage the study of controversial issues. Perhaps the most important limitations upon the school's freedom in handling controversial issues are the local mores

and immediate climate of opinion. The attitudes and responses of teachers, administrators and members of boards of education to pressures which would affect the teaching of controversial issues in the classroom will determine to a considerable degree the extent to which students will learn to deal with controversial issues.

School personnel should become fully acquainted with the community in which they reside. An understanding of power groups, strong religious and business forces, influential individuals, and the predominant racial and national backgrounds can be invaluable aids in organizing a school program that includes the study of controversial issues.

Several studies have revealed insight about the attitudes of school personnel and patrons concerning factors relating to the teaching of controversial issues. Coan found that Kansas parents are not as wary or opposed to the inclusion of controversial issues in the curriculum as many people believe.<sup>35</sup> Vennard found that board of education members were less sensitive to criticism than school administrators. Teachers and board members rejected or accepted critics and criticisms to about the same degree. Teachers were more willing to accept critics or

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<sup>35</sup> Clark Coan, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Study of the Attitudes of Selected Social Studies Teachers and Parents of Kansas High School Students Regarding the Inclusion of Controversial Issues as a Part of the Secondary School Social Studies Program, Dissertation Abstracts, XXII, No. 7 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1962), p. 2246.

criticisms than were administrators.<sup>36</sup> The study involved board members, teachers, and administrators of Nebraska.

A New Jersey study regarding the opinions of social studies teachers, administrators, and school board members found secondary school principals to view fewer items listed on a questionnaire as controversial than did any other group in the study. Superintendents viewed the most items as controversial. Teachers and board members followed in that order. Although superintendents viewed more items as controversial, a larger percentage of them agreed to include all items in the curriculum. Principals, teachers, and board members followed in that order. Of the total respondents, 76.53 percent would include all items in the curriculum. More superintendents agreed that challenged teachers should be supported more than any other group. Teachers, principals, and board members followed in that order.<sup>37</sup>

A study by Hoffman queried nine different groups consisting of school personnel, clergy, and local governmental officials over the United States concerning their opinions on teaching selected controversial issues.

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<sup>36</sup>Bruce Irving Vennard, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation The Effect that Critics of Educational Practices Have Upon the Thinking of Board of Education Members, Administrators, and Teachers, Dissertation Abstracts, XXV, No. 10 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1964), p. 5657.

<sup>37</sup>Robert P. Schremser, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation The Teaching of Controversial Issues: A Study of the Opinions of Selected Social Studies Teachers, Administrators, and School Board Members of New Jersey, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVII, No. 11 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966), p. 3677A.

He found that people in positions of potential influence were willing to inject subject matter of a controversial nature into the curriculum and consequently there seems to be an increasingly healthy climate in the public schools today.<sup>38</sup>

Do Teachers Provide Students the Opportunity to  
Study Controversial Issues?

The review of the literature revealed little information which would indicate the extent to which students are given the opportunity to study controversial issues in their schools. The large amount of writing regarding the attacks which have been made against the curriculum of the schools may be an indication that at least where the pressures have occurred, those schools were providing students an opportunity to study a controversial issue.

Only one study was found which addressed itself directly to the extent to which the study of controversial issues existed. This study was by Truman Hall and involved the secondary schools of Ohio.<sup>39</sup>

Hall found that the curricula of all the schools in his study provided some opportunity for the discussion of controversial issues. Yet he concluded that teachers devoted relatively little time in their classes to the study of controversial issues. On this conclusion he further

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<sup>38</sup>William Edgar Hoffman, Jr., Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Survey of Opinions Held by Potentially Influential Citizens on Selected Controversial Areas of the Public Secondary School Curriculum, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVI, No. 3 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1965), p. 1426.

<sup>39</sup>Hall, op. cit.

concluded that a majority of the issues were dealt with in a superficial manner and that in terms of range, very few issues were covered in a school year. A majority of the teachers dealt only with issues which were related to the work of their class. Teachers dealt very little with issues which involved religion and personal problems. The issues which were discussed seemed to be those that adults believed adolescents ought to discuss. Apparently only one-half of the Ohio secondary school teachers dealt with issues of a controversial nature.<sup>40</sup>

If the above study was valid and if Ohio teachers are representative of the teachers of all states, students have not had ample opportunity to study controversial issues. This would imply that in spite of the seemingly large number of sources which advocated the study of such issues, extensive, effective study of controversial issues generally has not occurred.

Are School Policies Regarding the Teaching of Controversial Issues Desirable and to What Extent do They Exist?

The literature seemed to be widely in support of written school policies relating to the teaching of controversial issues. Coan said a published policy adopted by the board of education is desirable.<sup>41</sup> Schremser's study indicated that "school board policies and administrative guidelines for teaching about controversial issues are desirable and

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Coan, op. cit.

necessary."<sup>42</sup>

The reasons for supporting written policy in the area of controversial issues were most frequently stated as a means of resisting pressure groups. The National Congress of Parents and Teachers urged school boards to have written statements of policy placing the responsibility for curriculum decisions and the selection of teaching materials with teachers and educational administrative officials.<sup>43</sup> Gross, in How to Handle Controversial Issues<sup>44</sup> also expressed this view as did the California Teachers Association.<sup>45</sup> However, both implied an even more important reason for the existence of written policies in this area. Students have a right to learn to deal with controversy. The two sources seemed to agree with Reavis who said,

Instructional policy on controversial issues should be clearly defined and officially established in the community in order to insure youth a thorough and well-balanced preparation for American citizenship, and to protect teachers and school administrators from unwarranted attacks by pressure groups that may attempt to use the schools for partisan purposes.<sup>46</sup>

Lunstrum wrote articles which were directed specifically at the need for school policies for the teaching of controversial issues. He

<sup>42</sup>Schremser, op. cit.

<sup>43</sup>Extremist Groups (Chicago, Illinois: National Congress of Parents and Teachers).

<sup>44</sup>Gross, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>45</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>46</sup>Reavis, op. cit.

pointed to attacks on intellectual freedom in Indiana schools, but perhaps more pertinently to voluntary censorship by teachers who feel it is better to play it safe. "What appears to be harmony in some communities is more likely to stem from a tacit agreement on the part of teachers to avoid candid appraisal of unpopular beliefs in the classroom."<sup>47</sup> The National Education Association's Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom has reported that,

Presence in the school curriculum of items about which a particular group is sensitive is causing a greater degree of voluntary censorship today than ever before.<sup>48</sup>

Whether practical policies can be formulated is of course a relevant question. Lunstrum indicated that workable policies could be formulated, based on his study of Indiana schools. He called for involvement of the teachers and community in the development of such policies. Otherwise the impact of the policy is highly limited.<sup>49</sup> Schremser said that policies can be "cooperatively written without difficulty."<sup>50</sup> The California Teachers Association said that the policy recommendations should be made to the board by the professional staff acting through the superintendent. The district's superintendent should provide the leadership and his

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<sup>47</sup>John P. Lunstrum, "Controversial Issues, School Policies, and Reflective Thinking: Part II," Social Education, XXVI (May, 1962), p. 5.

<sup>48</sup>B. J. Chandler, "Freedom of Inquiry Is In Jeopardy," Phi Delta Kappan, XLI, No. 8 (May, 1960), p. 356.

<sup>49</sup>Lunstrum, "Controversial Issues, School Policies, and Reflective Thinking: Part II," p. 8.

<sup>50</sup>Schremser, op. cit.



recommendations should be arrived at through cooperative study and discussion with his professional staff and with individuals and groups in the community.<sup>51</sup> Once policy is developed it becomes the duty of every administrator to be sure that teachers know and understand the policy, and that they are given adequate help in working in conformity to it.<sup>52</sup> Gross indicated that if policy does not exist, teachers should seek a statement from their board.<sup>53</sup> The National Education Association has also urged teachers to seek a clear statement of policy from their local board and advises that such a statement may be arrived at cooperatively by the formation of an advisory committee consisting of classroom teachers, school administrators, board members, and other citizens.<sup>54</sup>

The fact that so much of the literature urged the development of policy statements may be an indication that many schools do not have written policies for the teaching of controversial issues. Lunstrum's study of Indiana schools found only two of thirty-eight school systems in the study with written policy regarding the teaching of controversial issues. If this is typical of all states, very few schools have developed policy for this facet of instruction in spite of the urging of many that

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<sup>51</sup> Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>53</sup> Gross, op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> Controversial Issues in the Classroom, p. 1.

policies be formulated.<sup>55</sup> However, a National Education Association publication indicated that a growing number of schools are now operating under specific, written policies that govern the teaching of controversial issues.<sup>56</sup> Yet the fact that NEA published a booklet to assist those who would write policy indicates the organization believes written policy for teaching controversial issues is lacking. The booklet provided sample policy statements selected from several hundred that were submitted for the preparation of the booklet. The booklet could be a help to a district which desired to develop policies regarding the teaching of controversial issues.

The following represents the views of the California Teachers Association concerning the importance of written policies for controversial issues:

The rules and regulations with respect to the teaching of controversial issues should not be negative consisting merely of a series of prohibitions growing out of prior unfortunate incidents; nor retroactive and punitive; nor formulated to appease dissatisfied minorities. Instead they should be:

Clear and free of ambiguity;

Broadly stated in terms of general policy;

Positive in nature, based on the assumption that controversial issues shall be considered;

Well known to the staff and community through publication in bulletins, handbooks, teachers' guides, community newspapers and other media;

Designed to govern the subsequent activities of administrators and teachers;

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<sup>55</sup>Lunstrum, "Controversial Issues, School Policies, and Reflective Thinking: Part II," p. 5.

<sup>56</sup>Controversial Issues in the Classroom, p. 8.

Formulated for the good of the community as a whole;  
 Forward-looking, guaranteeing support to teachers who in  
 undertaking new or pioneering activities, encounter unexpected  
 difficulties.<sup>57</sup>

What is the Role of the School Regarding the Development of Values Which  
 Will be Used for Decisions About Controversial Issues?

There was an abundant amount of literature which stated that the school does have a responsibility in the area of value development. The North Central Association in Points of Take-Off for the Social Studies listed among its more specific objectives of social studies instruction to help the student understand "his own value structure, values of the group with which he is associated; principle value systems and ideologies of the world, and areas where these various value systems conflict."<sup>58</sup> Another North Central Association publication further states that although there may be disagreement over facts, an issue usually becomes controversial because of values which are applied to the facts.<sup>59</sup>

Since decisions about controversial issues are made within the framework of a person's value system, it seems that the school should help students to develop values that will facilitate good decisions. Nearly every study related to values which was included in the bibliography either specifically stated the school has a responsibility in this area or

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<sup>57</sup>Commission on Educational Policy of the California Teachers Association, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>58</sup>Foreign Relations Project, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>59</sup>Teaching Controversial Issues - Methods of Approach, p. 1.

it implied so. Reavis said moral and spiritual values are essential elements of the public school program.<sup>60</sup> Yeazell said the American public school system has been charged with assisting in the education and enculturation of the young in the value system of our society.<sup>61</sup> Trump said the development of student character has long been espoused as an objective of the public schools.<sup>62</sup>

Among the questions about the development of value systems by students may be, what are the basic moral, ethical and political values of the American democratic society? Another question is how are values best taught? Although it may be necessary to determine the values of our culture, doing so does not necessarily mean the method of teaching is one of indoctrination. However there probably are some values about which there is no question, for example honesty. The Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association in its publication Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools clearly enunciated the moral and ethical values of this nature. The significance of the individual, moral responsibility, common consent, devotion to truth, moral equality,

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<sup>60</sup>Reavis, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>61</sup>Mary Francis Yeazell, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Qualitative Analysis of the Value Content of Selected Literature for Ninth Grade English, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVII, No. 11 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966), p. 3788A.

<sup>62</sup>John Minart Trump, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation A Descriptive Analysis of Character Education in Indiana Junior High Schools, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVII, No. 6 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1966), p. 1726.

brotherhood, and respect for excellence were included.<sup>63</sup> The political expression of these values, most of which are guaranteed through the Bill of Rights are rights of assembly, speech, religion, and press; universal suffrage, the concept of majority rule and minority rights, and the further protection of the rights of the individual. It is likely that any effective teaching of values will result in most students adopting these values as their own.

The traditional approach to moral education has consisted of direct moral instruction. Children have been told what they ought to do. "The inadequacy of traditionalism has become quite apparent, as is shown by the present state of moral perplexity."<sup>64</sup>

A fairly common belief regarding the method of developing a worthy value system is that students learn the right values when the school functions within the framework of those values. Reavis indicated this to be important.<sup>65</sup> B. F. Skinner's theory of operant conditioning has been influential and it is a more sophisticated description of the importance of providing the right example for students to emulate.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Human Relations Committee of the Oklahoma Curriculum Improvement Commission, The Teacher and Improved Human Relations Education in the School (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 1966), p. 10.

<sup>64</sup>Gerald Howard Paske, Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation Moral Education, Dissertation Abstracts, XXV, No. 6 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1964), p. 3618.

<sup>65</sup>Reavis, op. cit., p. 18

<sup>66</sup>Paske, op. cit.

Trump found that teachers were not sure of the best approach to influence the value systems of students. Generally they seemed to favor the indirect approach, although teachers of direct instruction classes felt the direct approach could be effective when used in conjunction with the indirect. Principals indicated that the conduct of teachers was important in the development of student character.<sup>67</sup>

Although almost all the literature acknowledged the importance of the school functioning within the values of our culture, several significant studies called for a more direct approach. Allen supported the theory that insights into ones own culture can be gained by studying cultures with different values.<sup>68</sup> Paske included but discounted training, indoctrination, and instruction as being effective methods of teaching values. Indoctrination was considered to prevent a person from seeing legitimate criticisms of specific claims. Training was seen as primarily concerned with acquiring abilities and instruction was seen as primarily concerned with the acquisition of information.<sup>69</sup>

Paske made a distinction between being morally educated and morally instructed. He saw the most essential aspect of the teaching of

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<sup>67</sup>Trump, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup>Benjamin J. Allen, Jr., Abstract of Doctoral Dissertation The Construction of an Instrument Designed to Measure Student Held Attitudes Toward Certain American Values as Related to a Jury of Experts Consensus, Dissertation Abstracts, XXVI, No. 8 (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms, 1965), p. 4487.

<sup>69</sup>Paske, op. cit.

morality to be the provision of experiences that allow students to grasp the basis of moral principles and rules.<sup>70</sup> Yeazell's proposed method as it related to the teaching of literature seemed to call for a similar approach. Students were to critically analyze and appraise literature to determine if it reflected the current American values.<sup>71</sup> Both of these researchers may have provided the means to solving the problem posed by Reavis as the greatest one in the development of values. He said the big problem of character education is the motivation to right conduct. Knowledge of right by itself does not always impel the individual to do right.<sup>72</sup>

There were several studies which described what the researcher found to be the values of selected populations. Some compared the values of different groups. These studies are included in the bibliography.

A most significant work found regarding values was Values and Teaching.<sup>73</sup> Raths and his co-writers stated a value theory that can guide a teacher and furthermore they described a process and specific strategies to implement the theory. In order to help students develop clearer values, they said one must help students use the process of valuing. One must help students: (1) make free choices wherever possible, (2) search

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Yeazell, op. cit.

<sup>72</sup>Reavis, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>73</sup>Louis E. Raths, Merrill Harmin, and Sidney B. Simon, Values and Teaching (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., 1966).

for alternatives in choice-making situations, (3) weigh the consequences of each available alternative, (4) consider what they prize and cherish, (5) affirm the things they value, (6) do something about their choices, and (7) consider and strengthen patterns in their lives. The teacher creates conditions that aid students in finding values if they choose to do so. This approach has similarities to those by Yeazell and Paske.



## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

#### Design of the Study

This study was designed to determine the extent to which social studies programs in large Oklahoma high schools are committed to teaching students the means of resolving controversial issues. It was believed that the results of this study would provide information which could be used to make decisions that could significantly improve the contributions of social studies classes. Ultimately the information may assist in developing citizens capable of meeting and solving the issues of their day and thereby contributing to the welfare of our state and nation.

As the review of the literature revealed, there has been a pronounced interest in the teaching of controversial issues and the problems related to this instruction. This particular study may be especially valuable at this time because of the seemingly insurmountable domestic and foreign problems that face our nation. The current unrest that faces much of the nation has not been felt so profoundly in Oklahoma. If Oklahoma students learn to deal effectively with controversial issues, Oklahoma may avoid the chaos prevalent in some parts of our nation.

The general design of this study may be considered to be

descriptive research which is defined as "all those studies that purport to present facts concerning the nature and status of anything."<sup>1</sup> More specifically the design could be classified as descriptive-survey-status research, which according to Good is "directed toward ascertaining prevailing conditions (the facts that prevail in a group of cases chosen for study), and this method is essentially a technique of quantitative description of the general characteristics of the group."<sup>2</sup>

Following Good's requirements, stages and administrative aspects for surveys, the following general principles were used in this study.

1. Define the purpose of the survey.
2. Relate the survey to other surveys or programs.
3. Develop a survey plan that considers (a) the psychology of the respondents (b) the extent of coverage (c) the frequency and timing (d) the method of collection (e) nonsampling errors (f) the standard definitions and classifications (g) the processing and interpretation of the data (h) the allowance for pretests and follow-ups (i) the comparison with data from other sources (j) a proposed calendar and costs estimates.
4. Develop a questionnaire and accompanying instructions.
5. Administer pretests.
6. Insure a sampling procedure that results in representativeness.
7. Follow up on unreturned questionnaires.
8. Edit, tabulate and summarize the returns.
9. Interpret the returns.

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<sup>1</sup>Carter V. Good and Douglas E. Scates, Methods of Research, Educational, Psychological, Sociological (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954), p. 259.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 551.

10. Prepare and publish as final report.<sup>3</sup>

A major consideration in the design of the study was that of determining the population to be sampled. Social studies teachers were selected because the subjects included within this field, more than any other, lend themselves to the study of controversial issues.

A second consideration regarding the design of the study involved decisions affecting the delimitation of the study. From the beginning it was quite obvious that some limitations must be placed upon the population to be included in the study. Therefore the study was limited to teachers in senior high schools with more than one-thousand students. With one exception, all schools considered consisted of grades ten, eleven and twelve. The exception was one of the state's largest high schools. It included the ninth grade.

The selection of a sample group of schools as opposed to utilizing the total population was considered advisable because of the number of schools which had more than one-thousand students as reported on their 1968-1969 North Central Association Annual Reports. Thirty schools reported more than one-thousand students. These schools represented fifteen different school districts and all but four had only one senior high school with over one-thousand students. Of these four, two districts had two high schools of this size and two were large metropolitan districts with several large high schools. All school districts with only one high

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 611.

school of the minimum size were selected to be a part of the study. An exception was Norman High School because of its staff's involvement in the development of the data gathering instruments. In Lawton and Midwest City one of the two eligible schools in each district was selected by lot. In Oklahoma City and Tulsa, two eligible schools from each system were selected by lot. Oklahoma City had seven schools with more than one-thousand students and Tulsa had eight. As originally designed all systems in Oklahoma containing large senior high schools, with the exception of Norman, would have been represented in the study. Using VanDalen as a guide, the sample was sufficiently representative of all senior high schools in the population.<sup>4</sup>

Considering that the study was concerned with social studies teachers in general in the large schools the total number of teachers involved in the study as opposed to the total number of teachers in the total population was a factor in the determination of the sample adequacy. The total number of social studies teachers in high schools containing more than one-thousand students was 291 as reported on the master schedules submitted with the North Central Association Annual Reports.

By involving all available teachers in the sample schools, it was assumed that the teachers involved in the study would be sufficiently representative of the total population. The verification of this assumption will be demonstrated in the description of the procedure.

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<sup>4</sup>Deobald B. VanDalen, Understanding Educational Research (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1962), p. 249-254.

The sample used in this study was designed to be a miniature of the population from whence it was selected and presumed to embody the characteristics of the total population defined in the problem.

### Development and Validation of the Instruments

Since the success of the investigation rested on the development of appropriate data gathering instruments, the next step was to determine what instruments were most suitable for this study. To do this the literature was investigated and consultation with the chairman of the study committee and other knowledgeable persons occurred. Some of the specific questions listed in the statement of the problem presented in Chapter I called for specific answers and therefore could be answered best through the structured items of a questionnaire. Other questions of the statement of the problem lent themselves more to an interview because of the unstructured open ended information being sought. The study of data gathering tools indicated that the two tools, interview and questionnaire, can be used to compliment each other as study instruments. For these reasons it was decided to employ both the interview and questionnaire techniques. A study of each of these techniques was continued in order to insure instruments of good quality.

A number of sources include characteristics for the construction of effective questionnaires. Among these were Whitney,<sup>5</sup> Hillway,<sup>6</sup> Good

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<sup>5</sup>Frederick Lamson Whitney, Methods in Educational Research (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1931), p. 153.

<sup>6</sup>Tyrum Hillway, Introduction to Research (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1956), p. 190.

and Scates,<sup>7</sup> VanDalen,<sup>8</sup> and Mouly.<sup>9</sup> From these sources a synthesis of criteria was developed. The questionnaire was developed according to the following procedures.

1. It must be brief so that it will take a minimum of the respondent's time, making the demands on him as easy as possible.
2. It should deal with matters that will seem to the recipients to be worth investigating.
3. Clear instructions must be included as to the way answers are to be indicated. It should elicit unequivocal replies, especially if these are to later be subjected to statistical treatment. The purpose of the study should be fully and clearly stated.
4. The wording of every item ought to be understandable and familiar in order to insure the respondent's comprehension of what is being asked.
5. The items should be arranged in a neat and logical order. The questionnaire should be in good mechanical form - that is, printed or typewritten and easy to read.
6. The information requested should be otherwise inaccessible to the investigator.
7. A promise of a summary or the results of the study should be included.
8. The questionnaire must not "put words into the respondent's mouth," nor should the questions embarrass the individual or cause him to suspect hidden purposes. The questionnaire should elicit responses which are definite, but they should not be mechanically forced.
9. Space should be provided for supplementary communications from the recipients.

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<sup>7</sup>Good and Scates, op. cit., p. 615.

<sup>8</sup>VanDalen, op. cit.

<sup>9</sup>George J. Mouly, The Science of Educational Research (New York: American Book Company, 1963), p. 263.

10. Some questions may exist merely to develop the proper psychological set or for the purpose of catharsis.

Each item was judged against the procedures listed above and each was revised many times before the first pre-test. The initial pre-test occurred three years before the final administration of the questionnaire. The high schools that participated in the first pre-test were Edmond, Norman, and College High of Bartlesville. Extensive changes followed with the major change being the addition of Part Two of the questionnaire. Part One was used to discover what teachers believed regarding teaching students to resolve controversial issues. Part Two was used to determine the extent teachers were providing students the opportunity to study controversial issues. Both parts of the questionnaire were designed to answer the specific questions stated in Chapter I.

Social studies teachers of Norman High School helped select thirty issues which were considered controversial. These issues were included in Part Two of the questionnaire.

A second pre-test was administered to the Norman High School social studies department approximately two months before the questionnaire was used in the investigation. The teachers involved evaluated the items of the questionnaire and made suggestions regarding their construction and worth. Only minimal revision was called for as a result of the second pre-test. A copy of the final form of the questionnaire is included in the appendix.

Considering the importance of the time required of respondents

as a factor in the success of a questionnaire, the overall length was such that it could be completed by most teachers in twenty minutes or less. The structured type of item was chosen over the unstructured type.

A cover sheet with the instructions regarding the questionnaire was made. The cover sheet also provided space for each respondent to give information about himself. The information was used to divide the respondents into six separate categories. These categories were (1) males, (2) females, (3) over forty years of age, (4) less than forty years of age, (5) athletic coaches, and (6) all respondents.

Although an objective evaluation and comparison to which the questionnaire as an instrument of science must subscribe had been made, there remained the task of identifying the specific ways in which the validity would be established. This validation was made possible through the interview which followed the administration of each questionnaire. The interview not only provided information which answered specific questions presented in the statement of the problem, but it permitted comparisons with responses given in the questionnaire. By comparing the oral responses of the interview with the written responses of the questionnaire, the consistency of responses of both instruments were substantiated. These comparisons occurred during the interview.

The basic principles of the interview and the questionnaire are nearly the same. "The questionnaire process is almost identical with the interview, the difference being that interviews are put personally and



directly."<sup>10</sup> Hillway presents principles which are more directly related to the interview. These were followed to develop the interview of this study.

1. Seek the confidence and cooperation of the respondent.
2. Prepare in advance a detailed outline or plan of the complete interview.
3. Explain the purpose and scope of the study as well as the number and type of persons who are being approached for information.
4. State every question clearly and ensure that its full importance is understood by the respondent.
5. Exercise patience.
6. Avoid injecting your own bias into the phrasing of a question or into the intonation of your voice.
7. Do not embarrass the respondent.
8. Do not ask questions that imply accusation or that put the respondent on defense.
9. Learn to record accurately at the time of responses.
10. Learn all you can about the person to be interviewed.
11. Remember that only the very skillful can employ this technique with success.<sup>11</sup>

The interview was pre-tested by administering it to social studies teachers of Norman High School and appropriate revisions followed. The length of the interview depending upon the responses of those being interviewed generally took from seven to ten minutes. Thus the combined

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<sup>10</sup>John C. Almack, Research and Thesis Writing (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), p. 212.

<sup>11</sup>Hillway, op. cit., p. 187.

time required for administering both the questionnaire and the interview of this study was usually twenty-five to thirty minutes. A copy of the interview questions is included in the appendix.

### Procedure of the Study

The high schools which were selected for this study were Booker T. Washington of Tulsa, Charles Page of Sand Springs, Central of Muskogee, College High of Bartlesville, Douglas of Oklahoma City, Duncan, Eisenhower of Lawton, Enid, McAlester, Moore, Northwest Classen of Oklahoma City, Ponca City, Putnam City, Sapulpa, Shawnee, and Will Rogers of Tulsa.

Each principal was written a letter to secure permission to involve his school in the study. In Oklahoma City the request was made through the central office of the Board of Education. Copies of the letter and post card which was to be returned by the school principal are included in the appendix. In some instances it was necessary to provide copies of the instruments and to write subsequent letters. On receipt of the cards granting permission to conduct the study in a particular school, telephone calls were made to the school principal to arrange dates for administration of the questionnaires and interviews.

Two schools, Charles Page of Sand Springs and Sapulpa, chose not to participate in the study. Consequently the final sample consisted of fifteen schools in twelve school districts.

One school day was spent in each of the schools involved in the

study. The questionnaire was administered by the investigator either to one person or to more than one at a time, depending on when teachers were available. Identical instructions were given in each administration and respondents were free to ask questions during the time they completed the questionnaire. After each respondent submitted his completed questionnaire, the instrument was examined to see that each item had been considered and was legible. By examining each questionnaire when it was submitted, follow-up was instant and no later contact with respondents was necessary for clarification as is sometimes the case when questionnaires are mailed. Also the examination of the questionnaire in the presence of the respondent made the validating function of the interview easier.

The interviews were conducted in private and notes were taken by the investigator. The respondents were given the opportunity to read the notes at the close of the interview. The interviews were as uniform as it was possible to make them. In both the interview and questionnaire, instructions assured respondents of the confidentiality of their replies.

Each school was visited only once and consequently those teachers who were absent on the day of visitation were not involved in the study. In a few instances some teachers refused to participate from the beginning and a few failed to appear for their scheduled questionnaire and interview. The total number of teachers in the population as earlier indicated was 291. The total number of social studies teachers teaching in the sample schools was 147. The total number who participated in the

study was 131. Following VanDalen, this number was sufficiently representative for this study.<sup>12</sup>

#### Treatment of the Data

The responses to the questionnaire were tabulated for all respondents and for the various categories into which the respondents were classified. Since the items in Part Two of the questionnaire in some cases called for three responses and these could be in various combinations, the tabulations were made on the basis of the various possible combinations. Part One of the questionnaire called for only one response to each item and was much easier to tabulate. The responses of the interview were classified so they could be tabulated into certain categories also. These tables are presented in Chapter IV. The final tabulations were converted into percentages based on the number of teachers reporting. These percentages were studied in order to gain answers to the questions presented following the statement of the problem.

Following this analysis of data, general conclusions were made concerning the present practices that exist in the teaching of controversial issues in the large high schools of Oklahoma. Based on these conclusions, and what the literature as cited in Chapter II presents as ideal practices in this area, recommendations were made for teaching controversial issues in Oklahoma high schools. These conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.

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<sup>12</sup>VanDalen, op. cit.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

#### General Information

The information obtained by tabulating the returns to the questionnaire and interview is reported and analyzed in this chapter. The findings are reported in terms of the specific questions posed in the statement of the problem presented in Chapter I. Chapter IV begins with question one and proceeds through the eighth question. Summaries in terms of percentages were prepared in tabular form for each item of the questionnaire and interview. The tables relating to each specific question as presented in the statement of the problem follow the respective question. A discussion and analysis of the data follows each table.

The total number of teachers who responded to the questionnaire was 131 and interviews were held with 128 of the 131. The respondents were divided into six categories. These were: (1) all respondents; (2) female respondents; (3) male respondents; (4) respondents forty years of age or older; (5) respondents less than forty years of age; and (6) coaches. The respective percentages of each category were 100 percent, 35 percent, 65 percent, 34 percent, 66 percent, and 20 percent.

It is interesting to note that in the large high schools of Oklahoma,

the number of men who were teaching social studies outnumbered the women nearly two to one. This was surprising since it is only in recent years that men have surpassed women in number as teachers in public high schools and the margin of difference in the overall faculty membership is much smaller. Coincidentally, the ratio of teachers less than forty years of age to those over forty was almost identical to the male-female ratio. The number of teachers under forty years of age outnumbered those over forty nearly two to one.

The stereotype of the social studies teacher for many has been that of a coach, whose major concern is athletics. Only twenty percent of the social studies teachers in this study were also athletic coaches. It is unlikely that this small percentage of social studies teachers can be credited with being the major factor in the high or low quality of the social studies programs. The data presented in the remainder of this chapter indicates that there was considerable similarity in the attitudes and practices of coaches to that of other social studies teachers.

Do Social Studies Teachers in Large Oklahoma Public  
Senior High Schools Believe that Students Should  
Be Taught How to Resolve Controversial Issues?

The portions of the data gathering instruments which provided information required to answer this question were Item One of Part One of the questionnaire and the last interview question.

The last question of the interview requested respondents to make a general statement concerning the teaching of controversial issues.

Among the comments made were those with implications regarding attitudes about the senior high school's responsibility in the area of controversial issues.

Line "a" of Table 1 shows that eighty-nine teachers, representing sixty-eight percent of the respondents believed that the senior high school has a definite obligation to provide students with the information and skills to resolve controversial issues. This number more than doubles those shown by Line "b" who believed that although it is desirable for the high school to prepare students to deal with controversy, it should not be obligatory. Forty-two of the 131 respondents held this latter stated view. These forty-two respondents represented thirty-two percent of the total. No respondent as shown by Line "c" believed the school's primary function is to teach facts and principles and that there is virtually no place in the curriculum for teaching students to resolve issues.

TABLE 1

TEACHER ATTITUDES CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL TO TEACH STUDENTS TO RESOLVE CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	33	72	56	65	31	71	58	67	15	58	89	68
b	13	28	29	35	13	29	29	33	11	42	42	32
c	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\* See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item One to define a, b, and c.

When analyzed by categories of teachers, the percentages for each of the above stated views were very nearly the same for each category. The first viewpoint in all cases was held at an approximate two to one ratio over that of the second view.

During the interviews, the closing question asked for general statements concerning the teaching of controversial issues. Sixty-two of the 128 teachers interviewed, when responding to this question, suggested the school should be doing more than it currently does in the area of controversial issues. This unsolicited idea was the most frequently mentioned idea of all those presented in the general statement by respondents. This represented forty-eight percent of all teachers interviewed. Many others may have expressed the same view if they had been asked a specific question concerning whether the school should do more in this area.

It seemed obvious that all categories of social studies teachers in this study by a ratio of more than two to one not only believed the school is definitely obligated to provide instruction concerning skills and information to resolve controversial issues but they also believed more should be done than has been done to teach students these skills. No member of the sample believed the school should exclude the teaching of these skills. About one-third viewed the function as desirable but not obligatory.

What Methods do Social Studies Teachers in Large Oklahoma Public Senior High Schools Believe to be the Most Effective for Teaching Their Students the Means of Resolving Controversial Issues?

Items Two and Six of Part One of the questionnaire provided



information which indicated the beliefs of teachers concerning the methods for teaching students the attitudes, skills, and information necessary to deal with controversial issues. A variety of comments made by respondents during the interview also had implications concerning method.

Line "c", Table 2 shows that each category contained, for the most part, teachers who believed students should be provided the opportunity to study all sides of current controversial issues and to determine solutions for issues after having applied scholarly problem solving techniques. This represented in each category except coaches a ratio of either five or six to one over the total of the other two possible views expressed in Item Two. Coaches agreed with this method but at a ratio closer to three to one.

TABLE 2  
TEACHER VIEWS REGARDING THE BEST METHODS FOR  
TEACHING STUDENTS HOW TO RESOLVE  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES.\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	6	13	13	15	7	16	12	14	6	23	19	15
b	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	3	2
c	39	85	70	84	36	82	73	84	19	63	109	83

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Two to define a, b, and c.

The second most commonly held view of method as indicated in Line "a" of Table 2 was that the teacher and text should present the facts and principles that students will use as voters and citizens to resolve

controversial issues. This probably means that about fifteen percent of the social studies teachers in this investigation believed that teaching a body of knowledge is the teacher's primary function. These teachers likely were more text and content oriented in their teaching methods. Coaches tended to be slightly more inclined to this position than were the other teachers. Line "b" shows that only three teachers of the 131 in the sample believed students should be taught the solutions to current controversial issues.

The general comments of teachers in the interview supported the responses in the questionnaire. When asked to make a general statement about controversial issues in the schools, a number of comments concerned method. Twenty-one teachers said the teacher's views should not be imposed on students. Fifty-seven said teachers should show all sides of the issue being studied. Three said it was not necessary that the class make decisions about the issue being studied, and seventeen saw the study of controversial issues as a means of teaching problem solving. All of these remarks directly or indirectly supported the dominant view of method expressed by respondents through the questionnaire. Ninety-eight such remarks were made. It seemed clear that an overwhelming majority of the teachers believed students should be given an opportunity to study and make decisions about controversial issues.

Two other remarks that related to method were made with considerable frequency by respondents. Fourteen teachers said that strong emotionalism should not accompany the introduction of controversial

issues. They seemed to be indicating that problems were created when teachers emphasized melodramatically to students that the topic being considered was controversial. Another frequent comment, made thirty times, was that the most important factor about the study of controversial issues was the competency of the teacher and not the explosiveness of the topic. This indicated that a good teacher will introduce issues in a way that effective learning can occur without causing a reaction which would make it difficult to continue the study of the topic. This, if true, demands social studies teachers of the highest quality if the school is to prepare students capable of solving the issues of their day.

Item Six of the questionnaire considered the single source utilized most by students to gain information about a controversial issue. The sources used by students are indicative of teaching methods since the assignments and approaches made by a teacher in large part will determine the sources to be used by students. According to the all respondents category of Line "c", Table 3 the greatest single source used by students was group discussion in which students isolate and develop issues. One wonders where the knowledge for the discussion originated and if there had been very many planned studies of controversial issues which resulted in assignments which required the use of other sources so that discussion would be meaningful.

Table 3 indicates that the categories of teachers defined for this study seemed to differ more on this question than on most of the others posed in the statement of the problem. There was no obvious agreement

on one or two sources that every category of teachers felt was used most by students. The data implies that males, teachers less than forty, and coaches approached the teaching of controversial topics differently from the other categories. More likely, teachers did not know with assurance what sources students used most to gain information about controversial issues.

TABLE 3

THE SINGLE SOURCE UTILIZED MOST BY STUDENTS TO GAIN  
INFORMATION ABOUT A CONTROVERSIAL ISSUE\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	3	7	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	0	3	2
b	13	28	14	16	13	30	14	16	5	19	27	21
c	12	26	33	38	12	27	33	38	11	42	45	34
d	3	7	13	15	2	5	13	15	4	16	15	11
e	15	32	26	30	16	36	25	29	6	23	41	31

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Six to define a, b, c, d, and e.

Line "c" of Table 3 represents group discussion as a source of information. Line "b" represents outside reading and "e" indicates mass communication media. These three areas were collectively mentioned by all categories at a range from eight-two percent to ninety-two percent of all possible responses. As shown by Line "a" only three teachers in the study thought students gained most of their information from text books. Perhaps this was indicative of a need for different types of texts and for more up to date texts. Line "d" shows that ranging from five to

sixteen percent, only a small number felt students gained most of their information about controversial issues from teacher presentations. This meant that teachers did not present very much information on these areas. This did not necessarily mean issues were studied haphazardly or not very often. It could indicate that teachers were organizing learning situations which require students to secure information from other sources. Data analyzed later in the study will indicate the amount of study of controversial issues which exists.

Are Social Studies Teachers in Large Public Senior High Schools of  
Oklahoma Providing Their Students the Opportunity to Study  
Current Controversial Issues?

Three items in Part One of the questionnaire provided information concerning the opportunities students were being provided to study controversial issues. A number of statements made by respondents during the interviews related to whether students were being given the opportunity to study controversial issues. Part Two of the questionnaire provided information regarding thirty current controversial issues and the extent to which each of these had been studied during the school year of the study and during the preceding school year.

Item Three of Part One of the questionnaire dealt with the placement of controversial issues in the secondary school curriculum. This differed from whether teachers believed students should be taught how to resolve controversial issues. It is conceivable that teachers believed students could gain the attitudes, skills, and information necessary to

deal with controversial issues without actual study of current controversial issues.

Regarding the inclusion of specific controversial issues in the curriculum, Line "a" of Table 4 shows that in all categories of teachers except coaches, sixty-three percent to sixty-five percent believed the high school has a definite obligation to provide for the discussion of controversial issues if students are to be educated for life and citizenship in a democracy. Fifty percent of the coaches were in agreement.

TABLE 4

TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PLACEMENT OF  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE SECONDARY  
SCHOOL CURRICULUM.\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	28	63	55	65	28	64	55	63	13	50	83	63
b	13	28	21	25	12	27	22	25	9	34	34	26
c	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	12	3	2
d	4	9	7	8	3	7	8	9	1	4	11	9
e	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Three to define, a, b, c, d, and e.

Line "b" of Table 4 shows that approximately one-fourth of the teachers in each category except that of coaches thought it was desirable for the high school to assume responsibility for dealing with controversial issues, but that it should not be considered obligatory to do so.

Thirty-four percent of the coaches held this view. As shown by Line "c"

only a small number of teachers, three of 128, indicated that issues meeting with local disapproval should be avoided. Interestingly, all three were coaches.

Line "e" shows that no teacher in the study indicated that there was virtually no place in the high school curriculum for the study of controversial issues. Line "d" shows that in all categories, except coaches, seven to sixty-nine percent of the teachers felt only limited space should be given to controversial issues, for all secondary school students should not be expected to deal with issues about which the world disagrees. Four percent of the coaches held this view.

Table 5, Line "b", shows that in all categories of teachers in this study, the most prevalent practice regarding the conditions which determine the frequency that teachers dealt with controversial issues in their class is described in the following sentence: Whenever a controversial issue arises which is related to the material covered in the classroom and is within the range of the knowledge and competence of the students, it is considered. Collectively fifty-eight percent of the respondents expressed this view. The percentage in the female, male, and under forty years of age categories was approximately the same. Seventy-three percent of the coaches indicated this practice to be theirs as did sixty-four percent of the teachers over forty years old.

The practice ranking second concerning frequency of dealing with controversial issues was that of dealing with every significant controversial issue which is of interest to the students and which is within their

maturity level. Table 5, Line "a" shows that twenty-seven percent of all teachers held this view. All categories were very close to this percentage, ranging from twenty-two percent to thirty percent. Data were not available to determine if the subjects a person was teaching corresponded to either of the two views just discussed. It may be that since most social studies classes are chronological history classes, the view of covering a set body of knowledge assisted in causing the practice of covering what arises when it is related to the information being studied rather than studying every significant issue of interest to the students and within their maturity level.

TABLE 5

THE CONDITIONS WHICH DETERMINE THE FREQUENCY  
TEACHERS DEAL WITH CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN  
THEIR CLASSES.\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	10	22	26	31	10	23	26	30	6	23	36	27
b	26	57	50	58	28	64	48	55	19	73	76	58
c	9	20	9	11	5	11	13	15	1	5	18	15
d	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
e	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Five to define, a, b, c, d and e.

Line "c" demonstrates that of the 131 respondents, eighteen or fifteen percent said controversial issues were dealt with only when they had a direct bearing on the work of the class, and when the maturity level



of the students was appropriate. Twenty percent of the females held this view. Eleven percent of the males and eleven percent of those over forty said they dealt only with issues having direct bearing on the work of the class. Fifteen percent of those under forty and five percent of the coaches also followed this practice. Line "d" shows that no respondent said that controversial issues require too much time, and were not considered because there are clear cut answers for them. Only one teacher, a female over forty, said the curriculum (or course of study) made no provision for dealing with controversial issues and therefore no time was devoted to them. This response is shown in Line "e", Table 5.

Item Four of Part One of the questionnaire considered the number of controversial issues studied in the social studies classes of the respondents. Table 6 indicates the extent to which controversial issues are covered in social studies classes of the population. Over half of all the respondents indicated that many of the important issues are included. Line "b" of Table 6 shows that sixty-one percent of all teachers held this view. Fifty percent of the coaches, fifty-five percent of all teachers over forty, fifty-six percent of the males, sixty-four percent of those under forty, and seventy-two percent of the females indicated many important issues were studied.

Line "a" shows that twenty-seven percent of the respondents said most important issues were included in their classes. Nineteen percent of the females said most, but thirty-two percent of the males said most. Thirty-six percent over forty years of age said most and twenty-three

TABLE 6

THE EXTENT TO WHICH IMPORTANT CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES  
ARE COVERED IN SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES.\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	9	19	27	32	16	36	20	23	8	31	36	27
b	33	72	47	56	24	55	56	64	13	50	80	61
c	4	9	11	13	4	9	11	11	5	19	15	11
d	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Four to define a, b, c, and d.

percent under forty said most issues were covered. Thirty-one percent of the coaches said most important issues were included in their classes.

Eleven percent of all respondents as shown by Line "c", said few important issues were included. All other categories but coaches were within two percent of the percentage for all respondents. Line "d" shows that no teacher indicated that none of the important issues were included in their class. The range of difference by the categories of teachers in agreement concerning including most, many, or few important issues in their classes was greater than the differences on other matters of this study.

During the portion of the interview calling for general statements concerning the teaching of controversial issues, several statements related to the opportunity students have to study controversial issues. These remarks came without being asked a specific question concerning the

opportunities students are given to study controversial issues.

Fourteen teachers stated that because of the shortage of time caused primarily because they were trying to cover the text, they could not introduce the study of controversial issues in their classes very often. Thirteen teachers felt only the brighter and/or older and/or more mature students should study controversial issues. This view is indirectly related to method. Since all students are potential decision makers as voters in a democracy, a widespread adoption of this view would leave many future voters less prepared than they should be to vote in elections on the critical issues of the day. Twelve teachers of the 128 interviewed said they did not introduce controversial issues but covered them when they arose in the classroom.

Part Two of the questionnaire included thirty issues considered to be controversial. Teachers were asked to indicate if these issues were studied in their classes during the current school year or during the preceding school year. Teachers indicated whether the particular issue was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail or if the issue was studied in detail.

Table 7 shows the percentages of teachers in this study who provided their students the opportunity to study the issues selected for this study as controversial. The percentages should not be interpreted to be the percentages of students having had an opportunity to study the issue. The teacher may have introduced the issue in only one or in all of his classes. It was possible that the controversial issues were not included

for the most part in the general education social studies classes but only in the elective classes. This would mean that a large number of students who did not choose social studies elective courses had little opportunity to study many important controversial issues. Also there is the possibility that some issues are not included by a teacher because the teacher knows that through a coordinated and articulated school program, the student will be studying or have studied the issue in another social studies class or perhaps in some other field.

An issue may remain controversial for several years; however, there are some issues which remain controversial only for a short time and some which are at times much more of an issue than at other times. Not studying a particular issue when it is the most controversial because the students are to study the issue in another class, perhaps a year later, could result in the issue having subsided or passed. By the time for study, the interest and motivation of the students also may have waned.

Table 7 does give considerable indication of the amount of study of certain controversial issues during most of a two year period in large Oklahoma high school social studies classes. Interestingly, of all the issues selected for the investigation only one was studied in detail in the classes of over fifty percent of the teachers. Communism was studied in detail in the classes of sixty-two percent of the teachers. Organized labor in America was studied in detail in the classes of forty-five percent of the teachers. Quite likely many of these teachers included this topic in American history, a required course for students of this State. No

TABLE 7

THE PERCENTAGES OF TEACHERS WHO ARE GIVING THEIR  
STUDENTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY CURRENT  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES\*

Issues Studied Indirectly or Vaguely	Percent	Issues Studied in Detail
	62	The principles of communism
Student unrest	50	
Compulsory military service	49	
Civil disobedience by organized minority groups		
Capital punishment	48	
The role of the United States in Vietnam	47	
Open housing legislation	46	
Protection of persons accused of crimes	45	Organized labor in America
Equal employment opportunities	44	
Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies		
Deficit spending by the government	40	Public school desegregation
Censorship of entertainment media		The role of the United
The problem of the cities		States in Vietnam
Gun registration	39	
Medical programs sponsored by the government		
Right to work legislation	38	
Distribution of wealth in the United States	37	
	36	Civil disobedience by organ- ized minority groups
Religious observances in public schools	34	The problems of the cities
Reorganization of government structure and process		
Public school desegregation		
Legalization of marijuana and other drugs	33	
Intermarriage of persons of different races		
	30	Student unrest
Teacher militancy	29	
Organized labor in America		
	27	Right to work legislation Compulsory military service

TABLE 7--Continued

Issues Studied Indirectly or Vaguely	Percent	Issues Studied in Detail
		Reorganization of government structure and process
	25	Protection of persons accused of crimes
Legalized abortion	23	
	22	Gun registration
	21	Capital punishment
		Distribution of wealth in the United States
		Legalization of marijuana and other drugs
Principles of communism	20	Deficit spending by the government
Dissemination of birth control information		
Revision of the Oklahoma Constitution	19	
The origin of earth and man	18	Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies
	15	Open housing legislation
		Equal employment opportunities
	14	Religious observances in the public schools
	13	Intermarriage of persons of different races
		Medical programs sponsored by the government
Pre-marital sex	12	Censorship of entertainment media
	11	Legalized abortion
	9	Teacher militancy
	7	Pre-marital sex
		Revision of the Oklahoma Constitution
	6	Dissemination of birth control information
	3	Public aid to parochial schools

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part Two, Responses d and e of Items One through Thirty.

other topic was studied in detail in more than forty percent of the respondents' classes. Five of the remaining twenty-eight topics were studied in detail in from thirty to forty percent of the teachers' classes. Another eight issues were studied in detail in twenty-one to thirty percent of the teachers' classes. Fifteen issues, half of the issues selected for this study, were studied in detail in twenty percent or less of the teachers' classes. Five of the thirty issues were studied in detail in less than ten percent of the teachers' classes. Two of the five issues dealt with sex as did another issue studied in detail in only eleven percent of the teachers' classes. It should be noted that this investigation occurred during a time when sex education in the schools was under heavy attack. Legislation to restrict sex education was introduced in the Legislature. The State Board of Education had groups appealing to it on the issue and the news media gave wide coverage to these activities.

It seems quite obvious that most teachers involved in this study did not provide students with the opportunity to study controversial issues in detail.

A higher percentage of teachers' classes studied the controversial issues isolated for this study either vaguely or indirectly. However, no topic was studied vaguely or indirectly in the classes of more than fifty percent of the respondents. This means that of all thirty issues only one, communism, was studied in the classes of a majority of the teachers.

There were only four issues which were reported to have been studied more in detail than indirectly or vaguely. These were communism,

organized labor, public school desegregation, and the origin of earth and man. Eleven topics of the thirty presented as controversial were studied indirectly or vaguely in forty-one to fifty percent of the teachers' classes. Another nine were studied in thirty-one to forty percent of the respondents' classes. Only three issues were studied indirectly or vaguely in less than twenty percent of the teachers' classes. No issue in the study was included in less than twelve percent of the classes taught by the respondents.

Table 7 indicates that not many teachers are covering in their classes the controversial issues of the day in spite of earlier presented data in which teachers reported beliefs of the schools' responsibilities to include the study of controversial issues. If this data is to be believed, it appears to be a sad commentary for social studies instruction in the large senior high schools of Oklahoma.

A basic right of students is access to the truth. The perpetuation of a democracy depends upon an informed citizenry capable of dealing with the issues of its day.

Do Social Studies Teachers in the Large Senior High Schools  
of Oklahoma Believe that all Controversial Issues are  
Appropriate for Study in Senior High School Social  
Studies Classes?

As earlier indicated, a number of teachers believed that the maturity of the learner is a factor in determining what topics should be studied in social studies classes. This factor of course has implications for the grade level at which required social studies courses are placed. Part Two of the questionnaire asks teachers if they believe if particular



issues should be studied in high school, and if they should be studied in the social studies area. The issues about which these responses were made were selected because they are major controversial issues of our time.

The design of the study instruments provided a great amount of data relevant to the question of appropriateness of controversial issues in the social studies classroom. Within this Section of Chapter IV several tables are included. Table 8 is a long table from which Tables 9, 10, and 11 are deducted. Table 8 is presented because many readers will find the attitudes of the respondents on specific issues to be of interest. The data is analyzed through the discussions of Tables 9, 10, and 11.

Table 9 shows that there were only three of the thirty topics presented that all respondents accepted as appropriate to be taught in senior high schools. These topics were as follows: (1) the role of the United States in Vietnam; (2) civil disobedience by minority groups; and (3) the principles of communism.

Comparisons of the various categories of teachers are likely to be misleading when the percentages of difference are considered on issues where a very small number of all respondents held the view that the topic should not be taught in high school. Seven of the 131 respondents equals five percent. In the categories for coaches, the total number of coaches involved is of such size that a small number can represent a comparatively large percentage. When a very small number of persons of a particular category held a common view, the percentage was not identified. No discussion was made of the differences among the categories of teachers for

TABLE 8

## TEACHERS' OPINIONS REGARDING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF SELECTED CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES FOR HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES

		Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Coaches		Respondents	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Role of the U. S. in Vietnam	a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	85	100	44	100	87	100	26	100	131	100
Compulsory military service	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	b	2	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	5	3	2
	c	44	97	83	98	43	98	84	97	25	95	127	97
Open housing legislation	a	0	0	3	4	0	0	3	3	2	8	3	2
	b	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	c	45	98	82	96	44	100	83	96	24	92	127	97
Gun registration	a	1	2	6	7	2	4	5	6	2	8	7	5
	b	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	3	2
	c	44	96	79	91	41	94	80	92	23	88	121	93
Civil disobedience by a minority group	a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	b	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
	c	46	100	89	99	43	98	87	100	26	100	130	99

Legend: a - should not be studied in high school

b - should be studied in high school but not in social studies

c - should be studied in high school social studies classes

TABLE 8--Continued

		Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Student unrest	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
	b	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	1
	c	44	96	84	99	44	100	84	97	25	96	128	98
Deficit spending by Government	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	84	99	44	100	86	99	26	100	130	99
Public aid to parochial schools	a	3	6	13	15	3	7	13	15	10	38	16	12
	b	1	2	5	6	2	4	4	5	1	4	6	4
	c	42	92	67	79	39	89	70	80	15	58	109	84
Religious observances in public schools	a	5	11	12	14	4	9	13	15	6	23	17	13
	b	1	2	2	2	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	2
	c	40	87	71	84	40	91	71	82	20	77	111	85
Medical care programs sponsored by the government	a	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	3	1	4	3	2
	b	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	c	45	98	82	97	44	100	83	96	25	96	127	97

Legend: a - should not be studied in high school  
 b - should be studied in high school but not in social studies  
 c - should be studied in high school social studies classes

TABLE 8--Continued

		Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Coaches		Respondents	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Censorship of entertainment media	a	1	2	8	9	1	2	8	9	5	19	9	7
	b	5	11	2	2	2	4	5	6	1	4	7	5
	c	40	87	75	89	41	96	74	85	20	77	115	88
Legalized abortion	a	10	22	20	23	14	32	16	18	10	38	30	23
	b	4	9	12	14	4	9	12	14	5	19	16	12
	c	32	69	53	63	26	59	59	68	11	43	85	65
Origin of earth and man	a	2	4	4	5	2	4	4	5	2	8	6	4
	b	13	28	23	27	17	39	19	22	8	31	36	27
	c	31	68	58	68	25	57	64	73	16	61	89	69
Right to work legislation	a	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	4	1	1
	b	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	c	45	98	84	99	43	98	86	99	25	96	129	98
Public school desegregation	a	0	0	2	2	2	4	0	0	1	4	2	1
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	83	98	42	96	87	100	25	96	129	99

Legend: a - should not be studied in high school  
b - should be studied in high school but not in social studies  
c - should be studied in high school social studies classes

TABLE 8--Continued

		Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Coaches		Respondents	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Teacher militancy	a	8	17	22	26	4	9	26	29	9	34	30	23
	b	3	7	2	2	2	4	3	3	1	4	5	4
	c	35	76	61	72	38	87	60	68	16	62	96	73
Reorganization of government structure and process	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	b	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	c	46	100	83	98	44	100	85	98	26	100	129	98
Distribution of the wealth in the United States	a	0	0	4	5	1	2	3	3	2	8	4	3
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	81	95	43	98	84	97	24	92	127	97
Organized labor in America	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	4	1	1
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	84	99	44	100	86	99	25	96	130	99
The principles of communism	a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	b	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
	c	46	100	84	99	43	98	87	100	26	100	130	99

Legend: a - should not be studied in high school  
b - should be studied in high school but not in social studies  
c - should be studied in high school social studies classes

TABLE 8--Continued

		Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Coaches		Respondents	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Revision of the Oklahoma Constitution	a	0	0	3	3	1	2	2	2	0	0	3	2
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	82	97	43	98	85	98	26	100	128	98
The problems of the cities	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	4	1	1
	b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	c	46	100	84	99	44	100	86	99	25	96	130	99
Legalization of marijuana and other drugs	a	1	2	7	8	0	0	8	9	2	8	8	6
	b	4	9	11	13	2	4	13	15	5	19	15	11
	c	41	89	67	79	42	96	66	76	19	72	108	81
Protection of persons accused of crimes	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	b	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	4	2	2
	c	46	100	82	97	44	100	84	97	25	96	128	97
Dissemination of birth control information	a	11	24	21	25	14	32	18	21	8	31	32	24
	b	11	24	17	20	12	27	16	18	7	27	28	21
	c	24	52	47	55	18	41	53	61	11	42	71	55

Legend: a - should not be studied in high school  
b - should be studied in high school but not in social studies  
c - should be studied in high school social studies classes

TABLE 8--Continued

		Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Respondents		Coaches		Respondents	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Equal employment opportunities	a	0	0	3	3	1	2	2	2	1	4	3	2
	b	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	c	46	100	81	96	43	98	84	97	25	96	127	97
Capital punishment	a	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
	b	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	4	2	2
	c	46	100	82	97	44	100	84	97	25	96	128	97
Intermarriage of persons of different races	a	4	9	12	14	4	9	12	14	5	19	16	12
	b	3	7	10	12	5	11	8	9	4	16	13	10
	c	39	84	63	74	35	80	67	87	17	65	112	78
Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies	a	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	1
	b	2	4	1	1	1	2	2	2	0	0	3	2
	c	44	96	82	97	43	98	83	96	26	100	126	97
Pre-marital sex	a	8	17	26	30	17	39	17	19	5	19	34	26
	b	18	39	23	26	14	32	27	31	9	34	41	31
	c	20	44	36	44	13	29	43	50	12	47	56	43

Legend: a - should not be studied in high school  
b - should be studied in high school but not in social studies  
c - should be studied in high school social studies classes

TABLE 9

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVED CERTAIN  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SHOULD NOT BE STUDIED IN  
HIGH SCHOOL\*

Percentage of Respondents	Issue
0	The role of the United States in Vietnam Civil disobedience by organized minority groups The principles of communism
1	Compulsory military service Student unrest Deficit spending by the government Right to work legislation Public school desegregation Reorganization of government structure and process Organized labor in America Problems of the cities Protection of persons accused of crimes Capital punishment Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies
2	Open housing legislation Medical care programs sponsored by the government Revision of the Oklahoma Constitution Equal employment opportunities
3	The distribution of wealth in the United States
4	The origin of earth and man
5	Gun registration
6	Legalization of marijuana and other drugs.
7	Censorship of entertainment media
12	Public aid to parochial schools Intermarriage of persons of different races
23	Legalized abortion Teacher militancy
24	Dessimination of birth control information
26	Pre-marital sex

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part Two, Response b of Items One through Thirty

those topics where only a very small number of all respondents thought the topic to be inappropriate for high school students.



Of the thirty issues, there were eleven that one percent of all the teachers believed should not be taught in high schools. Another four issues were considered to be inappropriate by two percent of the respondents, one more by three percent, another by four percent and another by five percent. Twenty-one of the thirty topics were considered appropriate by ninety-five percent of the respondents. More than five percent of the respondents viewed nine issues as ones that should not be taught in high schools.

Six percent thought that the legalization of marijuana and other drugs should not be studied. Of the categories of teachers, only two percent of the women held this view and no person over forty believed the issue should not be taught.

Seven percent of the respondents believed that the censorship of entertainment media should not be studied. Again the females and the persons over forty had low numbers of people holding this view. Only two percent of each of those categories thought the topic should not be studied. Nineteen percent of the coaches believed the issue should not be studied.

Twelve percent of the respondents believed that the intermarriage of persons of different races and public aid to parochial schools were not suitable topics for study in high schools. Females and those over forty were the lowest in number holding this belief. Ten coaches representing thirty-eight percent of that category believed public aid to parochial schools should not be studied and five percent of the coaches believed that

intermarriage of races should not be studied.

Thirteen percent of the respondents believed religious observances in the public schools should not be studied. The belief by category was similar to the beliefs regarding intermarriage of races and public aid to parochial schools. The females and those over forty were the fewest proportionately holding this view with the men and those under forty next in that order and with the belief being supported to the greatest extent by the coaches.

Twenty-three percent of the teachers of this study thought that teacher militancy should not be studied in the highschools. Possibly the fear of patrons believing teachers were attempting to unethically indoctrinate students caused this to be among the issues thought by the most respondents to be unsuitable for study in the highschool. A general pattern of attitude by category can be seen in all the data thus far presented and the attitudes shown in this area are consistent with that pattern.

The study of legalized abortion, twenty-three percent, dissemination of birth control information, twenty-four percent, and premarital sex, twenty-six percent, were the items thought inappropriate by the most teachers. Approximately one-third of the teachers over forty years of age thought these topics should not be studied in highschools. The least resistance to studying these issues came in the category of teachers under forty years of age. Males and females did not differ appreciably regarding the inclusion of the first two of these issues in the curriculum. More coaches favored the exclusion of legalized abortion and dissemination

of birth control information than did any other category of respondents. However, regarding the study of pre-marital sex, only seventeen percent of the females said it should not be studied while thirty percent of the males held that view.

The touchiest of all the topics were those relating to sex. On most issues, coaches in particular were more opposed to their inclusion than were women. Those over forty years of age were more often fewer than those under forty in their belief that certain topics should not be studied in highschool.

Teachers were given an opportunity to indicate topics that should be studied in highschool but not in the social studies areas. In some instances they chose other areas because of the nature of the topic and its relationship to other areas such as science or English.

Table 10 shows data relating to the controversial issues which teachers of the sample believed should be included in high school social studies classes. Of the thirty issues under consideration nineteen were considered topics which should be studied in the high school social studies by ninety-seven percent or more of the teachers. Only the role of the United States in Vietnam, however, was considered by all teachers to be a topic which should be taught in social studies classes. The fact that only one issue was thought suitable by all respondents may imply that there were among the respondents a very few teachers with poor judgment or unusual ideas and this small number caused some of the issues to receive less than one-hundred percent support for study in the social studies.

TABLE 10

PERCENTAGES OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVED CERTAIN  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SHOULD BE STUDIED IN  
HIGHSCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES\*

Percentage	Issue
100	The role of the United States in Vietnam
99	Civil disobedience by organized minority groups
	Deficit spending by the government
	Public school desegregation
	Organized labor in America
	The principles of communism
	The problems of the cities
98	Student unrest
	Right to work legislation
	Reorganization of government structure and process
	Revision of the Oklahoma Constitution
97	Compulsory military service
	Open housing legislation
	Medical care programs sponsored by the government
	The distribution of wealth in the United States
	Protection of persons accused of crimes
	Equal employment opportunities
	Capital punishment
	Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies
92	Gun registration
88	Censorship of entertainment media
85	Religious observances in public schools
84	Public aid to parochial schools
83	Legalization of marijuana and other drugs
78	Intermarriage of persons of different races
73	Teacher militancy
69	The origin of earth and man
65	Legalized abortion
55	Dissemination of birth control information
43	Pre-marital sex

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part Two, Response c, Items One through Thirty

Otherwise it seemed unlikely that people would disagree that several of

the issues should be studied in the social studies area. The percentage of support was quite high on a number of issues and showed that almost all teachers believed most issues should be included in social studies.

In general the individual age categories of teachers were in agreement with the all respondents category regarding what should be studied in social studies classes. Males were a little less in support of including some issues than were the females. The older teachers, over forty, and the younger teachers were generally similar in attitudes as expressed by percentages. The older teachers exceeded the younger group proportionately in support of seventeen issues. The younger exceeded the older on twelve. They had the same percentage on one issue. Apparently the teachers under the age of forty did differ substantially from older teachers in attitude toward teaching most of these issues.

Table 11 presents data concerning topics that teachers believed should be studied in fields besides social studies. The high percentage of teachers who listed the origin of earth and man as a topic for study in another area is probably an example of this. Twenty-seven percent said the topic should not be included in the social studies curriculum. Thirty-nine percent of teachers over forty believed that this problem should not be handled in the social studies program.

Some teachers believed that certain topics should be taught in special classes organized for that purpose. Some statements made by respondents in the personal interview indicated this to be true. Special classes for sex education was the place where teachers believed some of

TABLE 11

PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS WHO BELIEVED CERTAIN  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES SHOULD BE STUDIED IN  
HIGHSCHOOL BUT IN AN AREA OTHER THAN  
SOCIAL STUDIES\*

Percentage	Issue
0	The role of the United States in Vietnam Deficit spending by the government Public school desegregation The distribution of wealth in the United States Organized labor in America Revision of the Oklahoma Constitution The problems of the cities
1	Open housing legislation Civil disobedience by organized minority groups Student unrest Medical care programs sponsored by the government Right to work legislation Reorganization of government structure and process The principles of communism Equal employment opportunities
2	Compulsory military service Gun registration Religious observances in public schools Protection of persons accused of crimes Capital punishment Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies
4	Public aid to parochial schools Teacher militancy
5	Censorship of entertainment media
10	Intermarriage of persons of different races
11	Legalization of marijuana and other drugs
12	Legalized abortion
21	Dissemination of birth control information
27	The origin of earth and man
31	Pre-marital sex

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part Two, Responses b and c, Items One through Thirty.

these issues should be studied. The three topics with the exception of the origin of earth and man listed most frequently as being ones to be

taught in another area related to sex education. Nearly one teacher in three believed pre-marital sex belonged in another area. One in four believed the study of the dissemination of birth control information should be studied but not in social studies classes. Thirty-nine percent of the females, thirty-four percent of the coaches, thirty-two percent of those over forty, thirty-one percent under forty and twenty-six percent of the males thought the study of pre-marital sex belonged in another field of study. About one in eight teachers believed legalized abortion should be studied in classes other than social studies.

Only two other topics besides those already discussed were believed by ten percent or more of the respondents to be appropriate for study but in other than social studies classes. Ten percent of the respondents thought that inter-racial marriage as a topic did not belong in the social studies. Nineteen percent of the coaches, a greater percentage than any other category, held this view.

Eleven percent of the teachers thought the study of legalization of marijuana and other drugs belonged in another field of study. The greatest holders of this view were the coaches and the least were the females.

Of the thirty topics, twenty-four were thought by five percent or less of the respondents to be topics that should be studied in the high-school in areas other than social studies. The indication is that social studies teachers believed their field to be one in which most controversial issues should be studied.

What Controversial Issues do Social Studies Teachers  
in the Large Senior High Schools of Oklahoma  
Consider to be Difficult or Impossible to  
Deal with Because of  
Community Climate?

During the personal interviews teachers were asked if the climate of the community made the introduction of controversial issues easy or difficult. This was followed by asking what specific issues were difficult or almost impossible to deal with because of attitudes in the community.

Although the teachers from all schools were dealt with as a group, it was apparent during the interviews that the same issues were often considered by teachers of the same community to be difficult to introduce. The nature of the community seemed to have considerable effect on the kind of issues which would create community reactions. Schools located in districts with military bases seemed to view the same issues as ones that could be difficult. Teachers from the two schools located in cities with large oil refineries viewed some of the same issues as ones that would be difficult. The responses of the teachers in the schools which had mostly Negro pupils were similar. In short, the schools, in the judgment of the interviewer, reflected the communities in which they reside.

Table 12 shows that all categories of teachers in this study considered sex to be the item which was the most difficult from the standpoint of community climate. Nearly one-half of all teachers believed this. A possible reason for the feeling was the organized attacks at the time the study was made occurring throughout the State on sex education programs.

The issues next to sex which teachers believed would be the most



TABLE 12

ISSUES CONSIDERED TO BE DIFFICULT OR ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO  
DEAL WITH IN SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES BECAUSE OF  
THE CLIMATE OF THE COMMUNITY\*

	Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
	Respondents	Respondents	Respondents	Respondents	Respondents	Respondents	Coaches	Coaches	Respondents	Respondents	Respondents	Respondents
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sex	17	37	45	55	22	50	40	47	9	36	62	48
Abortion	2	4	6	7	1	2	7	8	2	8	8	6
Open housing	0	0	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	4	2	2
Race and civil rights	14	30	24	29	12	27	36	31	6	24	38	30
Religion	6	13	16	20	8	18	14	17	3	12	22	17
Role of military	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	0	0	4	3
Federal aid and govern- ment control	4	9	4	5	2	5	6	7	0	0	8	6
Leniency on communism	3	7	10	12	6	14	7	8	0	0	13	10
Expressing leftist views	8	17	8	10	8	18	8	10	0	0	16	13
United Nations	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	0	0	3	2
Sympathy with student unrest	0	0	2	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	2	2
Evolution	2	4	7	8	4	9	5	6	0	0	9	7
Labor	2	4	4	5	3	7	3	4	0	0	6	5
Urban renewal	0	0	3	4	0	0	3	4	0	0	3	2
Gun registration	1	2	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	2

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item Two.

difficult to teach because of community climate were those related to civil rights. The year of the study was a year during which some school districts were having desegregation forced on them through the courts. Thirty percent of the teachers listed civil rights as a difficult area. Another two percent listed open housing, which is one aspect of civil rights. Coaches considered civil rights a little less difficult than did other categories of teachers. More contact with Negro athletes may have been a factor here.

Religion ranked third as an area of difficulty. Seventeen percent of all teachers viewed it to be so.

Expressing lenient views toward communism and expressing general leftist views both were regarded as posing difficulty by over ten percent of the teachers. Since expressing leniency toward communism is generally a leftist view, and since advocacy of Federal aid and government control is also regarded by many conservatives as leftist, as many as twenty-five to thirty percent of the respondents considered the expression of leftist views to be difficult.

Whether teachers included in their classes the issues that they considered difficult because of community climate was not determined in the interview. However the data earlier presented regarding the issues teachers had included gave some indication. Issues related to sex seemed to be excluded most in social studies classes and was also the area which most teachers believed difficult to teach because of community atmosphere. The exclusion may in part have occurred because social studies teachers

believed these issues belonged in other fields. Most teachers did include the teaching of civil rights issues in spite of their view that it is difficult. This at least was encouraging but of course the degree and means of teaching them were not determined.

Among the critical problems facing America is the issue of civil rights, particularly as they relate to race. The effectiveness of the schools as they introduce students to this area may very well determine the course of this nation. It seems highly important that schools provide in a diplomatic but productive way the experiences for students that will lead to a greater harmony among the people of this nation.

Are Social Studies Teachers in the Large Senior High  
Schools of Oklahoma Knowledgable of Written  
School Policies Regarding the Teaching of  
Controversial Issues?

The opening question of the interview asked teachers if their school had written policies concerning the teaching of controversial issues. A subsequent question asked that the written policies be described.

Table 13 shows that sixty-three percent of the respondents were not sure or did not know if their school had written policies relating to the teaching of controversial issues. Thirty-three percent indicated that there was not written policy and five percent, or six of 128 respondents said there was written policy in their school. There was specific written policy regarding the study of controversial issues in only one system. Only one teacher in that system was aware that policy existed and he was knowledgable of its contents. One teacher of the six teachers in the study

TABLE 13

PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS KNOWLEDGABLE OF THE EXISTENCE OF  
WRITTEN SCHOOL POLICY ABOUT THE STUDY  
OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES\*

	Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
	Respondents No.	%	Respondents No.	%	Respondents No.	%	Respondents No.	%	Coaches No.	%	Respondents No.	%
There is written policy	1	2	5	6	3	7	3	4	0	0	6	5
There is no written policy	14	30	28	34	17	39	25	30	7	28	42	33
They are not sure or do not know	31	67	49	60	24	55	56	67	18	72	80	63

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item One.

said written policy existed, but that it was only indirectly related to controversial issues. The teacher was not from the system with specific written policies about controversial issues.

Generally the responses of each category of teachers were similar to those of the all respondents category. There were no coaches who said their school had a written statement on controversial issues.

The findings as disclosed in Table 13 may have leadership implications for principals and other school administrators. The fact that there was so much uncertainty about the existence of policy may mean that teachers had not been told if or what policy existed. However, they may have been told but did not listen or remember. Nevertheless, it seems that teachers should know the policies relating to controversial issues and that the instructional leaders have a responsibility to insure this. If policy does not exist, administrators should lead in its development. The review of the literature in Chapter II indicates that written policies should exist and it appears inexcusable that these policies often appear non-existent in many schools. Academic freedom is made doubly difficult in their absence.

Do Social Studies Teachers in the Large Public High  
Schools of Oklahoma Believe that Conditions in  
Their Schools are Conducive to the  
Teaching of Controversial Issues?

During the interview, several open ended questions were asked to determine the feelings teachers had regarding whether the conditions in their schools were conducive to the teaching of controversial issues.

These questions related to community climate, school climate, their own views as compared to their colleagues and their administrators, and whether they had knowledge of teachers being restricted in the area of controversial issues.

Table 14 shows that more than half the teachers in all categories believed that the climate of the community made it easy to include the study of controversial issues in their classrooms. It was interesting that of the fifteen schools in the study, there were four schools, however, which had more teachers who believed the climate was difficult than there were teachers who believed the climate was easy. Thirteen percent of all teachers said they were not sure if the climate was difficult or easy. Teachers who were not sure may be teachers who suspect difficulty but have no concrete evidence of difficulty. If this is true the percentage of all teachers in this study who were anxious about community reaction would be forty-seven percent. Perhaps this is due to the basic conservatism of teachers and their past reluctance to teach controversial issues. Teachers may introduce issues even when they believe community reaction will occur. However, it was demonstrated earlier in this study that teachers were not including the study of a number of controversial issues in their classes. It was also shown that they believed controversial issues should be studied. Maybe they would follow their beliefs more about what should be included if community support for teaching issues was greater. There may be implications concerning the need for competent teachers with the courage to follow their beliefs in spite of anxieties about

TABLE 14

TEACHER VIEWS CONCERNING COMMUNITY CLIMATE REGARDING  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES \*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Easy	27	59	41	50	25	57	43	51	14	56	68	53
Difficult	13	28	31	38	12	27	32	38	10	40	44	34
Not sure	6	13	10	12	7	16	9	11	1	4	16	13

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item Two.

community reaction. It is also possible that many of the fears held by teachers of the community are imagined fears. It seems that school leaders should be asking what can be done to encourage teachers to introduce controversial issues in spite of possible community reaction.

Table 15 indicates the percentages of teacher beliefs about whether the school climate makes the teaching of controversial issues easy or difficult. Eighty-two percent of all respondents thought the school climate made the study of controversial issues easy and another five percent thought the climate encouraged the study of controversial issues. This left only thirteen percent of all teachers in the study who thought the school climate made the study of controversial issues difficult. There was no school which contained more teachers who believed the school climate made the teaching of controversial issues more difficult than it did easy. Apparently teachers felt the school makes it easy, but they were much less sure of the community.

Table 16 indicates the extent to which respondents believed that their views concerning the study of controversial issues agreed or disagreed with their colleagues. This interview question was asked primarily to lead into a following question which compared the respondents' views with his administrators. There is some likelihood however that the views of one's peers may add or detract from the conditions which make conducive the inclusion of controversial issues in social studies classes. The colleagues under consideration were other social studies teachers. Two of three teachers believed that they were in general



TABLE 15  
TEACHER VIEWS CONCERNING SCHOOL CLIMATE REGARDING  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Easy	39	84	66	80	38	86	67	80	21	84	105	82
Difficult	4	9	12	15	4	9	12	14	2	8	16	13
Encourages	3	7	4	5	2	5	5	6	2	8	7	5

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item Three

TABLE 16

BELIEFS OF TEACHERS CONCERNING THEIR AGREEMENT  
WITH COLLEAGUES ABOUT THE TEACHING  
OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Agree	33	72	52	63	28	64	57	68	19	68	85	66
Disagree	7	15	23	28	10	23	20	24	5	20	30	23
Not sure	6	13	7	9	6	14	7	8	1	4	13	10

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item Four.

agreement with their colleagues. A fairly common comment by teachers who thought their views disagreed with fellow teachers was that the other teachers were more conservative. Ten percent of the teachers did not know if their views were similar to their colleagues. There seemed to be among the teachers interviewed a few who did not like to make decisions on questions relating to controversial issues in the schools. The responses by categories of teachers were similar to those of all other respondents.

Table 17 indicates that fifty-nine percent of all respondents thought their views about the study of controversial issues were similar to their administrators. A larger percentage of coaches, sixty-eight percent, believed this than did any other category. Fifty-five percent of the group under forty believed their views were similar to their administrators. This was only four percent less than the total groups' percentage. A greater percentage of coaches believed their views were different from their administration's than did any other group. The reason that proportionately more coaches thought their views were similar and more also thought their views to be different was that proportionately few coaches responded in the not sure category. The comments of most teachers indicated that most teachers thought of their principal as the administration.

There were only two schools of the fifteen in which most teachers felt that their views were not similar to those of their principal. Often teachers seemed unsure about the views of their principal. Many who answered affirmatively did so in a hesitating manner. It seemed that

TABLE 17

BELIEFS OF TEACHERS CONCERNING THEIR AGREEMENT WITH THEIR  
ADMINISTRATORS REGARDING THE TEACHING OF  
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES\*

	Female		Male		Over 40		Less than 40		Athletic		All	
	Respondents No.	%	Respondents No.	%	Respondents No.	%	Respondents No.	%	Coaches No.	%	Respondents No.	%
Similar	29	63	46	56	29	66	46	55	16	68	75	59
Different	77	15	20	23	6	14	21	25	5	25	27	21
Not sure	10	22	16	20	8	18	18	21	3	12	26	20

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item Four

principals did not express their personal views sufficiently for teachers to know with assurance what the principal believed about the study of controversial issues in high school social studies classes. This has significant implications for leadership in the large senior high schools.

Table 18 shows the percentage of teachers who had been restricted or knew of others who had been restricted regarding the study of controversial issues in their school. Only thirty-one percent of the respondents knew of a person being restricted. A restriction was considered to be the following: (1) being asked not to include the study of a subject or topic; (2) being requested not to use certain materials; or (3) being requested not to invite particular resource people to their classes. The percentages for all categories of teachers regarding their knowledge of restrictions were similar. If a restriction occurred in a school, sometimes several teachers reported it so the percentages listed do not indicate the percentage of restrictions. It is surprising that a larger percentage was not aware of a fellow teacher having been restricted. Teachers may pass on this kind of information to their colleagues less than some persons suppose. Also the restriction may have occurred before the teacher being interviewed taught in the school.

The following are some of the issues for which teachers have been restricted. Restrictions on sex related topics were mentioned by teachers in six schools, and teachers mentioned being restricted from espousing left wing views in four schools. In two schools teachers were reported to have been restricted from the teaching of religion. In three, school

TABLE 18

THE EXTENT TO WHICH TEACHERS WERE KNOWLEDGABLE OF TEACHERS BEING RESTRICTED FROM TEACHING CERTAIN CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
They knew of persons being restricted	14	30	26	32	16	36	24	28	8	32	40	31
They did not know of persons being restricted	32	70	56	68	28	64	60	72	17	68	88	69

\*See Appendix D, Sequence of Interview Items, Item Five

community text book committees had exerted enough pressure to bring about restrictions. Two of these text book committees were no longer active. In three schools it was reported that there had been restrictions on bringing in visitors.

An important inference made by several persons was that where restrictions had occurred, they were needed because of poor judgment and/or practice on the part of the teacher who had been restricted. The implication was that the way a teacher handles an issue is more likely to cause restrictions than what the issue is. This does not necessarily mean certain types of indoctrination are condoned but that when excessive sensationalism, emotionalism and other poor teaching practices occur, supervision becomes necessary. In the judgment of the interviewer, the restrictions cited usually occurred because of the way the issue had been handled rather than its actually having been taught. It seems that by upgrading the quality of teachers, great gains could be made in terms of the acceptance of controversial issues in the classroom.

Do Social Studies Teachers in Large Oklahoma Public  
Senior High Schools Make a Planned Effort to  
Provide Students with the Opportunities  
to Develop Values Which Will Assist  
Them to Resolve Controversial  
Issues Effectively?

Item Seven of Part One of the questionnaire requested information from teachers regarding the conditions which existed in the schools of the study concerning the teaching of basic values. Table 19 shows the condition as expressed by the respondents.

Table 19, Line "b" shows the view held by fifty-four percent of the teachers of the study was that the general objectives of the school included the teaching of values as an educational goal, but little beyond that insured the teaching of the values. The range of percentages reporting this view by category was from forty-five to sixty-nine percent. Teachers over forty expressed this view the least. Coaches expressed it in the greatest proportion.

TABLE 19

THE BELIEFS OF THE RESPONDENTS CONCERNING THE  
TEACHING OF BASIC VALUES IN THEIR SCHOOL\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	9	20	25	29	9	20	25	29	4	16	34	26
b	29	63	42	50	20	45	51	59	18	69	71	54
c	0	0	4	5	2	5	2	2	0	0	4	3
d	8	17	14	16	13	30	9	10	4	16	22	17

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Seven to define a, b, c, and d.

The next highest expressed view was that there was virtually no direct planning within the school to insure that teachers include the teaching of values in the classroom. This view is shown by Table 19, Line "c" and ranged by category from sixteen to twenty-nine percent with the coaches expressing the view the least and those under forty and the males expressing it most.

Thirty percent of the teachers over forty, as shown by Line "d",



said that almost without exception social studies teachers have written specific objectives for each unit to determine which values are being stressed within the unit and they made a definite effort to know what values are being taught and when. Only seventeen percent of all respondents held this view. Perhaps the older teachers were doing more in the area of values.

Line "c" shows that three percent of the teachers said the social studies department had developed objectives and guidelines to insure that values had been taught but that most teachers disregard them.

Decisions about controversial issues are made within the framework of a value system. This study indicates that little planned instruction regarding basic values existed in the schools of this study. Lack of time for planning may contribute to the lack of planning as well as the priority given certain topics in the planning time.

The values of the teachers themselves will determine to some extent the kind of teaching which will occur in the teaching of basic values and controversial issues. For this reason Item Eight of Part One asked about individual rights which reflected the values of the respondents. In order to have an informed citizenry, an essential for a democracy, a free market of ideas is necessary. Respondents were asked their beliefs concerning freedom of speech, press, assembly, and dissent. Table 20 shows these views.

Line "c" of Table 20 indicates that sixty-three percent of the respondents believed restrictions should exist if the freedom infringes on

TABLE 20

THE VIEWS OF RESPONDENTS CONCERNING THE FREEDOMS OF  
SPEECH, PRESS, ASSEMBLY, AND DISSENT\*

	Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Over 40 Respondents		Less than 40 Respondents		Athletic Coaches		All Respondents	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
a	6	13	8	9	6	14	8	9	3	12	14	17
b	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
c	29	63	53	62	27	61	55	63	13	50	82	63
d	10	22	24	28	10	22	24	28	10	38	34	26

\*See Appendix C, Questionnaire, Part One, Item Eight

the rights of others, but the infringement should first be clearly demonstrated. This indicated an understanding of freedom by most of the teachers of the study.

Seventeen percent of the teachers of the study, as shown by Line "a", believed these freedoms should exist without restriction. Perhaps they were concerned about who or what criteria would determine infringement or the condition of mentally incompetent. Line "b" indicates that only one percent of the respondents said restrictions should exist only for young children, mentally incompetent and convicted criminals.

Line "d" shows that slightly more than one in four respondents, twenty-six percent, believed that freedom of expression can easily be extended too far with the result of protecting an individual or minority at the expense of the majority. The word easily is a key word in analyzing this response. It may mean that one in four are somewhat reluctant to permit the basic freedoms of expression so vital to the development of

an informed electorate. If this is so, it is a dangerously high percentage.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The problem of this study was to determine if social studies teachers in large Oklahoma high schools are committed to teaching their students the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to resolve significant controversial issues. More specifically the study answered the following questions:

1. Do social studies teachers in large public senior high schools believe that students should be taught how to resolve controversial issues?
2. What methods do social studies teachers in large Oklahoma public senior high schools believe to be the most effective for teaching their students the means of resolving controversial issues?
3. Are social studies teachers in large public senior high schools of Oklahoma providing their students the opportunity to study current controversial issues?
4. Do social studies teachers in the large public senior high schools of Oklahoma believe that all controversial issues are appropriate for study in senior high school social studies classes?
5. What controversial issues do social studies teachers in the large senior high schools of Oklahoma consider to be difficult or impossible

to deal with because of community climate?

6. Are social studies teachers in the large senior high schools of Oklahoma knowledgeable of written school policies regarding the teaching of controversial issues?

7. Do social studies teachers in the large public senior high schools of Oklahoma believe that conditions in their schools are conducive to the teaching of controversial issues?

8. Do social studies teachers in large Oklahoma public senior high schools make a planned effort to provide students with the opportunity to develop moral and political values which will assist them to resolve controversial issues effectively?

9. Do social studies teachers in large Oklahoma public senior high schools when categorized by age, sex, or athletic coaching generally respond similarly to all of the teachers included in this study?

The investigator assumed that schools do have a responsibility to teach students to deal with controversial issues. Basic to this assumption is the idea that the success of a democracy rests upon an informed citizenry capable of making decisions about the issues of its day. Equally basic to this assumption is the concept that students have a human right to access to the truth. Those in education who fully understand the concept of the rights of free men in our society will take the necessary steps to accord those rights in so far as possible to high school students. The extension of such rights includes the study of controversial issues.

In order to accomplish this investigation, descriptive research

methodology was used. More specifically, the descriptive research employed a questionnaire in combination with the personal interview technique. The tabulated data were converted into percentages which were studied to gain answers to the questions presented in the statement of the problem.

Fifteen public senior high schools of Oklahoma with an enrollment of more than one-thousand students made up the schools in the sample. One hundred and thirty-one social studies teachers in the sample schools participated in the study.

#### Summary of the Findings

1. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents believed the senior high school has a definite obligation to provide students with the information and skills to resolve controversial issues.

2. Thirty-two percent of all respondents believed it is desirable but not obligatory for the high schools to provide students with the information and skills to resolve controversial issues.

3. There were no respondents who believed the school's primary function is to "teach facts and principles and that there is virtually no place in the curriculum for teaching students to resolve controversial issues."

4. Based on unsolicited comments in the interviews, teachers believed the schools should be doing more to provide students with the information and skills to resolve controversial issues.

5. Regarding method, eighty-three percent of the respondents believed students should be provided the opportunity to study all sides of current controversial issues and to determine solutions for issues after having applied scholarly problem solving techniques.

6. Only fifteen percent of the respondents believed the teacher and text should present the facts and principles that students will use as voters and citizens to resolve controversial issues.

7. Only two percent of the respondents believed that students should be taught the solutions to current controversial issues.

8. There was an indication from unsolicited comments in the interviews that teachers opposed the introduction of controversial issues in ways that would create excessive emotionalism and that the competencies of the teachers were considered important when an explosive issue was introduced.

9. There was no obvious agreement among the respondents concerning the greatest single source from which students gain information about controversial issues.

10. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents reported that they study controversial issues in their classes when the issues arise, are related to the materials being studied, and are within the range of knowledge and competence of the students.

11. Twenty-seven percent of the teachers said they dealt with every controversial issue which is of interest to the students and which is within the maturity level of the students. Obviously seventy-three

percent avoided some of these issues.

12. Fifteen percent of the respondents dealt with controversial issues in their classes only when the issue was directly related to the class content and within the maturity level of the students.

13. Sixty-one percent of the teachers said they covered many of the important controversial issues in their classes. Twenty-seven percent said they covered most important issues and eleven percent said they covered few of the important issues in their classes. A number of teachers in the interviews stated they did not introduce controversial issues, but they covered them if they arose.

14. The interviews indicated that a concern for covering a set body of information from the text, usually a chronologically arranged history text, limited the time that could be spent on the study of controversial issues.

15. There was also some indication from the interviews that a number of teachers believed that only the older, brighter, and more mature students should study controversial issues.

16. When questioned about thirty specific issues considered to be controversial, only one was reported to have been studied in detail in classes of more than fifty percent of the teachers. Five issues were studied in detail in the classes of thirty to forty percent of the teachers. Eight were studied in detail in the classes of twenty to thirty percent of the teachers and fifteen, or half of the issues, were studied in detail in the classes of twenty percent or less of the teachers.



17. Of the thirty topics presented, no issue was studied indirectly or vaguely in the classes of more than fifty percent of the teachers. Eleven of thirty issues were studied indirectly or vaguely in the classes of forty-one to fifty percent of the teachers. Twelve more were studied in the classes of thirty-one to fifty percent of the teachers. Five issues were studied indirectly or vaguely in the classes of twenty to thirty percent of the teachers and three were likewise studied in the classes of less than twenty percent of the teachers.

18. Of thirty important current controversial issues, twenty-one were considered to be appropriate for study in high school by ninety-five percent of the respondents. Approximately one of every four respondents opposed the study of teacher militancy, legalized abortion, dissemination of birth control information and pre-marital sex. There were only three issues considered appropriate by all respondents. These were the role of the United States in Vietnam, civil disobedience by organized minority groups, and the principles of communism.

19. Regarding the study of the same thirty issues in social studies classes, nineteen were considered suitable by ninety-seven percent of the teachers. Only one was considered appropriate for social studies by all respondents.

20. Thirty percent of the respondents believed the study of pre-marital sex belonged in classes other than the social studies. Twenty-seven percent believed the study of the origin of earth and man belonged in another area. Twenty-one percent believed the study of the dissemination

of birth control information belonged in another area. The other twenty-seven topics of the thirty presented were considered by at least eighty percent of the respondents to be appropriate for study in social studies classes.

21. Teachers of the same community were generally in agreement concerning the issues that are considered difficult or impossible to teach because of community climate.

22. Nearly half of the teachers considered the study of issues concerned with sex to be difficult or impossible to teach because of community climate. Thirty percent listed civil rights issues, twenty-five percent listed the study of leftist views, and seventeen percent considered the study of religion to be difficult or impossible because of community climate.

23. Topics related to sex were considered inappropriate by more respondents than any other topic because they were: (1) not believed to be related to subject content; (2) because of the age and maturity level of high school students; and (3) because of the taboo attitudes about sex of the society in general which are reflected in the attitudes of social studies teachers.

24. Sixty-three percent of the respondents either did not know or said they were unsure whether their school had a written policy about the teaching of controversial issues. Thirty-three percent said there was no written policy. Only one system had a specific written policy about controversial issues and only one teacher of that system was aware of it.

25. Fifty-three percent of the respondents believed the climate of the community made it easy to include the study of controversial issues in their classrooms. However there were four of fifteen schools in which more than half of the teachers believed the climate made the study of controversial issues difficult. Thirteen percent of the teachers were unsure whether the community climate made the study of controversial issues easy or difficult.

26. Eighty-two percent of the teachers of this study believed the climate of the school made the study of controversial issues easy and another five percent believed the school climate encouraged the teaching of controversial issues. There was no school in the study in which a majority of teachers believed their school's climate made the study of controversial issues difficult.

27. Two of every three teachers believed that their views concerning the teaching of controversial issues generally agreed with their fellow teachers. A fairly common comment was that the respondent believed he was slightly more liberal than his colleagues. Fifty-nine percent believed they agreed with their administration's views. Many teachers seemed to be unsure of their administrators' views. In two of fifteen schools, more than half of the teachers believed their views were different from the administrations'.

28. Thirty-one percent of the teachers reported knowledge of a teacher being restricted from dealing with a controversial issue in their classroom. Many times the teachers were reporting the same incident.

A frequent comment in the interview was that the restriction was justified because of poor judgment on the part of the restricted teacher.

29. Fifty-four percent of the respondents reported that the general objectives of the school included teaching values as an educational goal, but little beyond that insured the teaching of values. Twenty-six percent said there was virtually no direct planning within the school to insure that teachers included the teaching of values in their classrooms.

30. Sixty-three percent of the respondents believed freedom of expression should be restricted when the freedom infringes on the rights of others, but infringement should be clearly demonstrated. Seventeen percent believed freedom of expression should exist without restriction and twenty-five percent believed freedom can easily be extended too far with the result of protecting an individual or minority at the expense of the majority.

31. Generally the respondents when categorized by age, sex, and coaching athletics were similar in their responses. A greater percent of coaches tended to be at one end of the range on several of the questions. They were less likely to believe the school had an obligation to provide students the opportunity to study controversial issues. They were less likely to introduce specific issues as a means of teaching students to resolve controversial issues and a greater percentage said few controversial issues were studied in their classes. Coaches to a greater percentage than any other group favored excluding the study of legalized abortion and the dissemination of birth control information. Coaches more than

others believed their views about the teaching of controversial issues agreed with their administrators and they were more certain concerning whether written policy on teaching controversial issues existed. They believed teaching civil rights issues to be less difficult than did the other groups. They reported to a greater extent that little planning for the teaching of values existed and they to a greater percent than any other group said that freedom of expression could easily be extended too far at the expense of the majority.

32. When considering thirty controversial topics, teachers over forty years of age exceeded proportionately those under forty in support of seventeen issues as appropriate for study in high schools. Those under forty exceeded those over forty on twelve issues and the two groups were equal on one issue. Greater percentages of older teachers opposed including the study of topics related to sex than did those teachers less than forty years of age.

### Conclusions

1. Considered as a group, social studies teachers in the large public senior high schools of Oklahoma believed students should be taught how to resolve controversial issues.

2. Considered as a group, the respondents of this investigation believed the best means for teaching students to resolve controversial issues is to select some of the issues for study and to give the students practice in dealing with them.

3. Social studies teachers in the large public senior high schools of Oklahoma have not provided their students sufficient opportunity to study current controversial issues. Generally topics have been studied as they have arisen. Planning has, therefore, been lacking and students have been denied the benefits of comprehensive effective instruction which would add to their ability to become citizens capable of resolving the issues of their day.

4. The respondents of this investigation believed that many controversial issues were appropriate for study in senior high school social studies classes. However, they believed the social studies is a major area for the teaching of most of the controversial issues related to the content of typical social studies classes. Those less related to typical class content were believed by some teachers to be appropriate for other areas. Some topics were opposed because of the maturity of the learner. It is highly probable that many of the issues which teachers judge to be unsuitable for high school social studies classes are considered so because teachers fear adverse reaction from the community.

5. Issues dealing with sex, civil rights, "leftist views," and religion, in the order listed, were considered by the teachers of this investigation to be the most difficult or impossible to deal with because of community climate. The intense attacks occurring throughout the state on sex education at the time of the study as well as the publicity being given to desegregation which was being forced on several schools at the time of the study contributed to the belief that topics related to sex and

civil rights were difficult to deal with in the classroom. The responses of teachers of the same community tended to reflect the views of their community.

6. It was indeed distressing to learn that teachers in general were uninformed regarding the existence of school policies on the topic of controversial issues. Frequently teachers believed there was policy when there was none.

7. The respondents of this study as a group did not believe that the conditions of their schools promoted or encouraged the teaching of controversial issues. However, teachers generally felt that the conditions of the school did not prevent the teaching of controversial issues. Teachers did not feel threatened by the school climate to the extent that they felt threatened by the community climate. However there was some uncertainty in most schools about the position of the administration concerning the teaching of controversial issues and this may have contributed to the situation in which teachers often did not include the study of controversial issues even though they profess to believe the school should teach students how to resolve them.

8. There is generally no coordinated planned effort in the large public senior high schools of Oklahoma to provide students with the opportunities to develop moral and political values which will assist them in resolving controversial issues effectively.

9. When categorized by age, sex, or athletic coaching, social

studies teachers of this study were generally similar to all the teachers of the study. However, coaches tended to be more conservative in their views and teachers over forty years of age were more tolerant of including controversial issues with the exception of sex related issues than were teachers under forty. The older teachers likely were more acceptive because their experience caused them to be more secure in their jobs and it also demonstrated the need for making instruction relevant.

10. Based on the preceding conclusions, social studies teachers in large public senior high schools of Oklahoma have not been sufficiently committed to teaching their students the attitudes, skills, and knowledge necessary to resolve significant controversial issues. Teachers gave verbal committment which was not supported by what they said they did in the classroom. Apparently this vital area of education for citizens of a democracy has had either a very low priority or has been almost completely neglected in the classrooms of most social studies teachers of this investigation.

11. The chief reason for this condition has been the failure of superintendents and principals to create an atmosphere that: (1) demonstrated to the school and the public the importance of teaching all students to resolve controversial issues; (2) included written policies giving guidelines concerning the selection and teaching of controversial issues; (3) provided the supervision, teacher training, planning time, and materials which facilitate, and implementation of programs which include teaching all students to resolve controversial issues; and (4) provided teachers



security against reprisal from the community or school administrators.

12. Teachers and teacher education institutions must share some of the blame for the negligence that has existed in social studies classes regarding teaching students to resolve controversial issues. According to this study there are schools and communities in which the inclusion of controversial issues has been easy even though the school has not promoted their teaching. Yet the majority of teachers have neglected the area. The institutions which provide the specialized education of teachers and administrators apparently have produced teachers and administrators who have not been committed to teaching students to resolve controversial issues.

### Recommendations

1. Schools should take the steps necessary to provide as a part of the general education of all students the attitudes, skills, and knowledge required to resolve controversial issues.

2. The social studies classes should be a major area for this function.

3. The social studies requirements for all high school students should be organized so that all students gain practice in dealing with controversial issues in all social studies classes. Juniors and/or seniors in particular should be enrolled in classes in which controversial issues are studied. Two or more social studies units in grades ten, eleven, or twelve are recommended as requirements. If students are

provided the opportunity to study specific issues in only one year, the senior year is preferable because the students are older and will be more likely to deal with issues effectively.

American history is a requirement for all students in Oklahoma high schools. It is recommended that the emphasis in American history courses, regardless of the year offered, be away from a chronological text book oriented approach toward a problem centered approach with the central emphasis on a study of specific current controversial issues, the historical development of those issues, and an understanding of moral and political values and human rights which are basic to our democracy.

It is recognized that some schools will not abandon their present chronological method of teaching American history. In these schools and in schools where American history is taught in grade ten, it becomes increasingly important that students have an additional unit of social studies which has the study of specific current controversial issues as a prime emphasis.

4. Written board of education policy should exist which encourage the inclusion of controversial issues in the classroom.

5. Objectives and curriculum guides should be developed by the professional staff to encourage teachers to introduce controversial issues in their classes, which give criteria for the selection of such issues, and which suggest the methods to be utilized for studying controversial issues.

6. Adequate instructional materials for studying current controversial issues should be made available.

7. Schools should provide in-service education and planning time to insure that the preceding recommendations are carried out.

8. Schools should provide protection and support for teachers when unjustifiable complaints, requests, and demands are made.

9. The program to insure the inclusion of controversial issues in the schools should be developed under the leadership of school administrators through cooperative study and discussion with their professional staff and with individuals and groups in the community.

10. If leadership by administrators is lacking, teachers through their professional organizations should provide the impetus that results in school programs where controversial issues are studied. It is also desirable that boards of education and/or community groups could do the same.

11. Teacher education institutions should strive to develop teachers and administrators who are committed to teaching students the attitudes, skills, and knowledge to resolve controversial issues.

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## APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

911 West Main  
Norman, Oklahoma 73069  
February 20, 1969

\_\_\_\_\_, Principal  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ High School  
\_\_\_\_\_, Oklahoma

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

During the remainder of this school year, it is my hope to complete a study concerning the teaching of controversial issues in the social studies classes of the Oklahoma senior high schools which have more than one thousand students. Your school is a school which falls in this category.

My method for gathering data is a questionnaire combined with an interview. Information is to be obtained from social studies teachers. The purpose of this letter is to request permission to spend a day in your school interviewing your social studies teachers and administering a questionnaire to them during their planning period or before or after school. The questionnaire can be administered in a group situation so it could be given to several teachers simultaneously who have a common planning period. The questionnaire will require approximately twenty minutes.

Interviews will require approximately fifteen minutes each and one is to be held with each social studies teacher. This too could occur during the planning period or at another time of your choosing which would not interrupt the instructional program.

The responses of each teacher will remain anonymous. No effort will be made to compare specific schools or teachers. The purpose of

the study is to determine the extent to which social studies teachers are committed to teaching their students the means of resolving controversial issues.

If you need more information to decide whether it is possible for your teachers to participate, I will provide you with a copy of the questionnaire and interview questions. Hopefully, your school can be visited in \_\_\_\_\_ . A post card is enclosed. Please complete this card and return it to me. After the cards are received by me each principal of the schools to be involved in the study will be contacted by telephone to arrange a day for my visit.

I am hopeful you will permit this study in your school. It may provide information which will lead to an improvement of the social studies in Oklahoma. Requests such as this require time from your busy schedule. Your help is greatly appreciated. Without your help and that of other principals, the study will not be possible.

Cordially,

Bert Corr

BC:rb

Enc: 1 (to be returned)

APPENDIX B

POSTCARD RETURNED BY PRINCIPALS

1. Our school will participate in the study of controversial issues. Please telephone to arrange a visiting date.
2. Our school does not desire to participate in the study of controversial issues.
3. Please telephone and provide more information about the study before we decide whether our school can participate in the study of controversial issues.

\_\_\_\_\_  
School Name



APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS

As you read the newspapers, listen to the radio and watch television programs, you must be impressed as I am with the ever increasing number of controversial issues which are arising in our present-day society. The solutions to these will ultimately affect both the young and old of our state. Therefore, I have chosen to study the teaching of controversial issues in the large senior high schools of Oklahoma.

The questionnaire will require about twenty minutes of your time. Please do not identify yourself by name on the questionnaire since I am anxious that complete anonymity characterize the returns.

So that we may understand each other, I have adopted the following definition: An issue is controversial when one or more of its proposed solutions conflicts with the cherished attitudes or beliefs of a group of individuals.

I do sincerely appreciate your giving time for the questionnaire and interview which will follow. It is obvious that the study could not occur without your help. Please complete the following items about yourself and proceed to the questionnaire contained on the following pages.

Are you married? \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years of teaching experience \_\_\_\_\_

Subject taught each period of the day

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Is social studies your major area of certification? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are a woman, does your husband own a business? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your highest degree earned? \_\_\_\_\_

### Questionnaire

#### Part One

Please check only one response for each item in Part One.

1. Which of the following most nearly represents your attitude toward the responsibility of the senior high school to teach students to resolve controversial issues?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. The senior high school has a definite obligation to provide students with the information and skills to resolve controversial issues.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. Although it is desirable for the high school to prepare students to deal with controversial issues, it should not be considered obligatory.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. The school's primary function is to teach facts and principles and there is virtually no place in the curriculum for teaching students to resolve controversial issues.
  
2. If you believe the school does have a responsibility for teaching students to resolve controversial issues, which of the following statements best represents your view of how students are best taught to resolve controversial issues?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. The teacher and text should present the facts and principles that students will use as voters and citizens to resolve controversial issues.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. Students should be introduced to current controversial issues and they should be taught the solutions to these issues.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. Students should be provided the opportunity to study all sides of current controversial issues and to determine solutions for the issues after having applied scholarly problem solving techniques.
  
3. Which of the following statements most nearly represents your attitude toward the placement of controversial issues in the secondary school curriculum?
  - \_\_\_\_\_ a. The high school has a definite obligation to provide for the discussion of controversial issues if it is going to educate students for life and citizenship in a democracy.

- b. Although it is desirable for the high school to assume responsibility for dealing with controversial issues, it should not be considered obligatory to do so.
  - c. Some controversial issues are legitimately a part of the high school program, but those issues that meet with local community disapproval must be avoided.
  - d. There is only a limited place for controversial issues in the high school curriculum, for all secondary school students cannot be expected to deal with issues about which the adult world disagrees.
  - e. The primary function of high school education is to teach facts and principles and there is virtually no place for controversial issues in the high school curriculum.
4. If you believe there are some issues which students of high school age might find controversial and yet are within their maturity level, please answer the following question.
- Is treatment of controversial issues and problems provided within the framework of the regular social studies classes in your school?
- a. Most of the important issues are included.
  - b. Many of the important issues are included.
  - c. Few of the important issues are included.
  - d. None of the important issues are included.
5. Which of the following conditions most nearly represents the frequency with which you deal with controversial issues in your classes?
- a. Every significant controversial issue which is of interest to the students and which is within their maturity level.
  - b. Whenever a controversial issue arises which is related to the material covered in the classroom and is within the range of the knowledge competence of the students, it is considered.
  - c. Controversial issues are dealt with only when they have a direct bearing on the work of the class, and the maturity level of the students indicates they would profit from such a study.
  - d. Controversial issues require too much time, and since there are often no clear cut answers for them, they are not considered.
  - e. The curriculum (or course of study) makes no provision for dealing with controversial issues and therefore no time is devoted to them.
6. If you introduce controversial issues in your classroom, which of the following sources do students utilize most to gain information about an issue?
- a. Text-book regularly used by the students.
  - b. Outside reading done by the students.
  - c. Through group discussions in which students isolate and develop the issue.

- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Through teacher presentations.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Through mass communication media.
7. Students who are given an opportunity to study controversial issues will make decisions about the issues within the framework of their values system. Which of the following most nearly represents the condition which exists in your school regarding the teaching of basic values such as the importance of the individual?
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. There is virtually no direct planning within the school to insure that teachers include the teaching of values in the classroom.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. The general objectives of the school include the teaching of values as a goal, but little beyond that insures the teaching of values.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. The social studies department has developed objectives and guidelines to insure that values are taught but most teachers disregard them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Almost without exception social studies teachers have written specific objectives for each unit to determine which values are being stressed within the unit and they make a definite effort to know what values are being taught and when.
8. In order to have a thoroughly informed citizenry, an essential for a democracy, a free market of ideas is necessary. Related to a free market of ideas are freedom of speech, press, assembly, and dissent. Which of the following most nearly represents your values concerning these freedoms?
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. These freedoms should exist without restriction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Restrictions should exist only for young children, mentally incompetent, and convicted criminals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Restrictions should exist if the freedom infringes on the rights of others, but the infringement should first be clearly demonstrated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Freedom of expression can be easily extended too far with the result of protecting an individual or minority at the expense of the majority.

### Part Two

Below is a list of topics frequently considered controversial. Please check the appropriate answer for each regarding your belief as to their appropriateness for study and as to the degree they were studied in your classes. More than one response may be checked in Part Two. As many as three responses may be checked if you believe the topic should be studied in high school, that social studies is the appropriate area for study of the issue and if you select either d, e, or f to indicate the consideration the topic had in your class.

1. The role of the United States in Vietnam.
  - a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
  
2. The aspects of compulsory military service.
  - a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
  
3. Open housing legislation.
  - a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
  
4. Gun registration.
  - a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.

- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
5. Civil disobedience by organized minority groups.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
6. Student unrest.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
7. Deficit spending by government.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
8. Public aid to parochial schools.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.

- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
9. Religious observances in public schools.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
10. Medical programs sponsored by the government.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
11. Censorship of entertainment media and literature.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

## 12. Legalized abortion.

- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

## 13. The origin of the earth and man.

- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

## 14. Right to work legislation.

- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

## 15. Public school desegregation.

- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.



- \_\_\_\_\_ f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
16. Teacher militancy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
17. Reorganization of governmental structure and process (judicial, legislative, etc.).
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
18. The distribution of wealth in the United States.
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
19. Organized labor in America.
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Should be studied in senior high schools.

- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
20. The principles of communism.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
21. Revision of the Oklahoma constitution.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
22. The problems of the cities.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

23. Legalization of marijuana and other drugs.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
24. Protection of persons accused of crimes.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
25. Dissemination of birth control information.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
26. Equal employment opportunities.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
  - b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
  - c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
  - d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
  - e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.

- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
27. Capital punishment.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
28. Intermarriage of persons of different races.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.
29. Failure to salute the flag or show it other courtesies.
- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

## 30. Pre-marital sex.

- a. Should not be studied in senior high schools.
- b. Should be studied in senior high schools.
- c. Should be studied in social studies classes.
- d. Was studied vaguely or indirectly but not in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- e. Was studied in detail in my class or classes either this school year or last school year.
- f. An appropriate issue which was not studied in my class because other issues had higher priority or because the issue was covered elsewhere in an articulated social studies program.

## APPENDIX D

### SEQUENCE OF INTERVIEW ITEMS

1. Does the school have written policies regarding the teaching of controversial issues?

This is a question which could have been on the questionnaire but was easily answered and helped to establish a good start on the oral questions. If the answer was yes, the teacher was asked to describe the written policy.

2. Does the climate of the community make the inclusion of controversial issues in a classroom easy or difficult?

If the response indicated difficulty, another question was asked. What issues in your judgment are difficult or almost impossible to deal with because of the climate?

3. If the school had written policy, the teacher was asked the following question: Do the written policies of the school reflect the actual climate of the school concerning the study of controversial issues? If there were no written policies the question was as follows: What is the climate of the school regarding the study of controversial issues?
4. Do you believe your views about controversial issues in the classroom are similar to your colleagues? Are they similar to the principal's or others in administration?
5. Do you know of any teacher in your school being censored or reprimanded for including the study of a controversial issue in his class? If so, what happened to the teacher? What issue was involved?
6. Please make any general comment that you may have relating to the study of controversial issues in the school.