GEOGRAPHY IN THE K-12 CURRICULUM: WHERE TO LOCATE IT AND HOW TO GET IT THERE

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It must be realized by all members of the discipline of geography that the health of the whole profession is tied in direct and undeniable bond to the status of geography in the pre-collegiate curriculum. The greater service the discipline plays in the design and execution of courses at the K-12 levels, the greater the demand there will be for the teaching of geography at the college and university levels. And who among us does not admit to the fact that graduate programs and faculty research are both underwritten by the enrollments in the undergraduate courses? The linkage should be quite apparent to anyone bothering to pick up *The California Geographer* in the first place. The question you should ask if you have read this far is, "How can geography play a larger role in the education of pre-collegiate students in California?"

As members of the California Council for Geographic Education we owe it to ourselves and to our discipline to look for ways to augment our present minimal role in the K-12 curriculum. We should be concerned about this not only because of our own immediate relationship to geography class enrollments at any level, but also because we have organized ourselves professionally to "foster and promote geographic education and to increase the effectiveness of geography teaching."[1]

One of the options we have is to attempt to insert whole courses in geography into the present curricula. There is a merit in such a goal, but there is a difficulty with that. Teachers from the first grade through the twelfth already have more demands for course inclusion than they can realistically accommodate. While we should not overlook the possibility of the design of provocative and productive syllabi in our discipline

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for the K-12 curriculum, we might do better to think of ways in which we could introduce geographic education into already well-accepted courses. To that end, we must understand the mechanisms that are presently operating to stimulate decision-making in the design of courses. If we can find some way in which we can relate geography to an already-existing touchstone, then we can begin to enlarge our circle of geographic education. That must be and should continue to be a dynamic intention of the C.C.G.E.

Fortunately, in California, there is such a touchstone.

In May, 1974, the California State Board of Education adopted a report entitled Social Sciences Education Framework for California Public Schools.[2] This 64-page report is the basic guideline utilized presently in the organization and teaching of social science in the state. It is designed for implementation from Kindergarten through 12th grade. In essence, however, it is also the axis around which elements of human and cultural geography might be taught.

The foundation for this State Framework is designed to "provide programs in the social sciences which will be directed toward the achievement of civic competence." Toward that end, it has five explicit goals.

The Application of Geographical Concepts to the Goals of the State Framework

The State Framework goals are generalized objectives that must be met in the design of curriculum at all levels of pre-collegiate education. While the complexity and nature of examples will vary, of course, at the different grade levels, these goals are to be met by the grade-specific courses and course content. As will be shown below, geography has the capacity as a discipline to speak to and for each of these goals. In this section we will outline the goals and the application of geography in their achievement. In the next section, we will turn to a more specific example. The goals are:

> *1. Enable students to develop understandings based on date, generalizations, and interdisciplinary and disciplinary concepts drawn from the various social sciences including anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology and sociology.*

Geography as a discipline is richly endowed to bestow a sense of civic competence through the manipulation of data derived from generalizations and interdisciplinary concepts. Whenever a landscape overview is attempted, for example, data must come from subjective as well as objective sources; or in the discussion of contesting philosophies in the economic development of young nations, historical geography, patterns of economic geography, and cultural influences from other nations must all be considered. Geography is based upon the art of synthesizing, so that people trained in the geographic method are well-equipped to teach and to learn from diverse information sources. We find strength in this synthetic process and quality. Geography, consequently, is perhaps the widest net when one attempts to gather in the diverse elements of any reality.

2. *Enable students to develop and practice a variety of intellectual and work-study skills appropriate to the social sciences.*

Think, for example, of the process of regional analysis. Whether you are studying the neighborhood around a primary school or the cultural ecology of The People's Republic of China, you must deal with economic factors, patterns of movement in both an historic and contemporary sense, and cultural preferences. To gain a comprehension of such regions, the student will need to develop skills of observation, deduction, reference research and basic reading.[3] There will be a need to fix new truths in a spatial context, and geographers can show well how critical the spatial component has been to the development of all of the humanized landscapes analyzed by your students.

The additional intellectual skill that geography and geographers can bring to the State Framework in the pursuit of this goal is the process of speculation. If you work from some given landscape (whether it be a scene outside the classroom window or pictures in a text), you can tune minds well with the process of speculation as to the reasons for certain landscape design. Why this house type? Why these costumes? Where have they come from? Why the crowds of people? Why the absence of vegetation? Even if we ourselves do not have all of the answers to our own or our students' questions, we all benefit from the

mind-building process of observation, questioning and speculation. Geographers should make special attempts to utilize this rich resource of our landscape-focuses discipline.

3. Enable and encourage students to understand and respect individual and cultural differences and similarities.

In this domain, cultural and human geography are without parallel as agents of diverse cultural awareness. Every time you ask about a food preference or a religion, you are setting the stage for education about diffusion, change, migration, and cultural growth. And as a student comes to understand the processes involved in the creation of diverse cultural landscapes, he or she is bound to become more tolerant of and even more interested in the plurality of man's creation. *Understanding* of these diversities and similarities comes from discussion of the processes of their growth, change, and spatial distribution today. *Respect* most frequently follows a person's comprehension of the complexity and tenacity of cultural expression. Geography has the world and its variety to draw from for instruction in cultural differences and similarities.

4. Enable students to reflect on their society's values and encourage each individual to develop and clarify a personal set of values.

The process of gaining comprehension of any cultural landscape requires a sorting out of the elements evident in that scene. This process requires constant return to one's own personal value system. To understand a foreign language system, one must look to his own first. To comprehend a social custom associated with sex, one must first ask himself or herself how he or she might individually react to such a custom. In matters of burial, agriculture, commuting ... the whole range of decision-making that goes with the contemporary world, one first considers personal preference before one really understands the decisions of another group. Even if we do not explicitly ask the student each time to reflect on personal preference as we view the landscapes of others, we can be assured that our students are making mental comparisons. And these comparisons lead to the creation of a personal set of values. Such a process cannot help but

stimulate one to reflect on the broader values of society as a whole.

5. *Enable students to participate in activities in the society as individuals and as members of groups.*

With the landscape as a base--whether in a field trip situation or in a visual appreciation from media--participation is a natural process. What do you see? What has caused this scene to develop this way? What is of the present and what has been here for a long time? How would you change this vista? How would a Japanese view this differently? Participation may be engendered by speculation activities that tap only on imagination and virual awareness, or participation may be designed around library research in order to understand a landscape. What is vital about geography is that it deals with a tangible world. You can see the evidences of what man has done. You can find out by interviewing or reading or listening why he has done these things ... and then you can react to them.

Participation in the decision-making process as it relates to landscape change involves your students in the societal processes of, for example, zoning, freeway construction, resource utilization, settlement densities, and even credit programs. All of these concerns are geographic. And all of these gain from consideration in the context of landscape design. And such consideration may be dynamic and relevant, qualities that have always enriched education.

Virtually all phases of education are enhanced by consideration of the spatial component of a stated problem. If the problem is pollution, look at distribution and the influence of the car (mobility). If the problem is crime, look at the growth and decay of urban space. If the class is studying the cost of food, look not only at the transport costs, but explore the food preferences and their relationship to earlier settlement history. What peoples have been there? Where did they come from?

Consideration of these questions is utilization of geography. Utilization of geography in this way is a creative step toward achieving the goals of the State Framework.

Geography and Illustrative Level Objectives: The CED and Death-by-Auto

There is a series of concepts that give the State Framework internal structure. These are called the Illustrative Level Objectives. These objectives take up the majority of the space in this California Department of Education document. Tables are created which elaborate on these terms in their introduction into the curricular levels K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-12. In this manner, the document very nearly provides a lesson plan for the achievement of the goals and the instruction in the illustrative level objectives. The question, then, is how can geography effectively be integrated with these outlines. In this section we will note the terms and then use a single example in our discussion of geography and this section of the State Framework.

The Illustrative Level Objectives include the following concepts:

Citizenship	Multiple Causation	Diversity	Needs
Justice	Social Control	Property	Truth
Freedom	Interdependence	Scarcity	Change
Culture	Authority/Power	Morality	Conflict
Resources	Environment		

Geography embraces a broad number of these areas of educational importance.

In attempting to rank and describe the complimentarity of geography to these concepts, I offer two categories and a swing category that is really in a class by itself. The first group consists of the Major Geographic Concepts; the second, the Minor Geographic Concepts. The concept that catalyzes both lists--and stands between them--is "Needs," the third category. A chart for a geographer would look like this:

Environment	Resources		Citizenship	Freedom
Property	Scarcity		Social Control	Truth
Diversity	Culture	Needs	Morality	Justice
Multiple Causation	Change		Authority/Power	Conflict
Interdependence				

A teacher of Social Studies, Social Sciences, or geography should be able to weave a strong class unit around these lists. If, for example, a teacher wished to devise a unit in Environment Education on "Central City: Death-by-Auto;" it would be possible to touch on all of these concepts. Consider, for example, the following broad outline of such a unit.

The increasing disuse of America's Central City is a clear candidate for inclusion on a list of *environmental* problems in our society. The general flight of residential populations from these core areas of urban settlement not only leaves a great portion of our urban *resources* under-utilized, but the people who drive from suburbia to employment in Central City also cost us considerably in resources of all kinds. As this out-migration goes on, the uses of private and public *property* change. Residence units give way to wrecking crews as parking lots are created. Older hotels are razed and Motor Inns spring up with thousands of square feet of asphalted earth for each building. Traffic patterns are confused by changes in parking regulations and commuter behavior. The very auto that initially afforded flight from the Central City is wooed back into the city in hopes that consumers of space and goods will follow. In the Central City there develops a *scarcity* of residential amenities. Lacking are parks and--ironically--parking, schools, playgrounds, family markets and family entertainment as well as evidences of nature, fresh, clean air, and tranquility. These scarcities lead to reduction in the *diversity* that was initially so characteristic of the city. Just this question of diminishing diversity in inner urban America will lead to good geographic discussions at any grade level.

At this point the question of *culture* and the auto comes up. Students might well try to determine whether this change in the city has derived from the basic technology that gave us an agent of resource utilization called the automobile, or did American culture demand this mobility and suburban movement regardless of vehicle. The essential response will likely lead to the construction of *multiple causation* for this process of changing land use and settlement. Consequent discussion of transport technology, economic vs. social uses of property and associated economies of scale will shed additional light on this complex

exercise. Other topics likely to surface in the classroom discussion will deal with the attempts of some cultures to remain cohesive and compact after migration, and the differential mobility of certain cultures and culture groups. All such banter could lead to a recapping of the auto influence and allow for concluding discussion to be given over the patterns of economic, social, and cultural *interdependence*. The intensification of our culture's dependence upon technology--and our own subsequent dependence upon "experts"--can focus upon either the Central City where our unit began (with warehousing, financial districts, governmental offices, factories) or it may be moved to suburbia where examples include the wide variety of stores necessary to make shopping mall successful. The entire scene is characterized by *change*.

The auto may be properly involved in all of the sub-themes in the unit. As a primary vehicle of space adjustment it makes an excellent tool for class discussion of the Major Geographic Concepts.

In addition, the Minor Geographic Concepts can be related to this model by suggestion of the following themes. *Justice* and *morality* are called into clear focus by a comparative study of the crime rates in inner city areas and the suburbs. *Citizenship* and *conflict* emerge as major questions when one watches the indifference people can feel toward each other in a highly urbanized area as opposed to in a small town. *Freedom* and *truth* become difficult and relative terms as opportunities for employment, advancement and security are compared in these two different landscapes, or within the two residential populations of the areas. Finally, *authority, social control* and *power* to reverse this process of Death-by-Auto can be argued within the context of themes in cultural or social geography. Questions of planners, welfare, limited mobility, banning of the auto, the high financial and social costs of urban renewal all appear as students and teacher alike attempt to resolve this question of cause and responsibility for the flight from the Central City.

I admit that it assumes a broad definition of our discipline to embrace all of these Illustrative Level Objectives.

Social Science, however, is an untidy body of literature and philosophy, and the productive practitioners of any discipline within that area are constantly busy borrowing and apapting methodologies and perspectives of sister disciplines. What geographers must do is realize that we are not alone in the elective and electic process. Whether we look at space (Central City) or time (Changing Patterns of Human Mobility) we are graced with an intellectual framework that will accommodate exciting learning and teaching.

"Needs" and the Utility of Geography in the K-12 Curriculum

I have elected to deal with "needs" as a separate category because of the highly subjective nature of that concept. Beyond the most fundamental resource needs of adequate air, water and minimal food and shelter, the real dimension of need is assigned by culture. In California for example, we speak of our state of 22,000,000 as being overcrowded, i.e., we have a need for more space, but when we realize that Japan with a smaller nation than our state (and much less level land) has a population of nearly 110,000,000, we begin to get some understanding of how very relative and cultural our definition of need is.

Or, if we return to our example of the auto and the Central City, we can see that there is no absolute "need" associated with any of the Illustrated Level Objectives. In each consideration we make relating to freedom, resources, environment, conflict or any of the other terms, we must return to specifics. What are the traditional patterns that have emerged for the group you are questioning? What spatial and cultural needs have they had? What contemporary influences are forcing them to modify their needs? How are they reacting to a changing ability to achieve their needs?

It is in this area of needs assessment that we have a good potential for geography and history to blend in creative exploration. An understanding of the past and the forces that have shaped it will make it easier to comprehend the spatial and cultural profile of the contemporary scene and scenes to come. If for example we are trying to teach a unit on Urban Parks it

will be strengthened by a discussion of the historical distribution of town commons as a spatial and cultural foundation for the occurrence of central parks and squares.

Or, as an additional example, if one wishes to explore the relationship between the need for ease of access to work and the current question of mass transit development, then one must relate contemporary demographic patterns to our culture's costly wish to be urban-suburban-rural all at once. Our need for a supposedly non-urban home setting does not easily mesh with our demand for easy access to urban amenities. We must pay costs for this spatial contradiction--and geography is capable of explaining how this contradiction has arisen. And good class time could be productively devoted to speculation on how it might be resolved.

The final comment one might make on the utility of geography in the discussion of needs is to point out the ephemeral quality of needs. Just as history is inexorable in its process of change, so too is space ever-changing. The interesting thing to note is that time is a force that culture cannot stop, whereas society can fix space in a single, static configuration. From this argument comes the observation that space is more responsive to a people's interest. And it is that more malleable quality of the medium of geography that helps to make it a useful vehicle for teaching.

Conclusions

In a sense, you might say that I am writing this for the wrong audience. Anyone inclined toward geography enough to read *The California Geographer* might be defined as one already convinced of the merits of the discipline. However, I find that many geographers fail to consider the potentially broad applications of the discipline's concerns. This is especially true for those who teach at the college and university level. Yet, it should be these very people who should give creative energy to the introduction of the discipline to pre-collegiate education.

If we can show how our discipline lends itself to the formal State Framework, then we have made one step in the direction of creating a broader acceptance of our profession as well as our discipline. The two consequent steps that one would hope

might come from this exercise would be, first--the writing of a number of mini-units in geography that could fit neatly into already established courses. The second goal would be the creation of several syllabi of courses in geography that have an urban, cultural, and contemporary focus.

It is toward that goal that the California Council for Geographic Education should strive. We stand as the only California organization that has the professional preparation and the educational inclination to devise such courses. The public schools of the state have shown an interest--at least in some quarters--in the elaboration of geography courses for the K-12 curriculum.

How shall we respond?

NOTES

[1]California Council for Geographic Education *Constitution*. November, 1972, 1.

[2]*Social Sciences Education Framework for California Public Schools*. (Sacramento, California: California State Department of Education, 1974).

[3]Salter, Christopher L. "The Case for the Nontechnician Geographer in the Technician's Era," *Journal of Geography*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (February, 1976), 70-77.