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Halvorsen, Anne-Lise. (2013) *A History of Elementary Social Studies: Romance and Reality*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

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In *A History of Elementary Social Studies: Romance and Reality*, Anne-Lise Halvorsen avoids what could have easily turned into a dry recount of committee work and textbook publications, and instead tells a compelling story of the people and events that led to shaping the current state of elementary social studies. As the title suggests, this chronology of elementary social studies in the United States is the account of a field that has grown greatly in the last century. From the romance of the ideal to the reality of what is, the author traces the development of the field from the disciplinary beginnings through the introduction of an integrative fusion approach, to the struggles of that combination, and into the present day. Throughout the book, Halvorsen constructs her argument

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that the current iteration of social studies in the elementary grades primarily grew out of Progressive Era reforms. Building upon Paul Robert Hanna's metaphor of the romance and reality of elementary social studies, Halvorsen draws conclusions about why the field is currently marginalized and considered by many to be in a troubled state. In addition, she offers recommendations for those working to advance the primary purposes of elementary social studies throughout the current century.

Halvorsen chose to tell the story of the development of elementary social studies and argue for its importance from a historical lens, making this particularly interesting for those working in elementary social studies, educational history, and teacher education. Weaving together a variety of sources to pull together a cohesive narrative of how the field developed, the author relied heavily on formal publications of the Committees of Ten, Seven, Eight, and others, published school district curricula, and private correspondences found in archives. It appears as if no stone went unturned in her investigation of how the field grew, who appeared as major and minor players, and what they had to say throughout the decades of development.

Starting in the nineteenth century, the generation of the current field was placed in the historical context of the era of reconstruction and industrialization. This history also introduces a focused study of two Michigan public school systems. Data from these districts presented throughout the book includes formal curriculum guidelines and lessons and is often supplemented with evidence from other geographic regions. Chapter three was particularly compelling when the history of social studies in the interwar years was detailed. As this chapter describes, the development of the social studies was in flux at this time and was finding its identity within a context of the battle between the disciplines and the fusion approach to teaching social studies and the social sciences. This period was marked by great competition between the newly formed National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the dominant American Historical Association (AHA). Not only philosophically at odds with each other, these two organizations were at different places in their development as credible institutions worthy of making recommendations to teachers and schools. Halvorsen diplomatically and honestly recounts their struggles with

funding, organization, prestige, and personalities without marring the name of either organization or the individuals working in them.

The story then unfolds into a description of Paul Robert Hanna's authoring of a series of highly influential textbooks. These texts advanced the expanding communities approach to the elementary social studies curriculum that ultimately dictated the field for decades. While Halvorsen clearly traced how this model stemmed from ideas proposed prior to Hanna, she draws the conclusion that the publication of his texts and their wide scale adoption cemented this approach into the present day. Based on a developmental perspective that young children should learn first about what is close to them, the expanding communities model has the youngest children learning about the self, the family and the home before then learning about their cities, states, and nation. Finally, as students enter into the upper elementary grades they are to learn about the world and cultures beyond their own.

Even though Hanna himself did not see this as the supreme model of teaching social studies, his books advocated for its use. Halvorsen adds that this large scale textbook adoption, coupled with a largely untrained teaching force demanded as a result of the post-World War II baby boom, and increased foci on science education and international economic competitiveness due to the space race, led to teachers relying heavily on these texts to teach social studies. Even with the innovative and student-centered approaches introduced as part of the New and Newer Social Studies initiatives born out of the 1960s era reforms, the expanding communities model endures to the present day.

One of the most delightful and surprising pieces of this story was the regular presence of women and their academic contributions for the development of the field. Halvorsen's telling of this story reveals many of the influential women often forgotten in common memory or in other histories of the field. It is likely that for many readers, this is the first place where they are able to meet Lucy Salmon, Lucy Sprague Mitchell, Caroline Pratt, and Hazel Hertzberg, among others. Alongside dominant males in the field, John Dewey, Paul Robert Hanna, and Harold Rugg, these women are presented as valued and often

critical voices throughout the development of elementary social studies with their contributions noted throughout the history.

Unfortunately, the description of the alternative curricular models that compete or complement the expanding communities model leaves the reader wanting more. As the story unfolds into the era of accountability and the many voices challenging the testing culture, five alternative models are briefly described: Cultural Universals, Storypath, Service-Learning, Core Knowledge, and Social Justice Social Studies. The author is critical of the expanding communities model and even points out that its main proponent, Hanna, had more complex and broader reaching values not advanced by it, however a mere seven pages are dedicated to the descriptions of these multiple alternative models. While a detailed history of the development of each of these alternatives was not needed, greater attention to their presence would have been appreciated as an addition to the complex developments and current competing models in the field.

In her conclusion, Halvorsen outlines what she calls "opportunities" available for 21st century elementary social studies educators and researchers: Agreeing on and revising goals, conducting education research, improving collaboration among social studies educators and disciplinary experts, challenging the expanding communities approach, improving social studies textbook selection, and integrating the elementary social studies and the literacy curricula. Each of these conclusions is clearly drawn from her historical tracing of the field and predictions about what can best place social studies in a position of strength and robustness for the future. The fourth opportunity in particular, challenging the expanding communities approach, can be seen as the culmination of one of the primary findings of the book. From the first chapters, Halvorsen included the perspectives of the many individuals and groups who contested this model and its dominance. While the primary purpose of the book was not to upset the current curricula of elementary social studies, it was criticized throughout the chronology more than any other element of the history, and that extended critique left the reader hoping for a strong position from Halvorsen to advocate for another way. Finally, one of the doors opened with this history was the topic of further

study. For researchers in the field, the author outlined areas in need of further attention including the theory and practice gap, research on assessment measures, and the effectiveness of materials and programs like the expanding communities model and its competitors on student achievement and motivation. In this way, Halvorsen ends her history with an eye toward the future and how the field can become more rigorous in the common era.

Overall, Halvorsen's history proves to be an interesting and worthwhile addition to the field with her in-depth analysis of how elementary social studies has grown and how the current landscape is still being influenced by the romance of what can be and the reality of what is.

About the Reviewer

Kathryn E. Engebretson, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in Curriculum & Instruction at Indiana University, Bloomington. She teaches elementary social studies methods and multicultural education to both preservice teachers and doctoral students. Her scholarly work focuses on gender in social studies education, particularly as it relates to controversial or difficult issues in K-12 education in the U.S. and in South Sudan.

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