

**THE FUNCTION OF IDEALS
AND ATTITUDES IN
SOCIAL EDUCATION:
AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY**

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The Function of Ideals and Attitudes in Social Education: An Experimental Study by Paul
Frederick Voelker

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PAUL FREDERICK VOELKER

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The Function of Ideals and Attitudes in Social Education

AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

BY

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CHAPTER I

THE PERSPECTIVE

SOCIAL education is a business of prime importance to the life of a democracy. The adequate accomplishment of this business is an essential condition under which democracy can be realized: it is a fundamental prerequisite to the ends for which popular government was established; and it is a necessary preventive of certain social defects which tend to develop under the operation of *laissez-faire* institutions. From the standpoint of the individual, social education is the preparation for participation in group life; from the standpoint of society it is the training of the group in the collective performance of the functions of its community life. The individual must be taught to consider the social bearing of his conduct, he must be trained in the suppression of his anti-social impulses, and he must be socially motivated. The group as a whole must be made socially conscious, it must be taught to consider the effect of its collective conduct upon its individual members and upon the general welfare, and it must acquire the ability to act co-operatively in the protection of its community interests and in the conscious direction of its own progress.

It is only when viewed from the standpoint of society as a whole that the transcendent importance of social education in a democracy becomes apparent. Just as adaptation to his environment is an essential condition of the survival and prosperity of the individual, so is group adjustment to the exigencies of new situations a necessary condition of the progress and survival of the group. The very essence of democracy is collective action. If collective action is to be in the interests of the general welfare, if it is to tend toward social preservation and progress, it must be directed by intelligence and based upon justice. Social education will demand, therefore, not only the dissemination of information, but also the development of a sense of social solidarity, the cultivation of a keen sensitiveness to the encroachment of private interest upon the interests of the social body, the strengthening of social coherence to the point where public opinion can be utilized in the protection of community interests.