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TAKING THE “SQUEEZE” OFF OF SOCIAL STUDIES: A Phenomenological Study of Teacher “Curricular” Autonomy and its Effects on Social Studies Instructional Time

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TAKING THE “SQUEEZE” OFF OF SOCIAL STUDIES

A Phenomenological Study of Teacher “Curricular” Autonomy and its Effects on Social Studies Instructional Time

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A dissertation submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri-St. Louis
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in
Education with an emphasis in Teaching and Learning Processes

August 2016

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Abstract

The state of social studies instruction in US schools has become dismal. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of the impact of high stakes testing on social studies teaching when it is not tested by the state. I examined the elementary teacher's "curricular" autonomy (curricular/instructional decision making) within the context of social studies teaching in a suburban low performing, urban demographic, school. Participants were asked to describe the experience of making instructional decisions regarding social studies education. The specific aims of this study were to:

1. reveal the meaning of teacher autonomy for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri
2. reveal the perceptions of the role of social studies for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri
3. give voice to teachers in low performing elementary schools who are in high stakes testing states, where social studies is *not* tested

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the educators who work in urban, urban demographic, challenging and diverse environments that stretch, and sometimes test, their dedication to the teaching profession. These environments require a different type of educator with varying skill sets. Everyday these committed professionals educate students, parents and communities that present new and unique issues, in addition to the academic obligations with which they are charged. As a practicing educator, I have worked alongside these gladiators in many capacities (classroom teacher, reading specialist, instructional coach, assistant principal, principal and district administrator). I am honored and humbled, on a daily basis, to witness the resolve, the compassion, the care and the consistency they provide selflessly and sacrificially. Education, today, is not an easy field to work in. It is not for the faint of heart. We SERVE and, contrary to test scores and popular belief, we always aspire to do it well.

Acknowledgements

First, and foremost, I have to thank God for the journey that he placed me on in the process of completing this dissertation. Through all of the layoffs, job changes and personal challenges that I have endured during the pursuit of this degree, God has been my rock. Starting and not finishing was NEVER an option for me. God has kept me on the path, even with some detours, provided me patience, grit and comfort in times when I wanted to quit. I look forward to the next journey that he has for me, knowing that I can do all things with him.

To my family I would like to say I appreciate you for the supportive words and actions over the past 8-9 years. The struggle has been real! But you have supported me throughout. You never doubted my completion of this process and I am grateful. To my twin sister, Jennifer, your completion of your J.D. when I was completing my first Master's degree motivated me to begin this process, even after the Ed.S. You will never know how your dedication to your profession has inspired me to keep more students from ever being involved in our judicial system, in a negative way. Most importantly, to my daughter Ashlyn, you stated one day that I have been in school since you were born. What a wakeup call for me! You have been my biggest supporter, while watching me go through times of disappointment, stress and happiness. Thank you for your hugs, kisses and understanding when I had to sacrifice some "Mommy" time in order to work on my dissertation. You are just as excited to see me cross the stage for this degree as I am. I love that, and I love you!

The opportunity to complete a third, and hopefully final, degree at the University of Missouri-St. Louis has been an interesting, yet fantastic experience. I would like to

thank my accomplished and esteemed committee. Dr. Lewis-Harris, your guidance, care, accomplishments and keep it real attitude have truly kept me on track throughout all that has happened in the past 8-9 years. From the initial entry interview, you encouraged me to complete the Ph.D. program. You saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Words can't say how much I appreciate that you pushed me, it's true that God places certain people in your life for a reason. Dr. Wilkinson, your calm and helpful demeanor helped me realize that no matter what level of education you have attained, or how knowledgeable you actually are, everyone doesn't need to know it! Your influence is not always seen, but you have a way of imparting knowledge that is covert and doesn't necessarily need to be acknowledged. That's service! Dr. Catapano, you may not remember me from one of your early childhood classes a long time ago at UMSL but I remembered you. That class was the catalyst for my love of early childhood students and their education. It was a rough semester for me, due to some life challenges that I was going through. However, you wouldn't expect anything less than what you expected from everyone else in the class. I got through your class that semester but what I took away from it was more important. I walked away with a heightened appreciation of teachers that taught young children and wanting to own my own business (daycare or school) someday. I had even created a name for it! Last, but absolutely not least, Dr. Kyle. I met you in the final course of the doctoral program, only because Dr. Navarro's class was over enrolled. I volunteered to go to your class instead and I do not regret that decision. Your feedback regarding my proposal and the writing process was invaluable. Your extensive knowledge of research and educational topics was intriguing to me and very motivational. When choosing my methodology for this study, your input was the

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Countless others deserve acknowledgement but there are too many to list. To my Ph.D. and Ed.D. friends who were taking this journey with me, while pursuing their own degrees (Sarah, Cynthia, Bonita, Carolyn, Timothy, etc.), your support and encouragement was PRICELESS. Knowing that I was not suffering alone was more motivational than you will ever know. Finally, to my colleagues who participated in this study, I certainly hope your voices were heard through my writing. I value and respect your stories, with the honesty and candor provided. As we continue our travels through the landscape of education, just remember to stay the course and you are not alone.

GLADIATORS RISE!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Social studies education in elementary schools in the US could be in the midst of extinction. Today's post No Child Left Behind (NCLB) curriculum, defined by test scores and annual yearly progress (AYP) targets, appears to have caused social studies education to become an afterthought in elementary school curriculum. A study by Pace (2011) was the motivation for this study. The purpose of the Pace study was to investigate the impact of high stakes accountability on social studies teaching where it is not tested by the state, and to address the question of what is happening in middle and high performing schools that are socio-culturally diverse vs. struggling schools (in grades 4-7). The teachers in her study expressed having more professional autonomy than teachers in struggling schools. Her participants did not articulate difficult dilemmas concerning instructional time.

In addition to Pace (2011), my research stems from a study by Wills (2007). For ten months, during the 2002-2003 school year, one fourth-grade and two fifth-grade classrooms at an elementary school were observed and videotaped during classroom lessons and activities in social studies. The case study included 125 videotaped observations, as well as interviews with students, teachers, and the principal. Materials from the curriculum and analysis of student work were also included. All collected data were analyzed in order to gain an understanding of the instructional and curricular choices teachers made in social studies. The study concluded that the accountability system instituted to improve teaching and learning for all students is actually undermining the quality of students' education in social studies. The purpose of Wills'

(2007) study was to analyze what happens to the approved social studies curriculum in elementary schools where the response to state testing in Mathematics and Reading (English Language Arts /ELA/Communication Arts) causes a reduction in social studies instructional time. Social studies instruction appears to have always been low on the priority list for receiving instructional time in elementary classrooms.

For example, Thornton and Houser (1996), while studying elementary classrooms in Delaware, noted teachers spent only twenty minutes per day on social studies instruction. Brophy and VanSledright (1993) found that elementary teachers, including those deemed by peers as exemplary social studies instructors, spent no more than twenty minutes per day teaching social studies. The sidelining of social studies education at the elementary level has been documented repeatedly. According to a report by the Center on Education Policy (2007), 44 percent of districts surveyed have reduced time for social studies since the enactment of the “No Child Left Behind” federal education policy (NCLB). That percentage rose to 51 percent in districts with “failing schools”. Districts with “failing schools”, low performing or non-AYP achieving, focus on language arts and mathematics, assessing students in these areas and providing intensive instruction. Meanwhile, students in the districts with “successful schools”, high performing or AYP achieving, may have more opportunities to expand their field of knowledge (Doppen, 2007). The Center of Education Policy (2008) used a nationally representative sample to study the NCLB act and reported that elementary schools have reduced instructional time for subjects other than reading and mathematics in 71% of the 299 school districts surveyed; while 53% of the schools indicated they reduced time by at least 75 minutes per week in social studies, the same percentage (53%) reduced time by

at least 75 minutes per week in science. Among the districts that reported increases, the average increase amounted to 141 extra minutes per week (or an average of 28 minutes per day) in ELA (English Language Arts) and 89 extra minutes per week (or about 18 minutes per day) in Mathematics.

There appears to be a popularly held belief that social studies are an expendable piece of the curriculum that is to be taught only after reading and mathematics have been thoroughly covered. This belief ought to be dispelled.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the impact of high stakes testing on social studies teaching when it is not tested by the state. The focus was on the elementary teachers, teacher autonomy (curricular/instructional decision making), within the context of social studies (the only content area not tested in Missouri) instruction. My goal was to investigate the impact of state mandated testing on teacher autonomy in a suburban low performing (non-achieving AYP), urban demographic, elementary school within the context of social studies teaching. Participants were asked to describe the experience of making instructional decisions regarding social studies instruction. The specific aims of this study were to:

1. reveal the meaning of teacher autonomy for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri
2. reveal the perceptions of the role of social studies for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri
3. give voice to teachers in low performing elementary schools who are in high stakes testing states where social studies are not tested

Conceptual Framework

Although teacher autonomy does not consist of a single trait, it can be defined using the work of Pearson and Hall (1993) and Pearson and Moomaw (2005), as the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for students. These researchers proposed and validated an instrument for measuring perceptions of teaching autonomy. The Teaching Autonomy Scale measures two types of autonomy: general and curricular. In the area of curricular autonomy, the teacher's perception of whether he/she has freedom from outside control when making important instructional decisions based on student needs is paramount. Within the general teaching autonomy, the teacher perceives that he/she has control over the overall work environment including, but not limited to, student work habits and utilization of creative methods of teaching (Pearson & Hall, 1993). For the purpose of this study I focused on the area of teacher "curricular" autonomy within the context of social studies teaching.

Significance of the Study

Since beginning as a teacher in the field of education 19 years ago I noticed a decline in the emphasis on social studies education in the various schools/districts in which I worked. At one point, in the state of Missouri, 4 content areas were tested (Communication Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies). Today, Communication Arts and Mathematics and Science (science was taken away and brought back) have taken the forefront because of high stakes, state mandated testing.

My hope is for my research to instill some sense of urgency into policy makers and district administrators of low achieving suburban and urban schools. I would like them to see that the emphasis on Communication Arts, Mathematics and Science has left

out a content area extremely imperative to our history as a country. In many schools across the United States school districts include; in their mission and vision statements; the goal of preparing students to be productive, active and even global citizens. With limited social studies background knowledge, coming from elementary school, students entering middle/high school and taking required social studies/history classes will be ill prepared for the level of content they will need to master. How does this prepare them? In a report from NCSS Task Force on Early Childhood /Elementary Social Studies (1988) it was stated that if our students don't acquire the foundation of knowledge, attitudes and skills in social studies in the elementary years, then it is unlikely that teachers in the junior/middle and high schools will be successful in preparing effective citizens for the 21st century. The reduction in time and teacher curricular autonomy given to teach social studies affects our nation's primary purpose for education, the creation of "democratic citizens". This discrepancy between practice and policy is in need of further examination. Therefore, my intention is for this study to provide an understanding of teacher curricular autonomy and the marginalization of social studies education due to high stakes state mandated testing.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study included data collected from 12 teachers across three elementary schools, during one school year. One school was the work site of the principal research investigator. The research investigator was a Reading Specialist in this school.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Relevant Literature

The History of Social Studies

Social studies education functions as one of the nation's primary tools for the preparation and education of tomorrow's citizens. At the turn of the century, increased immigration and industrialization created many concerns over the security of the perceived values of the United States. Concurrent with the establishment of "social studies" as an academic field came one of the earliest identified social studies goals: Citizenship (Fleming & Petrini, 1990). Citizenship is the qualities that a person is expected to have as a responsible member of the community. From 1894 to 1915, Progressive reformers influenced education in the United States. Education, at this time, was seen as a way to teach children the proper values needed to be a productive United States citizen (Hertzberg, 1981). It was believed that society's ills could be alleviated by education for all classes that would prepare children for their proper role in society. Public education was also seen as a way to "Americanize" the considerable amount of immigrant children flooding into cities. Compulsory attendance laws were enacted to ensure that children from all classes received a basic, "common," education in elementary grades. The founders of the social studies; Henry Johnson, I. James Quillen, Lawrence E. Metcalf, and Shirley Engle, responded to the need to instill the knowledge and skills of citizenship by incorporating them into professional group reports for the National Education Association (NEA), the American Historical Society (AHA), and National Council of the Social Studies (NCSS) during the earliest efforts to set goals and define the social studies. In addition, most educators during the Progressive Era accepted

citizenship as a teaching goal but they continued to debate about what was an appropriate education of citizens (Hertzberg, 1981).

In the 1880s and 90s the *laboratory method*, also known as *inquiry*, when students learned to assemble material and from it make generalizations, was used as a method of teaching history (Hillman, 1935). The students evaluated and selected historical evidence and practiced the writing of history, this was called the “source method” (Hillman, 1935). However, by 1900 the momentum of the use of the source method had faded (Fleming & Petrini, 1990). By 1910 students were exposed to original sources; however, these materials were supplemented by textbooks written by historians. At this time national organizations began recommending a specific program for schools. Fleming and Petrini (1990) state, “if the researcher were to deal only with literature of the social studies field of the 1920s, one might conclude that little occurred in the development of social studies skills-that leaders, reformer, and educators were far too engrossed in building curriculum according to Progressive Era reform innovations and unifying public school education to meet the needs of a rapidly growing school population” (p. 237). Although, if you were to examine the advancements in the field of psychology and testing it would reveal important history relative to measurement, skill descriptions and goals of the social studies. During the 1930s, Morse and McCune (1940) reported that New York teachers developed a work skills diagnostic test which contained such items as “use of general references; newspaper reading; interpreting a chart, pictures, graph, and table of statistics; summarizing and outlining” (p.13). A good portion of this terminology would eventually become part of the social studies terminology. Also, with World War 1, Hitler and The New Deal gaining public attention “civic education” regarding propaganda and current

events became part of social studies responsibility. By the 1940s an interest in critical thinking had increased and was very evident when NCSS dedicated the entire 1942 yearbook to this subject. Social studies skills were designated and had finally arrived (Anderson, 1942).

The 1950s marked a period of reform generating criticism, continued clarification of skills and interest in curriculum development. In a 1953 NCSS yearbook publication the definition of “skills” came to have a broader meaning. The NCSS published an expanded version of the 1940 bulletin and referred to the social studies skills in the title: *Skills in the Social Studies* (Carpenter, 1953). According to Hertzberg (1981), advocacy of the social studies skills reached its zenith in the 1960s reform period amidst warning about the weaknesses inherent in the “new social studies” package. She found that classroom teachers were modifying but not replacing the old curriculum, and that most classroom teachers had very little knowledge about national reform. In several *Social Education* (1965) articles reviewed by Hertzberg there were perceived problems in the new approach. Reformers knew little about the demands on teacher time when trying to implement new methods; they didn’t look at what teachers were already doing well or examine what it was like to be a classroom teacher (Petrini & Fleming, 1990). There was an increased emphasis on listening skills, reading and writing and developing critical thinking skills. US specialists considered the break that occurred in the 1960s was due less to an increase in curiosity with regard to the past than to a development of interest in present problems. This tendency to *presentism*, the projection of present-day problems on to the past, may have been endorsed in the meetings or collaboration between historians of education and social scientists (Graff, 1977). In the United States, the notion of the

“new history” was assimilated to the revisionist movement. This movement considered teaching as a substitute for the family, the church and the community. Put another way, the school then became responsible for the maintenance of national cohesion and the inculcation of codes and values calculated to ensure stability and social order (Greene, 1973). The revisionists condemned the conservative nature of school reforms and emphasized the closeness of the links between education, political relations and social structures (Leon, 1985). Analysis of the functions of the school also led revisionists to raise questions concerning the number of years of education, recruitment (for example the sex, age, ethnic origin and social level of pupils), the school or university routes followed, and the individual or social effects of education. The interest of the revisionists in the problems of literacy extended beyond the United States. It also led revisionists to raise questions regarding the aims of the school policy of the Western powers in their former colonies, and whether it was oriented towards liberation or integration.

On April 11, 1965 the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a United States federal statute, was enacted. Signed into law as a part of Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” it was considered to be the most far-reaching federal legislation affecting education ever passed by Congress. The Act is a statute that funded primary and secondary education, while explicitly forbidding the creation of a national curriculum. It also emphasized equal access to education and established high standards with accountability. The bill aimed to shorten the achievement gaps between students by providing each child with fair and equal opportunities to an exceptional education. The funds, as mandated in the act, were authorized for professional development, instructional materials, for resources to support educational programs, and for promotion of parental

involvement. The Act was originally authorized through 1970. The government has reauthorized the act every five years since its enactment (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Web. 15 Dec.).

Research reported during the 1970s documents the confusion over what skills should be acquired in the social studies (Petrini & Fleming, 1990). In 1977 a collaboration of NCSS, ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Sciences Foundation, and Social Science Education Consortium produced a report as a review of scientific research materials on social studies education. This review documented problems regarding language of the social studies (wanting to move social education to the social sciences). By the early 1980s business leaders, the government, and the general public had decided that public education in the United States was in "parlous trouble" (National Council on Excellence in Education, 1983). In 1981, the National Council on Excellence in Education (NCEE) was created. The eighteen-member panel was composed of representatives from a wide range of political perspectives. The panel produced the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform*. *A Nation at Risk* became the driving force for two decades of standards-based reform.

Major economic problems in the 1980s magnified the public's dissatisfaction with public education. More and more people seemed to connect the recession in the economy to the poor system of education in the United States. During the 1980s, there was continued confusion over the identification and definition of social studies skills, much of the literature at this time alluded to disagreement over "thinking skills". Arguments continued regarding whether these skills should be taught independently of content, whether thinking skills could be taught directly or whether they should even be taught at

all. Newspapers reported major declines in students' scores on the SAT and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The National Science Foundation also reported that academic standards were declining in the nation's schools. This news was alarming when compared to the high standards that the United States' economic competitors required of their students.

The emphasis on education reform in the 1980s led to the National Governors Association's articulation of national educational goals in 1990 and the subsequent endorsement of those goals by the Bush administration. From 1982 to 1995, the world experienced such events as the breakup of the Soviet Union and former Yugoslavia; the falling of the Berlin Wall; the Gulf War; the end of apartheid in South Africa; the events in the Tiananmen Square; global economic changes; continued international space projects; increase of immigration to the United States; changing U.S. demographics and family structures; and acts of national and international terrorism. As educators, social studies teachers had to reflect on ways to help young learners grasp the magnitude of these events and evaluate the impact on their individual lives (Laughlin, 1995).

Teaching social studies during these years was not simple. Looking to NCSS for direction, in relation to the rapidly changing and interdependent world, was something that teachers had to do often. In 1991, NCSS published the first *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning*, edited by James P. Shaver. It provided a detailed overview and analysis of research in social studies education. In 1992, Congress passed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, categorizing educational goals and endorsing the development of national educational standards as a means of encouraging and evaluating student achievement. While that act included the arts, civics and

government, economics, English, foreign language, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, science, and vocational education, it omitted social studies. However, social studies educators, under the guidance of the NCSS, successfully annexed social studies to the national agenda and named a task force to develop curriculum standards. The development of social studies standards has occurred concurrently with the development of standards in other areas of education (the arts, civics and government, economics, English, foreign language, geography, history, mathematics, physical education, science, and vocational education).

In 1994, the Bill Clinton administration gained congressional approval for the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). Among the most important features of the IASA was a provision that encouraged state and local education agencies to coordinate resources in schools with high percentages of children living below the poverty line. The IASA required states to adopt standards aligned with state assessments, but it allowed states full autonomy to make instructional, governance, and fiscal policy decisions to support their academic performance standards. The political reality was that holding schools and districts accountable to high-stakes mandates was not feasible under IASA. There was very little enforcement of the IASA provisions and few states made substantial progress in meeting its requirements.

Also in 1994, the largest organization of social studies teachers in the United States, the Board of Directors of the National Council for the Social Studies, created the following definition:

Social studies are the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to

promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provide coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics and natural sciences. The primary purpose of the social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (National Council for the Social Studies, 2009, p.3)

The NCSS Board of Directors officially approved the standards document in April 1994. NCSS began distribution of the standards to social studies educators around the country and initiated a series of discussion and training workshops at conventions and in other locations at national, state, and district levels. The standards that were approved initially by the NCSS Board of Directors on April 27, 1997, revised, and approved as revised by the board in September 2002. The initial version of the twenty subject-matter standards was developed by an NCSS Task Force on Social Studies Teacher Education Standards appointed in 1995. The revised standards, like the earlier social studies standards published in 1994, continued to be structured around the ten themes of social studies. However, the revised standards offered a sharper focus on Purposes, Questions for Exploration, Knowledge: what learners need to understand, Processes: what learners will be capable of doing and Products: how learners demonstrate understanding. The revised standards also included enhancements in the descriptions of the ten themes and the associated learning expectations, the addition of new descriptions of standards-based class practices to time-tested descriptions that were included in the original edition of the

standards, stronger focus on student products and their assessment, and an updated list of essential social studies skills and strategies, including literacy strategies (NCSS, 2010)

The aforementioned political atmospheres significantly contributed to the movements in the development of a national social studies curriculum. However, the No Child Left Behind Act stirred the country into a frenzy with its lofty educational requirements and sanctions. Named and proposed by President George W. Bush, the reauthorization of ESEA was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Even before the enactment of NCLB, many states began testing students at many grade levels and in several academic areas as part of their statewide education reform activities.

Consequently, students were also expected to participate in assessments in other subject areas, such as history, geography, and writing skills, if and when required by the state. However, NCLB required assessments only in the areas of reading/language arts, math, and science at certain grades (No Child Left Behind Act, Web. 15, Dec. 2012). Marion Wright Edelman (1997) viewed it necessary to leave no child behind in much broader terms than the NCLB legislation. In her view, it is a “moral question about whether America truly values and will stand up for children” (p. 16). NCLB was said to be the driving force in the way we educated our children, but the history leading up to this law sheds some light on the realities of its implementation. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015. The previous version of the law, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, was scheduled for revision in 2007. Over time, NCLB’s prescriptive requirements became increasingly unfeasible for schools and educators. Recognizing this fact, in 2010, the Obama administration joined a call from families and educators to create a better law that focused on the clear-cut goal of

fully preparing all students for success in college and careers (Every Student Succeeds Act, Web. 25, May 2016).

Below are some of the laws, as highlighted by Gardiner, et.al. (2008), that set a standard for US public education (US Department of Education, n.d.); they reveal the shifting political/legal climate impacting education.

Equal protection. 14th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States (1868) guarantees, “No State shall...deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” This is the most significant federal law protecting the rights of students in the United States.

Desegregation. Brown v. Board of Education (1954). It has been just 54 years since *Brown v. Board of Education* outlawed the legally supported separate and unequal education for African-Americans and whites, and began the integration of African-American students into the public schools. This landmark Supreme Court decision changed the course of American Public Education, by granting equal access to public schools for all students.

Equal Access to Federal Financial Assistance. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964). This law sought to provide meaningful access for all persons in public educational institutions, and prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in activities and programs receiving federal assistance from the US Department of Education. “... No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin ... be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to 144 Urban Rev (2009) 41:141–160 123 discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Bilingual Education. Bilingual Education Act (1968). According to this law, all students, including English language learners, were to be held to high standards and instructed using programs tailored for students' linguistic and cultural needs.

Bilingual Education. Lau v. Nichols (1974). The US Supreme court ruled it was a violation of students' civil rights to place them in an instructional "sink or swim" situation where they were expected to learn in English only, and not receive full benefit from programs designed to meet their educational needs. The tenant equal is not the same was asserted in this law underscoring the belief education should instead take into account a student's primary linguistic and cultural background and prior knowledge and abilities. The court found "... students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education when they are instructed exclusively in a language they do not understand" (Language responsibilities of Education agencies serving language minority students, 1995).

Equal Opportunity to All in Public Schools. The Equal Educational Opportunities (EEO) Act (1974). This law expanded the prohibition of discrimination in Title VI to all public schools regardless of federal funding [20 U.S.C. 1203(f)].

Bilingual Education. Lau Remedies (1975). Guidelines were developed for school districts to follow to ensure compliance with the Lau v. Nichols ruling and any civil rights violations. Bilingual education programs were implemented permitting teachers to instruct ELL students in academic subject areas in their native language, while at the same time instructing them in English language [414

U.S. 563 (1974)].

Bilingual Education. Castaneda v. Pickard (1981). Mexican American families sought and were granted access to bilingual education (see Carter 2005; Rosario 1995) [648 F.2d 989 (5th Cir., 1981)].

Executive Order 13166 “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency” (2000, August 11). Signed by President Bill Clinton, the law afforded new opportunities for immigrants learning English, now referred to as English language learners (ELL). “The Federal Government is committed to improving the accessibility of these services to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English” (US Department of Justice 2000).

Racist, discriminatory and anti-immigrant laws have also been proposed or passed since Brown. In 1998, a backlash against immigration and equality of opportunity was seen in the legal propositions passed by citizens in California.

Anti-Bilingual Education. In Proposition 187 California law imposed social and educational restrictions on undocumented immigrants, preventing them from access to benefits and public services including public school education. In Proposition 227 (1998), also in California, English was made the main medium for English Language Learners to be educated. Anti-bilingual political organizations successfully promoted the passing of laws imposing social and educational restrictions on immigrants (see Escobedo, 1999).

Educational Equity. No Child Left Behind (United States Congress Public Law 2002). This piece of legislation affected schools and their approach to educational

equity. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed by President George W. Bush in 2002. Previously, under ESEA (1965) achievement results were reported as averages for a school or district. Thus, underachievement by sub-group student populations was hidden. The amendments and reauthorization of ESEA under NCLB (2002) attempted to hold schools and school districts responsible for the academic progress of all students.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents good news for our nation's schools. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students.

All of the laws previously mentioned were put into place because of one or more deficiencies, within our educational system, that needed to be addressed. NCLB, supposedly, was designed to transform US schools. This "transformation" was intended to take place by encouraging a culture of achievement in our schools rather than just compliance (Public Law 107-110, Web. 15, Dec.). The annual testing of all students' grades 3-8 in the subjects of Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics and eventually Science was planned to help the process of transforming our schools. The NCLB Act also required each state to establish Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) proficiency targets using the mandated test scores, with an expectation that 100% of students be proficient or advanced by the year 2014. Schools not meeting AYP targets, as deemed by their state, for two consecutive years were identified as "in need of improvement" (INOI), and students attending INOI schools received tutoring or be transferred to another school.

Absent from this legislation was a testing requirement for social studies, the fourth “core” academic subject (Public Law 107-110, Web. 15, Dec.). Although most states have a test for this subject area (whether they choose to administer or use it for accountability is a state choice) districts were not required to test in this area according to the NCLB legislation. There are also a required number of instructional minutes (weekly) that should be completed within this content area, even though it is not tested (DESE, Web. 15, Dec.). Due to the NCLB Act there has been a push to increase instructional minutes only in the core content areas that are being tested. Despite the professed importance and value of citizenship preparation (the social studies) (Furin, 2003; Palmer, 1989; Smith, Palmer & Correia, 1995), a conflicting message is being presented when social studies is the only one of the four core subjects excluded in the performance expectations for which NCLB held public education accountable (Van Fossen, 2005).

Denying students’ the opportunity to build social studies vocabulary and background knowledge can lead to lower literacy levels and, ironically, increases the achievement gap (Craig, 2006). In many states, reading and math test scores become the sole measurement of learning. Even when social studies were included in high-stakes testing, both novice and veteran teachers tailored their teaching to the content requirements of the test, rather than to meaningful learning of core concepts (Grant, 2007). As a result of educational practices steeped in the “teach to the test” phenomenon, teaching and learning are reduced to that which is necessary for students to do well on state tests rather than providing a well-rounded program to ready students for life as active citizens in the twenty-first century (NCSS, 2010).

Students need the skills, knowledge and values that will enable them to live, make

decisions and interact with fellow citizens from different ethnic, racial, language, cultural and religious groups. This lends itself to the concept of a multicultural type of social studies education. In a study by Winstead (2011), many of the teachers who participated in the study acknowledged how accountability-based learning placed minority and immigrant children at a risk for gaining civic and democratic knowledge. The teachers mentioned the power of social studies content and its ability to help students build knowledge via historical themes and concepts. Additionally, they discussed how social studies content is purposeful and relevant for immigrants, English learners, and minority students and how teachers can tap into students' social and cultural resources to promote in-depth discussion and critical thinking.

Multicultural Education

Developing a twenty-first century citizen (teacher and student included), of the US, has become increasingly complex with the frequent addition of various ethnicities and cultures that have migrated into the United States over the past century. With this, the challenge of constructing a democratic and just society has become more difficult. The addition of varying ideals, customs and values has caused the landscape of our just and democratic views to be challenged, and in some cases violently opposed. By the year 2050, experts predict that the USA's combined population of racial and ethnic citizens (African Americans, Latinos, Asian-Pacific Islanders and Native Americans) will outnumber white Americans (Fulwood, 2011). The economic, social, and political aspects of immigration have caused controversy regarding ethnicity, jobs for non-immigrants, economic benefits, and impact on upward social mobility, settlement patterns, crime, voting behavior and education. The United States accepts more legal immigrants as permanent residents than all other countries in the world combined (U.S. population hits 300 million, Web. 15, Dec. 2012).

Since the removal of ethnic quotas in immigration in 1965, the number of first-generation immigrants living in the United States has quadrupled, from 9.6 million in 1970 to about 38 million (Papademetriou & Terrazas, 2009). Nearly 14 million immigrants came to the United States between 2000 to 2010 (Camarota, 2011). The cheap airline travels post-1960 facilitated travel to the United States. However, migration continues to be difficult, expensive, and dangerous for those who cross the United States–Mexico border illegally. Two-thirds of legal immigration to the US every year has been attributed to family reunification. The number of foreign nationals who became legal

permanent residents (LPRs) of the U.S. in 2009 was as a result of family reunification (66%). Religious and language diversity has been increasing among the nation's student population as well.

Teachers currently in the classroom, and those in teacher education programs, are likely to have students from diverse ethnic, language, racial and religious groups in their classrooms during their careers. This will require the infusion of multicultural content and perspectives into the curriculum, namely in the area of social studies.

Gay (2009) states, "In many ways Multicultural Education is a broker for democracy within the context of schooling for ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse students, especially those who are underachieving and marginalized. It is naturally compatible with and complementary of Social Studies Education since a primary intention of the latter is to teach students knowledge, attitudes, values, ethics, and skills needed to be constructive citizens of democratic societies, and conscientious and caring members of communities" (p.1).

Preliminary research conducted by NEA (2006) indicates that success in the classroom is dependent upon the value of cultural diversity. It is also suggested that when students of color are taught by teachers of their own ethnic group they perform better in all areas (academically, personally and socially). The NEA supports the development of cultural competence in educators. Cultural competence is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching (NEA, 2006). Educators who devalue ethnic and cultural

differences view their students as culturally disadvantaged simply because their ethnicity is different, which has a devastating effect on students' willingness to learn (Ferguson, 2001). Gay (2001) highlighted, "decontextualizing teaching and learning from the ethnicities and cultures of students minimizes the chances that their achievement potential will ever be fully realized" (p.23). An important goal of multicultural education is "to improve race relations and to help all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to participate in cross-cultural interactions and in personal, social, and civic action that will help make our nation more democratic and just" (Parker, 2003, p. 1).

With the trends in immigration, the social studies programs/instruction in our schools should be recognized as extremely important. Since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, educators have been trying, in various ways, to better integrate the school curriculum with multicultural content and to move away from a mainstream-centric and Eurocentric curriculum (Banks, 2002). This has been difficult for schools to attain for many reasons. Most importantly, Banks and Banks (2007) state, "ideological resistance is a major factor that has slowed down the development of a multicultural curriculum. Political resistance (the belief that a multicultural perspective on U.S. society challenges the existing power structure), the focus on high stakes testing and accountability, the low level knowledge about ethnic cultures that most educators have, and the heavy reliance on textbook for teaching have affected its growth and development as well" (p. 250). According to Cartledge (1996), due to the fact that all "behavior is culture based, social behaviors need to be defined and interpreted in a cultural context. Culture is not inherited but learned, passed on through the generations, and transmitted largely through the institutions of school and family" (p.39).

In order to assist with the implementation of multicultural education into our schools, Banks and Banks (2007) identified four approaches (levels) to the integration of multicultural content into the curriculum. Level 1: The Contributions Approach focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements. People who challenged the dominant society's values, ideologies, and conceptions and advocated radical political, social, and economic reform are seldom included in the contributions approach. The contribution approach gives teachers a way to integrate ethnic/multicultural content into the curriculum easily and quickly. However, there are some limitations to this approach. One limitation is that students do not obtain a global view of the function of ethnic and cultural groups in the US society. Rather, they see ethnic issues and events primarily as an addition to the curriculum and consequently as an add-on to the main story of the development of the nation and the core curriculum. This approach also tends to gloss over important concepts and issues related to the oppression of ethnic groups and their struggles for power and against racism. The contributions approach to content integration may provide students with an isolated experience with an ethnic hero-heroine, but it often fails to help them understand their impact and role in the total context of US history and society as a whole. Level 2: The Additive Approach is the addition of concepts, themes, content, and perspectives to the curriculum without changing its basic purposes, structure, and characteristics. Examples of this approach include adding a book to a unit, the use of a film during a unit, and/or the addition of a videotape during a unit of study that was not originally included in the curriculum. The teacher, with this approach, can put ethnic content into the curriculum without restructuring. This approach has its disadvantages as well. The biggest disadvantage usually ends up in the viewing of

ethnic content from the mainstream (historians, writers, artists, and scientists) perspective because it does involve a restructuring of the curriculum. It is usually the point of view of the conquerors that becomes institutionalized within the schools and conventional society. The point of view of both groups is needed to help us fully understand our history, culture, and society. Materials, content and issues that are added to the curriculum instead of being an integral part of a unit can be problematic. Students need the content background and attitudinal maturity to respond to curricular materials appropriately. Adding ethnic content to the curriculum in a segmented and unorganized way can cause some difficulty for the teacher; pedagogical problems, confusion for the student, and worst of all, community controversy. Level 3: The Transformation Approach changes the fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum. This approach enables students to view themes, concepts, problems, and issues from several ethnic perspectives/points of view and changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum. The goal is to enable the students to view concepts and issues from more than one perspective and from the point of view of the ethnic, cultural, and racial groups that were most effected and influenced by the event, issue or concept being studied. Level 4: The Social Action Approach includes all of the elements of the transformation approach but adds components that require students to make decisions and take actions related to the concept, issue, or problem studied in the unit (Banks & Banks, 2007). The major goals of this approach are to educate students for social change, social criticism and to teach them decision-making skills. Banks and Banks (2007) assert, “to participate effectively in democratic social change, students must be taught social criticism and helped to understand the inconsistency between our ideals and social realities, the work that must

be done to close this gap, and how students can, as individuals and groups, influence the social and political systems in U.S. society” (p. 249). Units that are organized using the social action approach have the following components: A) decision problem or question B) inquiry that provides data related to the decision problem C) value inquiry and moral analysis D) decision making and social action. This approach, ultimately, should create a nation that will move closer to attaining its democratic ideals.

In addition to the four approaches to integration of multicultural content contributed by Banks and Banks, the NCSS has addressed this need in the national standards revised and released in 2010. There are Ten Thematic (Conceptual) Strands: 1) Culture and Cultural Diversity 2) Time, Continuity, and Change 3) People, Places, and Environments 4) Individual Development and Identity 5) Individuals, Groups, and Institutions 6) Power, Authority, and Governance 7) Production, Distribution, and Consumption 8) Science, Technology, and Society 9) Global Connections and 10) Civic Ideals and Practices. All of these themes provide the possibility and opportunity to integrate multicultural/ethnic content. Another reason for the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular emphasis on diversity is that everyone benefits. Educational researchers (Astin, 1993; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Humphreys, 1998; Milem, 1994) have demonstrated that an integrated approach to diversity is associated with widespread beneficial effects for all students (irrespective of race/ethnic background). This improves their cognitive, affective development, racial understanding, satisfaction with the educational experience, sense of community, and civic participation: all qualities, one could agree, that will help them succeed in a diverse, globalizing world.

“Thus, multicultural education represents a means to deliver a more relevant

education for all students to be successful in our culturally diverse world, and a necessary condition for closing the achievement gap. The goal for every teacher, administrator and counselor should be to reach and teach every student. To accomplish this, teachers must see, view and understand that each student or groups of students are as equal and as important as those students who most resemble the teachers. Understanding ethnicity, race, culture, language, educational learning styles, communication and attitude would change the school climate and culture to be more inclusive and allow for greater success and an enriched education for all" (Gardiner et.al, 2008, p.158).

In the field of urban education this type of education is extremely important. The urban student population rarely leaves their community and their experiences maybe limited to the resources in their immediate reach. The trend showing a disparity between the ethnicity of students and their educators has overwhelming implications for the educational process. Brosnan (2002) asserts, "You can support students of color all you want with white teachers, but it's pretty clear that they'll have a stronger self-image, and are thus more likely to be good students and contributors to the community, if they see themselves reflected in the adults around them" (p. 7). White teachers are currently instructing an increasingly diverse student body, justifying the need for all educators to become multi-culturally knowledgeable/culturally competent to teach all students.

Narrowing the Curriculum

In low performing schools it appears to be much more challenging to find time to devote to the content area of social studies. Urban school students, who are often attending low performing schools, may then be denied the opportunity to engage in social

studies content that may be purposeful, relevant and tap into the students' social and cultural resources to promote in-depth discussion and critical thinking. With the focus upon reading, math and science (tested subjects) the most common response to this challenge of finding time to teach these subjects has been the phenomenon of "curriculum narrowing" (Gunzenhauser, 2003; Hess & Brigham, 2000; Mathis, 2003; Vogler, 2003). With this phenomenon, the core academic content areas of reading, mathematics, and science are given priority at the expense of the time and resources that are supposed to be given to the instruction of other subjects in the curriculum. These subjects include social studies, physical education, foreign languages, and the arts. Teachers may intentionally, or unintentionally, exclude material from their lessons that is not tested. This, in their minds, is an effort to maximize the learning of the content that may be on the test. Pressure from the district and stated educational leaders to raise test scores has caused this reaction from educators.

Research suggests when these pressures exist in low-income elementary school teachers, they are less likely to spend time on non-tested subjects, which frequently includes social studies (Pace, 2008, 2011; Segall, 2006; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). Pace (2011) noted that teachers of students in affluent schools spend considerably more time on social studies instruction due to the perception among faculty that students would inevitably score higher on the tested subjects. On the other hand, Segall (2006) found that teachers in working class elementary classrooms were less likely to teach social studies and provided instruction of tested subjects in fear of low student performance on the test. Among the low income schools (most times urban and low performing as well), time for social studies appears to be redirected toward reading, mathematics and science

education for remediation purposes (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009), sending a clear message as to its curricular priority. Not surprisingly, the influence of state mandated testing on teachers' instructional practices is stronger where the stakes are high for the students and the schools. The impact of testing programs is also generally stronger in elementary and middle schools than in high schools (Pedulla, et al., 2003).

The adage of "if it's not tested, it's not taught" could seemingly be a reason for the demise of social studies education at the elementary level but NCLB (with its de-emphasis on history education) may be the more likely cause. According to the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (2012), twenty-one states required a state-designed social studies test. Only nine states required students to pass a social studies test in order to graduate from high school. Eight states had statewide, standardized tests specifically in Civics/American government. There are only two states that required students to pass that test to graduate from high school. Interestingly, social studies assessments have shifted to almost exclusively multiple-choice exams from a combination of multiple-choice and performance tasks since 2000.

The possibility that minority students are more likely to experience a narrowing of the curriculum should raise important questions regarding educational equity in our schools. To believe that high expectations begin and end with reading, mathematics and science is unrealistic. Even though low performing urban demographic schools may provide interventions for students, designed to improve the areas of literacy and mathematics, attaining educational excellence moves beyond just literacy and numeracy. The math and reading achievement gaps that we must strive to close may cause us to

substitute one form of inequity for another. This denies the most vulnerable students the opportunities that the most privileged students take advantage of as a part of life.

Social Studies Integration

Social studies are one of the few subjects that allows students to gain civic competence and develop their own voice. Gaining civic competence allows students to acquire knowledge about how to negotiate their political and social worlds through active participation in and the examination of social issues (NCSS, 2010). Social studies as a foundation discipline can ultimately be integrated across the curriculum to raise students' social awareness through application of this knowledge in political and social situations. Teachers are the facilitators of this process. In the *Handbook of Research on Social Studies Teaching and Learning*, Adler (1991) states, "a contributing factor to the unfortunate status of social studies in the elementary curriculum is the void that exists between what effective social studies instruction should be and the current practices found in many elementary classrooms." (p. 213)

One solution to this void has been the approach of "curriculum integration". Curricular integration is a time-honored tradition in elementary schools (Knudsen, 1937). This takes place when teachers relate curriculum areas so that few subjects are taught in isolation from one another. Supporters suggest students can perceive knowledge as related and that this process will allow them to retain previously acquired subject matter for a longer period of time as compared to learning the content in isolation as factual information (Holloway & Chiodo, 2009). By combining other content areas into a bubble of social studies, teachers could solve their time crunch problem (Christensen et.al, 2001). Integration would also provide students with opportunities to see how social

studies concepts fit into the total human experience, including art, literature, politics, government, philosophy and psychology (Cannon, 2002). In a study by Rock et al. (2006), they state that “the teachers in the study were not calling for more testing but instead focused on better teacher preparation in curriculum integration as a solution to the problem of reduced instructional time for elementary school social studies” (p.474).

Teaching a variety of concepts within a limited amount of time is what curriculum integration is all about. It is the most commonly used method at the elementary level. The design of teaching units of subject matter could possibly lend itself to integration as well. In a case study by Boyle-Baise et al. (2008), they contend that “principals and teachers saw integration as their secret weapon, a means of addressing more content areas in a meaningful and effective way” (p.245). They found that despite the rhetoric, there was little evidence of purposeful integration, where the teachers intentionally sought to connect language arts and social studies in order to enrich the content. Integration seemed to be a coincidental effect, unplanned, opportunistic moment of additional explanation stemming from reading topics and exercises (Boyle-Baise et al., 2008). Gregg and Leinhardt (1994) make a similar observation when evaluating the incorporation of geography into reading: “The geography that has been taught or learned opportunistically, rather than systematically, has gaps in the conceptual framework, so much so that it has been reduced to a rather trivial, simplistic, fragmented subject, rather than presented as a powerful tool for reasoning and problem solving.” (p. 314)

Although studies show students who experience integrated curricula have more positive attitudes toward learning and experience significant advantages within their learning environment (McBee, 2001), the promotion and use of reading programs (e.g.

Open Court, Core Knowledge, Houghton Mifflin) that claim to incorporate social studies has created a connection between social studies and literacy education. However, this does not always mean the social studies goals and concepts are being addressed because social studies topics are introduced and taught within a reading program. Curriculum integration is difficult for educators. The curriculum becomes more meaningful and relevant in the lives of the students when employing this method (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000; Parker, 2005).

The development of conceptual understanding in students who study social studies is imperative in moving them away from memorization of factual information. Concepts are broad umbrellas that allow us to sort and classify a variety of specific bits of knowledge. Conceptual frameworks allow teachers to reduce the number of topics covered along with integrating thinking so that students can create connections and patterns between related ideas. Multiple concepts can be grouped together and organized into broader instructional themes but singular concepts may be easier to teach because of the specificity necessary for building a child's schema. Students then are encouraged to relate their thinking to conceptual and transferable understandings. As stated previously, The National Council for the Social Studies (2010) addressed the ten conceptual themes to organize the essential understandings for grades K-12. They are not separate from social practice but they are grounded in students' experiences. Students' bring their thoughts and experiences to the classroom on a daily basis. They should be used to enhance their academics. But teachers can't teach when they don't know or understand the subject matter. This may raise the issue of problems associated with teacher preparation for teaching history as well.

Common Core State Standards

The beginnings of the Common Core movement can be linked to several unsuccessful attempts in the previous two decades. These efforts were started by specialized subject matter organizations as well as the National Education Goals Panel. This panel was chaired by the Governor of Colorado, Roy Romer. Introduced during the Bush and Clinton administrations, these attempts were laden with controversy and opposed in congress by Republicans and Democrats alike. With all of the controversy, national standards from the top down were a failure.

Based on surveys, given to business and higher education faculty, about the knowledge and skills students needed to pass work place training programs and college courses the American Diploma Project (ADP) was established in 2001. The project was created to make sure students were prepared, by earning a diploma, for entry into the workforce and/or higher education. In sixteen states graduation requirements were aligned with benchmarks derived from the surveys. Five states developed and administered an Algebra I exam along with fifteen states then deciding to develop a common assessment in Algebra II. In 2006, two former governors of North Carolina and West Virginia (James B. Hunt Jr. and Bob Wise) decided that national standards were a realistic goal. Most responsible for influencing organizations and key-decision makers to support the idea, they encouraged the national policy community (foundations that might support the effort, governors, members of Congress, etc.) to begin to write about the idea. Using research, Hunt and Wise (along with the organizations they lead-the Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy and The Alliance for Excellent Education) shaped

a clear picture of the policy challenge with common K-12 standards across states being the solution.

During this problem-solution phase research showing drastic variation among state standards began to play a prominent role. Two important pieces of research were brought to the attention of the policy community by the National Research Council. One piece of research measured the alignment of 31 state standards in three subjects, comparing them to each other and the NCTM mathematics and NRC science standards. Cognitive demand and topic coverage being the focus, very little evidence was found that a national curriculum already existed despite the use of the national documents such as the NCTM standards or similar widespread textbook adoptions. As a matter of fact, overlap in topic coverage across grade levels within the same state was greater than the alignment across states at the same grade level (National Research Council, 2008). With this significant state to state inconsistency in curricula being recognized, additional research analyzed state by state variation in assessments and performance standards (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). When mapping state proficiency levels for grades four and eight as compared to the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) scale, researchers found that differences in the percent of students, per state, scoring proficiently on state assessments did not represent the same level of achievement on the NAEP test. These differences only represented where a state set its proficiency levels. Interestingly, some state cut-points fell below the NAEP *basic* standard and most fell below the NAEP *proficient* standard. For national standards support groups, this discrepancy between NAEP and state assessment student performance was compelling

evidence that could be used to persuade state officials. This evidence contributed to the big picture of states' different, and typically low, expectations of students.

The case for the common standards was solidified in a report published by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), National Governors Association (NGA) and Achieve (National Governors Association, et al, 2008). The report recommended that states upgrade their standards “by adopting a common core of internationally benchmarked standards in math and language arts for grades K-12 to ensure that students are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be globally competitive” (p.6). The group based its recommendation on William Schmidt’s research on TIMSS. The research showed that high performing countries had standards that encompassed fewer topics at greater depth, more coherence and a higher level of rigor. This presented a challenge for CCSS promoters, trying to break the tradition of states and local districts deciding what their students should be taught. The Common Core’s policy advocates strategically framed their rationale with research that highlighted global competitiveness. This framework provided a way to persuade policy makers that common standards may have been the remedy educational and economic problems in the states. Keeping the U.S. globally competitive and providing educational equality was foremost in the conversations on national standards.

Due to the opposition of the federal government’s role in supporting standards created by national subject-matter organizations, it was agreed upon by the Hunt Institute, Achieve, CCSSO, and NGA that states had to take the lead this time (<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>). Soon after, 48 states signed an agreement to participate in the process-development of ELA and

mathematics common core standards and their assessments. The process began with two phases: the first consisting of a set of college and career ready (CCR) standards. The second phase consisted of tasks that were completed in the political context-mainly grounding the standards in evidence and research. Validation of the standards took place during this phase as well. One of the validation strategies used was to involve both the National Education Association (NEA) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT). They brought together groups of teachers to review the CCSS drafts. Both groups communicated their concerns during face to face meetings with the writers of the standards. In the end, with a few exceptions, the NEA, AFT and teachers trusted CCSSO and NGA writers because several of them had assisted in the development of standards for their own states. The validation process continued with the reviewing of the standards conducted by committees consisting of superintendents, university faculty and researchers (<http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/development-process/>).

State adoption of the CCSS required a vote by the state board of education (SBE) due to its oversight on curricular issues. With its targeted groups and individuals that could potentially influence the SBE vote, the process somewhat resembled a political campaign. The essence of the communications to their constituents was that of the focus on students' CCR preparations, the potential for commonality across states and local communities, U.S. global competitiveness, the voluntary nature of state participation and the inclusive state-led development process (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010). The policy supporters and writers who supported Common Core and who developed the standards also made many appearances in the states in order to talk about the content and rationale for the CCSS.

Because the implementation of CCSS has only begun to be studied the effects of it are yet to be seen. Partly because of the shortened process from creation to adoption knowledge about the Common Core and what it will mean for US schools is limited, even among educators. Currently, the speed of implementation varies significantly across local districts and states. As of August 2015, 42 states have adopted the CCSS in ELA/literacy and math. They are now in the process of implementing the standards locally (CCSS, Web. 15, Dec. 2015).

Teacher Autonomy

For the purposes of this study teacher “curricular autonomy” is defined as the teacher’s perception of whether he/she has freedom from outside control when making important instructional decisions based on student needs. The literature indicates several types of teacher autonomy, ranging from the specific concept of individual autonomy to more broad concepts such as organizational autonomy. Words that commonly describe individual teacher autonomy are: discretion, independence, professionalism, control and decision-making. Autonomy appears to be a key variable when examining educational reform (Pearson & Moomaw, 2005). Some scholars argue that empowering teachers, by encouraging autonomy, is where we need to begin when trying to solve the problems occurring in schools today (Melenyzer, 1990; Short, 1994). There could be several benefits associated with teacher autonomy. Deal and Celotti (1977) suggested at least four. First, teacher autonomy simplifies the adaptation to change. In their individual classrooms teachers are, essentially, free to change methods or programs as new strategies become available and students change. Second, it is assumed that proper instruction can take place without administrative supervision. There is a faith in the

expertise and the dedication of the staff. Third, there is an implication that discussing educational issues is not necessary. Therefore, planning time and coordination costs are saved. Finally, with a view of being self-reliant professionals doing things our own way is what most of us would value.

Crawford (2001) related autonomy closely to decision-making power. Teachers should be the ones to make decisions regarding their students' progress, or lack thereof, because they are closest to their students. Pearson (1995) sees the autonomous teacher as the expert and supported Crawford's idea that the teacher should be allowed to control the classroom environment and given flexibility to do so. Another definition of teacher autonomy portrayed teachers as self-aware and focused on making things happen in the classroom (Rosenholtz, 1989). Street and Licata (1989) summarized individual autonomy when they defined it as "teacher's feeling of independence in making professional decisions within the classroom and their use of personal judgment to guide instructional work with students" (p.98).

In a survey conducted by the National Center for Educational statistics of the U.S. Department of Education a sample of teachers, nationally representative, were asked to rate their influence on a variety of school wide and classroom issues. It was found that teachers perceived their influence was confined to the areas of textbook selection and selection of teaching strategies (Willner. 1990). In a study conducted by Leon, Nason, Omari, Bastos, and Blumberg (1982), questionnaires regarding differences and similarities in teacher autonomy were given to teachers in Brazil, Jordan, the United States and Venezuela. Classroom activities and organizational activities (such as attending meetings, maintaining student records, etc.) were differentiated. The study

concluded that “in each country teachers felt more autonomous in the area of choice of classroom activities, and less autonomous in making choices related to organizational activities” (p.10-11). Other studies by Bourke (1984) in Australia and Deal and Celotti (1997) in the United States support this conclusion as well. Teacher autonomy has been considered to be one dimension of teacher empowerment (Klecker & Loadman, 1996; Short & Rinehart, 1992) yet as they are structured today, you do not generally find empowered teachers in US public schools (Corwin & Borman, 1988; Hanson, 1991). In recognizing teaching as a profession and teachers as professionals, attention given to teacher autonomy is a very important. Just as attorneys and doctors, in order to be regarded as professional individuals and be empowered, teachers have to have power and freedom in their professional practices (Pearson & Moomwaw, 2005; Webb, 2002).

The current state of education provides a complex environment for today’s teachers to exercise autonomy. Shulman (1983) addressed this issue. In an article in the *Handbook of Teaching and Policy*, he spoke about five obstacles to reform: top down delivery, limited resources, working conditions, limited resources and conflicting policy mandates (Shulman, 1983). The educational system often tends to strip teachers of control due to policies set forth by others. However, the complexity of teaching commands a level of professional autonomy. Teachers often end up spreading themselves among the students competing for their attention. They must teach several subjects to mastery, most times devoting more instructional time to one subject at the expense of another. All the while, they are functioning within a larger system of bureaucracy that provides them with teaching duties as well as other demands on their time and energy.

With all of these competing expectations a teacher is forced to make a plethora of decisions, making him or her quite autonomous, in a seemingly controlling environment. The obstacles of policy mandates and working conditions relate directly to my study in that “the ultimate goal is to make teacher autonomy yield education that meets policy demands and ensures equity, yet maintains the flexibility needed to negotiate the everyday complexities presented by the classroom’s specific context” (LaCoe, 2008, p. 11). Duffy and Hoffman (1999) discussed their concern that policy affected teacher autonomy, specifically laws that have begun to dictate instructional methodology. Teaching has evolved into a very technical and prescriptive process. They argue that a one-size-fits-all approach to educating students prevents teachers from teaching (using methods and strategies) that they know would be beneficial to children. Furthermore, they believed that the professional nature of teaching is in jeopardy. These authors declared that the answer is not in prescriptive research-based methodologies or policies, but in teachers.

Given the possible benefits of teacher autonomy there are inevitably some issues that might be associated with it as well. McLaughlin, Pfeifer, Swanson-Owens and Yee (1986) refer to three such problems: “The classroom door provides a measure of autonomy for teachers, but it also fosters isolation, limits feedback and performance, and promotes staleness” (p. 423). They went on to label these problems as isolation and stress, disenchantment and alienation and the resistance to meaningful change. Isolation and stress refer to the autonomous teacher working alone. When he/she has this luxury no one knows exactly what they do or accomplish. Therefore, they feel isolation and unappreciated. When speaking of disenchantment and alienation the autonomous teacher

feels disenchantment when the 'system' does not clearly delineate the channels of authority. The organizational structure of school systems can cause teachers to feel powerless to achieve the role in which they have been placed. The final problem of resistance to meaningful change speaks to teacher autonomy supporting the status quo. Teachers being free to experiment on a whim and veto innovations introduced at the school or district level, can cause a significant decrease in the likelihood that long-lasting and meaningful changes in instructional practices will happen.

Zajano and Mitchell (2001) wrote that there were major contradictions amongst policy makers, educational researchers and practitioners concerning autonomy. They said that "many schools are structured to foster independence yet demand dependence; encourage autonomy yet insist on control; aim to develop complex thinking processes yet test for isolated skill." (p. 161) With the tensions that relate to teacher autonomy being illustrated by the previous quote, Zajano & Mitchell (2001) argued further that teacher autonomy became highly problematic when compared to the concept of equity in education. The potential dangers of how autonomous teacher can provide or deny their students access to learning are compelling. Zajano & Mitchell (2001) maintained that teachers who had high levels of autonomy are able to deny students access to time, opportunities for success, curricular coverage and ultimately, instruction. Ability grouping and tracking students were ways that this occurred. Murphy, Hallinger, and Lotto (1986) studied what they defined as student "opportunity to learn" (OTL). OTL was defined as student access to curriculum content, time, success rate and quality of instruction. These variables were analyzed with the conclusion of a positive relationship between OTL and student achievement, as well as evidence of discrimination when these

variables were looked at among different student groups and curricular tracks. According to Murphy et al. (1986), how the instructional time was used differed despite equal time distribution. It was noted that time in the classes with lower ability tracks tended to consist of: more time getting class started, ending instruction earlier, loss of more time to student/teacher interruptions and more time allotted to completion of homework rather than providing further instruction or enrichment. As far as curriculum content, social goals appeared to take precedence over academic goals, students were asked to do less homework and fewer projects and reports (Murphy et al., 1986). Teachers clearly had autonomy to choose the level of expectations for achievement, kind of environment and whether students are challenged. This shows that autonomy can be used in negative ways as well. Thus, marginalization or empowerment can result from it.

High Stakes vs. Low Stakes Testing

There is a growing body of research that suggests that a driving force behind fundamental change within schools can be high stakes testing (Abrams, Madaus & Pedulla, 2003). In various states high stakes are attached to test results at the student and/or school level. For example, test results are used to make very important and significant decisions at the school and student levels in Maryland, Texas, North Carolina and Virginia. Similarly, Kentucky, Washington and Vermont use these test results to hold schools accountable. To illustrate this further a study conducted by Abrams, Madaus and Pedulla (2003) states,

“In Kansas, state test results were one of several pieces of information used to determine school accreditation, but had no official stakes for students. In Michigan, school accreditation was determined by student participation in, and

performance on, the state test, and students received an endorsed diploma and were eligible for college tuition credit if they scored above a certain level on the eleventh-grade tests. In Massachusetts, school ratings (and potential takeover) were based on the percentage of students in different performance categories on the state test, and students-starting with the class of 2003-had to pass the tenth-grade test in order to graduate from high school. Thus, as one moves from Kansas to Michigan to Massachusetts, the stakes for educators remain fairly constant (from moderate/high in Kansas to high in Michigan and Massachusetts), but the stakes for students increase dramatically (from low in Kansas to moderate in Michigan to high in Massachusetts)” (p.5).

A good portion of the research conducted on state testing programs addresses its effects and what is being taught as a result. For example, in a study conducted by Abrams, et.al (2003), they suggested that “as the stakes attached to the test results increased, the test seemed to become the medium through which the standards were interpreted” (p.7). Educators in the state of Massachusetts (high-stakes) mentioned more often that they used the state test as the focus for the efforts of their teaching while the educators in Kansas (low-stakes) were least likely to refer to this (Abrams et al., 2003). A considerable amount of instructional time is devoted to test preparation, on the standards that are tested, because of the pressure to improve student achievement and raise test scores. In another study about teachers’ opinions of statewide testing programs, conducted by Abrams et al. (2003), it was noted “teachers in high stakes settings were far more likely to report having greatly increased the instructional time devoted to tested content at the expense of non-tested content and enrichment activities than were teachers

from low stakes environments” (p. 27). In addition, it was reported that much more instructional time was spent using released items from the state, utilizing test preparation materials, teaching test taking skills and preparing students for the state test, in those high stakes state classrooms.

“Specifically, four times as many teachers (44%) in high stakes states reported spending more than 30 class hours per year on preparing students for the state test (10% of the low-stakes states reported the same). In addition, 70% of teachers in high stakes states, compared to 43% of those in low stakes states, indicated that they were preparing students for their state test throughout the school year, rather than just during the weeks prior to the test administration” (Abrams et al., 2003, p. 44).

Interestingly, however, a significant amount of teachers in both types of testing programs (87%-high and 67%-low) reported teaching test taking skills to prepare for state testing. Wanting to transfer out of grades where the test was administered was indicated by twice as many teachers in high stakes states versus low stakes states as well (Abram et al., 2003).

The high or low stakes associated with student achievement have a direct impact on classroom instruction and assessment. The intent of frameworks or curriculum standards created by states should be to convey clear outcomes and high expectations for academic achievement for students. These curriculum standards should ultimately end up providing teachers with a clear purpose and focus for their classroom instruction (Goertz, 2000). This doesn't appear to be happening across states (and in some cases within a state). In a study conducted by Abrams et al. (2003) findings suggested that some of the

biggest differences between the standards and the test were not between states but within states. For example, “the greater impact on special student population, the tendency for urban districts to spend more time on test preparation, and the increased burden on the elementary curriculum highlight the complexities involved in implementing a one-size-fits all reform in different context and with different populations” (p. 15). However, Abrams et al. (2003) assert, “the results suggest that the state test, rather than content standards, is the more powerful influence on teaching practices. While teachers reported generally positive views towards their states curricular standards, the substantial majority of teachers in both high and low stakes states reported that the state test has led them to teach in ways that contradict their own notions of sound educational practice” (p. 27).

Taking all of this into account, it appears state tests have an impact on what content standards gets emphasized and how students might be assessed. So regardless of the sanctions or rewards associated with testing, many teachers may feel negatively about the quality of instruction students receive because of state testing. Namely, in order to meet the demands of state testing teachers need to make changes to their instruction and assessments. Due to testing, teachers are now encouraged to mirror their classroom assessments (types of question, responses, etc.) to their state tests. Abrams et al. (2003) states, “Far more teachers in low-stakes states said their own tests reflect the format of the state test than did teachers in low stakes states. Although the differences are not as large, a similar pattern occurs with regard to the content of teachers’ tests reflecting that of the state test” (p. 114). With assessment mirroring the test, test preparation materials being used, the utilization of released items, etc. making a decision about school accreditation or high school graduation based on test scores should be questionable. The

validity of a state test that was originally designed to provide an accurate, and objective, measure of achievement doesn't appear to exist if this is what teachers are being required to do.

Phenomenology

The conceptual foundation for this study lies in the philosophy of phenomenology. Phenomenology is concerned with relationships between outward behavior and its inner conscious causes. "The aim of phenomenological research is the exploration of the fundamental consciousness of the person or people being studied so that their perceptions can be identified and interpreted" (Stone, 1979, p.2). Until the late 1930s, phenomenology was a "foreign affair". With its beginnings dating back to the late 1800s, Franz Brentano noted the term "phenomenology" in unpublished writings for a course on Descriptive Psychology at the University of Vienna (Spiegelberg, 1965). Brentano's task, to bring about a reformation of philosophy, had a negative and a positive side. Although his mission was never specifically stated, statements and actions made it plain that he contributed to the beginnings of this philosophy. Spiegelberg (1965) states, "Brentano's first concern in psychology was to find a characteristic which separates the psychological from non-psychological or "physical" phenomena" (p.39). During this search he developed his celebrated doctrine of intentionality as an essential component of psychological phenomena. These psychological phenomena are acts, experiences of undergoing and doing, transitory processes and states of consciousness. For the first time Brentano uncovered a structure that became one of the basic patterns for all phenomenological analysis. Brentano was concerned about the outcome of our uncensored experience.

Carl Stumpf, a student of Brentano's, played an important role in the introduction of phenomenological methods into psychology. His work helped with the transmission of these methods to some of its most active researchers. His approach spread through the work of gestaltists Max Wertheimer, Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Kohler, as well as Kurt Lewin of the Group Dynamics movement. He indirectly affected the work of Donald Snygg and Arthur W. Combs and their new "phenomenological psychology". Stumpf, in the history of phenomenology, would be found at the crossroads of the wider Phenomenology Movement where it branched off from the main philosophical road, when Husserl's conception of phenomenology had not yet been solidified (Spiegelberg, 1965).

Edmund Husserl, a student and colleague of Stumpf, was a central figure in the Phenomenological Movement. In 1901, the second volume of Husserl's book *Logische Untersuchungen* used the word "Phanomenologie" prominently for the first time (Spiegelberg, 1981). Within this volume was the first systematic attempt to clarify the main characteristics of this new and strange science of experience. Thus, the characteristics of experience: purity, its reflective character and the analytic approach based on the pattern of *intentionality* were introduced. Purity means two things: independence of empirical facts and exclusive concern for the general essences of experiences. Reflectiveness refers to the study of the varying aspects that phenomena may present themselves as well as the varying degrees of clarity in which they were given. Lastly, intentional analysis implies that the phenomena has been analyzed and described in terms of its intentional structure (reciprocal relationship between the act and its contents) (Spiegelberg, 1981). Although the Phenomenological Movement does not

end with Husserl's contributions (others include Wolfgang Kohler, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann, just to name a few).

For the purpose of this study Hans-Georg Gadamer's approach to phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology will be utilized. Gadamer, a student of Heidegger, brought to this philosophy the belief that consciousness is not universal. He saw human consciousness as being bound by traditions of their culture and situated within history. Gadamer's philosophy stresses the importance of the role of fore-meanings, prejudices, in understanding human experiences. These prejudices are to be understood in their original meaning of the term, which is "a judgment that is rendered before all of the elements that determine a situation have been fully examined" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 306). Being aware of the fore-meanings that one holds provides the ability to accept and move forward into the unknown. This allows one to see what was previously unseen. It also allows one to understand more clearly the phenomenon as it is experienced by those living it, thereby expanding one's own experience and sense of the world (Gadamer, 1976). Great emphasis is placed on the role of dialogue (as well as language) in understanding the phenomenon. Gadamer expresses that understanding takes place through dialogue with self and others (Gadamer, 1960/1989, 1976). Heidegger's emphasis on language and the understanding that comes through it is less than Gadamer (Taylor, 1995). Often there is an awareness of things before one has the language to appropriately express it. Ultimately, the means through which one understands and is able to express to others that which is understood is language.

Phenomenologists emphasize the subjective aspects of people's behavior. Our use of multiple ways of interpreting experiences through interacting with others enables

us to create meaning of our experiences that, in turn, constitutes reality. Therefore, reality is socially constructed. The intentionality of the teacher, as it relates to social studies instruction, will be examined within the context of teacher autonomy.

Intentionality has been described as a “plan of action” a teacher has in mind (Freyberg, 1980, p.41). Intentionality drives our deliberate acts and shapes the decisions that we make in regards to our experiences. On a daily basis teachers have a plan, or intention, to cover certain lessons, concepts, skills, etc. social studies instruction may or may not be included in this list.

People who work within the phenomenological tradition believe that the researcher cannot know human behavior without understanding the framework in which the subjects interpret their feelings, thoughts and actions. It requires the researcher to cut through common sense understandings and accept the subject’s point of view. To do this would require me to apply what phenomenological researchers call “*verstehen*”. This is an empathetic understanding, or ability to reproduce in my mind the feelings, motives, and thoughts behind the actions of others. This mental activity should cause me to grasp events as they relate to the total picture.

When conducting phenomenological research, it is important to remember that the participant and the researcher bring pre-understandings with them. Neither is in a privileged position to interpret. They both see the world from their own view and it is through the fusion of these views one comes to understand the experience in a new and different way (Gadamer, 1960/1989). One cannot function with only their own understandings nor is it necessary to make the understandings of another your own.

Therefore, we understand because of our pre-understandings rather than “in spite” of them (Koch, 1996).

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design

It is the question and not the researcher that should determine the research design (Gadamer, 1960/1989, Van Manen, 1990). In this study the research question was: What is the lived experience, in the area of teacher ‘curricular’ autonomy, of a teacher teaching social studies in a suburban low performing, urban demographic, elementary school? This question required a qualitative methodology. In hermeneutic phenomenology, guided by Gadamer’s philosophy, the aim is to gain a new or different understanding of the meaning of everyday experiences (Gadamer, 1960/1989; Van Manen, 1990). This made Gadamer’s approach to phenomenology an appropriate choice for a study that is seeking to understand the experience of teachers teaching social studies in a low performing elementary school, in the area teacher “curricular” autonomy.

A phenomenological study is “a study of people’s conscious experience of their life-world, that is, their “everyday life and social action” (Schram, 2003, p.71). My task as the phenomenologist, then, was to depict the essence or basic structure of experience (Merriam, 2006). I chose the qualitative design of a phenomenology study due to the focus on the experience of teacher “curricular” autonomy in low performing suburban (urban demographic) elementary school within the context of social studies teaching. The beliefs of the teachers would help me to understand their lived experiences in the classroom and why they make the decisions they make regarding the teaching of social studies. While quantitative researchers typically rely on numerical (statistical) analyses of how often things happen, qualitative researchers examine people (such as students,

teachers, and administrators) in natural contexts, interacting with other people and objects in their surroundings (Hatch, 1995).

Qualitative research has some distinct features. According to Creswell (1998), “qualitative research is a multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach in which the researcher attempts to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 15). First, qualitative researchers are concerned with the process of an activity, not just the outcomes. In particular, in educational settings they look at instructional activities within the total context of schools and classrooms. People’s behaviors and actions occur in a specific context; therefore, the behaviors must be studied in natural settings. I began the study with 3 teachers and their behaviors/beliefs in reference to teacher autonomy and the teaching of social studies. I also initially interviewed 2 administrators (school and district level) in reference to their beliefs about teacher autonomy and the teaching of social studies. Second, because of this belief, researchers wishing to study educational questions must collect relevant information through direct observation and personal interviews, at the data source. In an ideal situation, the researcher becomes an accepted, and participatory, member of that setting. They are not just an observer. In my study, I was a member of the school staff. It was my second year on the staff and relationships had been formed with the classroom teachers that were participating in my study. I also previously worked in the school district and had established relationships with other educators working in the district as well. Third, in qualitative research the information collected (data) is primarily verbal. Checklists that count frequency of occurrences of educational events, activities, and behaviors, are for noting trends and not for presenting averages or determining numerical

relationships. Verbal data assists the researcher in finding out what participants are thinking when performing a job. Data such as this provides a basis for examining the underlying mental process of complicated tasks that cannot be studied in any other way. The use of self-reported checklists, interviews and anecdotal notes were employed in my study.

In analyzing the data external validity is important. It addresses the extent to which the findings of a particular study can be applied to other situations. How generalizable are the results of the study? In qualitative research, a single case or small, purposeful, nonrandom sample is selected specifically because the researcher wants to understand the individual case/s in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest the notion of *transferability*, in which “the burden of proof lies less with the original investigator than with the person seeking to make an application elsewhere.” In my study, I sought to gain a greater understanding of teacher “curricular autonomy” within the context of social studies teaching. Originally used in ethnographic studies, *rich, thick description* (Merriam, 2009), has come to be used to refer to the use of a highly descriptive and detailed composition of the setting and findings of a study. I expected to attain thick description through the use of the phenomenological intensive interview process, along with field notes of behaviors or mannerisms demonstrated by the participants. The information gained from those interviews and observations/field notes provided me with the means to describe, in detail, the beliefs/behaviors (lived experience) of the participants. This is necessary in order to explain the phenomena of teacher ‘curricular’ autonomy and how it affects the teaching of social studies in the classroom.

In my phenomenological study I chose to collect information from participants who were knowledgeable and could describe the phenomenon. Then I interpreted the data and explicated it for themes/categories. My results created a description of the lived experience for each teacher, in the area of teacher “curricular” autonomy. A theory, from these descriptions, could possibly be tested later. From qualitative research, educators can obtain extensive knowledge about educational processes within classrooms, schools, and communities (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). With thick description I believe I achieved this.

Demographics of the School

The focus of my study was situated in one elementary school in the state of Missouri in the US. The teachers who participated in the study had been in the school for at least 2 years. This was a clear advantage due to the fact the teachers were familiar with the expectations of previous principals and the district. Turnover of administration might lead to reliability issues regarding the social studies education implementation.

The racial composition of the student population in the participating school was 97% African-American and 3% other. The percentage of students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch was approximately 91.8%. This percentage provides a basis for the type of families that makeup the school (i.e. low income). Over the past 2 years the total school enrollment averaged 254 students in grades K-5. Class sizes in these grade levels averaged 19 students during the school year that this study was conducted.

Participants/Sampling

The purpose of phenomenological research is to describe and explore a phenomenon, such as teacher “curricular” autonomy within the context of social studies

teaching. According to Hycner (1999), “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice versa), including even the type of participants” (p. 156). An understanding that saturation occurs when the data becomes repetitive and new themes no longer occur is how sample size is determined. Although random sampling is not necessary or appropriate in phenomenology, I find it necessary to disclose the method used for sample selection to assist the reader’s decision regarding transferability (Higginbottom, 2004; Sandelowski, 1995). I chose purposeful convenience sampling to identify the primary participants. According to Welman and Kruger (1999), this is considered to be the most important type of non-probability sampling. Perspective and insight are gained from a targeted group that has experience with the specific phenomenon being studied. I used purposeful convenience sampling due to my professional position and access to colleagues that may possibly assist me. The participants were chosen based on the content areas/grade levels that they taught, and were from multiple elementary schools in the same school district. Only grades 3, 4 and 5 teachers participated in the study. All of the grade levels were required to administer the state assessment. The grades 3-5 teachers that initially participated were Communication Arts and Social Studies teachers. All grade levels had access to the same social studies program/curricular materials. The administrators (district and school) interviewed were chosen using the same type of sampling. The district level administrator was the Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator for the entire district Grades K-12. The school administrators were the leaders of the implementation of social studies programming and instruction in the elementary schools. One district administrator, one school administrator and three teachers were interviewed initially. While conducting interviews with the initial participants, other key informants were

revealed and they were interviewed as well. I interviewed a total of 16 participants.

The primary elementary school chosen operated within a low performing, urban demographic school district where accountability pressures were high. In the school where the initial participants were employed, three principals were assigned to the school in the previous five years. During the time of the study, it was the school principal and researcher's second year in the school. However, the teacher turnover in the school for the past 6 years, at least, had been almost non-existent. The school made growth in all content areas on the state test during the 2012-2013 school year, but four years previous, test scores consistently declined in each content area. All of these groups of people (teachers, school administrators, district administrators) played a part in the implementation of and/or instructional importance placed on social studies programming in the school (in relation to the phenomena of teacher autonomy). Their voices needed to be heard.

Confidentiality and anonymity are related, but different concepts. While the former deals with information being private or a secret, the latter eludes to the unknown origin of something. In ethics literature, confidentiality is commonly viewed as similar to the principle of privacy (Oliver, 2003; Gregory, 2003). This concept is essential to our societal beliefs that individuals matter and those individuals have the right for their affairs to be private, although as Bulmer (2001) notes, in our information-led society upholding this right is far from simple. Reassuring someone of confidentiality means that what has been discussed will not be repeated, or at least, not without permission. The concept of confidentiality (and anonymity) was raised and discussed with research participants prior to their participation in the research. Researchers can ensure that they

do not disclose identifiable information about participants and can protect the identity of research participants through a variety of methods designed to make them anonymous.

The research context usually determines the extent to which being anonymous is successful. Researchers can claim that they will attempt to make sure, to the best of their ability, that participants are not able to be identified but they cannot promise that this will actually happen.

The participant's identities have been protected with the use of fictitious pseudonyms for the descriptive results/cases, sex may have been changed and each participant was assigned numbers for the interview transcripts. I told participants that pseudonyms would be used and offered to let them choose their pseudonym. I felt it was important for each participant to have the opportunity to choose his/her own pseudonym. Consent forms (Appendix A), for all participants, were distributed during or prior to engaging in an interview (prior-in the case of informants that were revealed during initial interviews).

Methods of Data Collection

Internal validity deals with how research findings match reality. Maxwell (2005) agrees that one can never really capture reality. "Validity, then, is a goal rather than a product: it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted. Validity is relative: It has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods and conclusions" (p. 105). Human beings are the main instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Accessed directly through their observations and interviews are interpretations of reality. The most common strategy to support the internal validity of a study is

triangulation, the use of multiple sources of data. A second common strategy for ensuring credibility is member checks, soliciting feedback regarding your emerging findings from the people you interviewed. Third, adequate engagement in data collection is necessary if you are trying to get as close as possible to the participants' perception of a phenomenon. A fourth strategy, related to the integrity of the researcher, is sometimes called the researcher's position, or the act of the researcher critically reflecting on him/herself being a "human instrument". This allows the reader to have insight into how a particular researcher's beliefs and values influence the conducting and conclusions of the study. Finally, peer examination, or review, helps the researcher to gain insight and feedback from an unbiased party regarding the findings being reasonable based on the data (Merriam, 2009).

Reliability in a study refers to the degree to which research findings can be replicated. The issue with this, in qualitative studies, is that human behavior is never fixed. The question that is most important when conducting qualitative research is whether the results are consistent with the data collected. So if the findings of a study are consistent with the data presented, the study can be considered dependable (Merriam, 2009).

The data collection process was, initially, to be conducted over a period of 6 months. Due to movement of participants and the academic calendar of the participating school district (summer vacation) the study lasted 20 months. From teachers, data was collected in the form of field notes, individual interviews, a self-reported checklist (noting whether or not social studies was taught daily) and relevant curriculum documents (lesson plans). From administrators (school and district) data were collected

in the form of interviews, field notes and relevant curriculum documents (district social studies curriculum, meeting notes, email correspondence regarding social studies and social studies program materials distributed). Gall and Gall (2007) state, “Two common methods of data collection in qualitative research-interviews and analysis of documents-involve words uttered or written by the participants in a natural setting” (p. 276).

I did recognize that the technique of interviewing could present an ethical dilemma within itself. Interviews can cause respondents to feel that their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed to answer certain questions and they may also say things that they never intended to tell. Patton (2002) stresses that the interviewer’s task “is first and foremost to gather data” (p. 405). Individual interviews were beneficial in my study in that they were used to get answers to questions or to test specific research questions or hypotheses. Rather, the intensive interviews were used as a means for understanding the experience of others and the meaning the interviewees make of that experience. The limitation of this was that I changed my questions in following interviews because of responses obtained during earlier ones. As a result, some interviews may be entirely different in scope and content than others.

The primary method of data collection in a phenomenological study is the interview. The interviews with the participants centered on their definition of autonomy, career history, educational goals and purposes in social studies, teaching methods and resources, their students and their school, relationships with administrators and colleagues, professional development experiences and thoughts about testing and accountability. Generally, one long interview is conducted during a phenomenological study in order to get a comprehensive description of the participant’s experience of the

phenomenon being studied. Interviews were semi-structured and took place in a location designated by the participants. Interviews were to be conducted before observations/field notes began (approximately an hour long), as well as at the conclusion of the study, in order to gain a deeper understanding of teacher “curricular” autonomy in the context of social studies teaching. Questions for the interviews were created in alignment with the aims of the study.

Relevant curriculum documents and email communication with participants were beneficial. Merriam (1998) asserts:

Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person's attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world. But because they are personal documents, the material is highly subjective in that the writer is the only one to select what he or she considers important to record. Obviously these documents are not representative or necessarily reliable accounts of what actually may have occurred. (p. 116)

Public records are open to scrutiny by everyone and are typically in an anonymous form. Gall and Gall (2007) state, “an important feature of human environments is the messages that people encode in various forms” (p.287). Written documents, visual media, audio media and combinations of media content make up forms of communication from one individual or group to another in natural situations. Relevant curriculum documents were gathered. A self-reported checklist noting whether or not social studies was taught on a daily basis and lesson plans were collected from the teacher participants weekly or bi-weekly. A school and district professional development

schedule was requested from the school and district administrator participants. Finally, copies of state/national standards and district curriculum for social studies were acquired as well.

In regards to my study, three types of data were collected in relation to the same phenomenon (interviews, checklist and curriculum documents). Merriam (1998) points out that one of the goals of qualitative research is to "reflect the participant's perspective" (p. 116). Since this is a process study, the perceptions of all participants are a key consideration (Patton, 2002). During the interviews I gained multiple perspectives by interviewing a district administrator, school administrators and classroom teachers. I did not supervise any of the participants. Therefore, my relationship with these staff members was not be a point of bias. The same amount of interviews, checklists and types of documents were requested from each participant. Questions that quite possibly could elicit beliefs counter to my own were not included in the interview guide but may have been asked during the course of the interview.

The initial subjects in my study received an incentive of a \$150 worth of gift cards. \$50 at the completion of each stage of the study. Interview #1 was stage one. Collection of data was stage two. Interview #2 was stage three. The administrators did not receive incentives for participation in the study. The 'possible' key informants participated in the study received \$25 for each stage of the study (as noted above).

Explication of Data

The word "analysis" has dangerous connotations for phenomenology. The term analysis, according to Hycner, usually means "a 'breaking into parts' and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon... [whereas 'explication' implies an]

...investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (1999, p.161). Analyzing transforms data through interpretation. I used Hycner’s explication process. It has five phases: bracketing/phenomenological reduction, extracting units of meaning, clustering those units of meaning to create themes, summarizing the interview (validating and modifying if necessary) and making a composite summary. Before evaluating interviews and documents I went through the process of *epoch*, refraining from judgment while revisiting the phenomena. Any assumptions or prejudices were bracketed, temporarily set aside, so that my own consciousness can be examined. Horizontalization, laying out all of the data and treating it as having equal values, took place. The data collected was already a result of various perspectives based on the position of the participants in the school district (district administrator, school administrator and teacher). Reduction and elimination of irrelevant data took place. All interviews and documents were analyzed and examined using reflective analysis wherein thick description was generated and discovery of patterns, themes and constructs was possible (clustering). Central themes/Categories of teacher autonomy were then extracted in order to be evaluated. Validating those categories brought about subcategories as well. Writing a description for them took place. I then developed a textual description of the phenomenon. Finally, a description of the essence of the experience (teacher autonomy) was formulated. Triangulating across data sources (field notes, interviews and documents) occurred (see Table 1).

Table 1

Data Collection and Analysis

Artifacts/Participants/Frequency	Analysis
-Interviews w/member checks (Teachers and School/District Administrators) 1x before the study begins 1x after the study has concluded Approx. 1-hour long	-Semi-structured -Reflective analysis-break into segments and look for themes/units of meaning -Findings presented to participant and check for accuracy
-Curriculum Documents –Lesson Plans, District Curriculum, PD Schedule for the District/School, CCSS, NCSS Standards (Teachers, School/District Administrators, State and National Documents) – Ongoing -Lesson plans-weekly/bi-weekly -District Social Studies Curriculum-1x -School/District PD Schedule-1x -CCSS and NCSS Standards	-Reflective analysis-break into segments and look for themes/units of meaning
-Self-Report Checklist-noting whether or not Social Studies was taught, # of instructional minutes and # of minutes ELA was taught	-Reflective analysis-break into segments and look for themes/units of meaning
-Field Notes and Email (All Participants)-Ongoing	-Reflective analysis-break into segments and look for themes/units of meaning

As Merriam (2009) suggests, I analyzed my data simultaneously with data collection. She states, “without ongoing analysis, the data can be unfocused, repetitious, and overwhelming in the sheer volume of material that needs to be processed” (p.171). The results of my analysis took the form of interpretations and hypotheses. In addition, these hypotheses and interpretations were weighed in relation to two different contexts- the context in which the documents and records were developed and the context in which they were being interpreted for research purposes (Hodder, 1991). However, the resources available, social and political context, participants, nature of the project and the nature of the questions being asked all played a part in determining the effectiveness of achieving an understanding of the phenomenon. I gained a full sense of the lived

experience of a teacher of social studies in a low performing elementary school, within the area of teacher 'curricular' autonomy.

It was my hope that during this phenomenological analysis the phenomenon of teacher "curricular" autonomy, as lived by the participants, would be illuminated. In reference to my study design and the data that was collected, my belief was that the trustworthiness/warrant would come from my triangulation of the data (field notes, relevant documents and interviews).

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter will present the analysis of 27 interviews conducted following an interview protocol that was generated to address the primary aims guiding this study: 1) revealing the meaning of teacher autonomy for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri 2) revealing the perceptions of the role of social studies for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri 3) giving a voice to teachers in low performing elementary schools who are in high stakes testing states where social studies is not tested. Curriculum documents and fields notes were collected for this study and will be referenced as well.

The personal stories for this study were generated through semi-structured interviews with 16 educators (14 women and 2 men), between the months of February and December of 2014 (6 school months). As stated previously, the phenomenological approach was chosen in order to obtain a full sense of the lived experience of a teacher of social studies in a low performing elementary school, in the area of teacher ‘curricular’ autonomy. During this phenomenological analysis the phenomenon of teacher ‘curricular’ autonomy, as lived by the participants, was illuminated.

Participants were given pseudonyms in order to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity. Each of the participants agreed to be interviewed on two separate occasions, provide curriculum documents and complete a self-reported checklist documenting when social studies was taught in their classroom. Over the course of the interview process, both the interviewer and participants (administrators) found that one interview was sufficient to explore the number of questions outlined in the interview protocol. Second

interviews were conducted to see if participant's views changed during the course of the school year. All but 5 classroom teacher participants were interviewed twice with a total of 27 interviews completed. These 5 participants were hired in different school districts before the completion of the study. All of the participants were recruited through conversation with initial participants of my study. They all were employees in the district office and/or elementary schools of a Missouri school district.

Table 2
Participant Demographics

Name	Race	Years in Education	Current Position	Education
Amanda	African American	17	3rd Grade	M.Ed. in Ed. Admin.
Allie	Asian American	9	5th Grade	B.S. in Education
Kathy	Caucasian	12	4th Grade	B.S. in Education
Sally	African American	2	5th Grade	Teach for America/ B.A. Business
Trina	African American	6	4th Grade	M.Ed.
Sam	Caucasian	13	5th Grade	B.S. in Education
Breann	African American	16	4th Grade	M.Ed.
Ashley	African American	18	3rd Grade	B.S. in Political Science/M.Ed. In Counseling
Missy	Caucasian	7	4th Grade	B.S. in Education
Tiffany	African American	16	3rd Grade	B.S. in Education/ M.A. Public Admin.
Elise	African American	22	5th Grade	M.Ed.
Nick	African American	13	Social Studies Supervisor	M.Ed./Ed.S.
Connie	African American	18	Principal	M.Ed./Ed. S.
Tammie	African American	20	Principal	B.A. Business/ M.Ed/Ed. S.
Rebecca	African American	18	Principal	M.Ed./Ed. S.
Sheila	African American	22	Principal	B.A. Business/ M.Ed/Ed. S.

Participants self-identified in the following ways (See Table 1): 1) 12 participants indicated their racial identity as African American, 2 participants identified as White/Caucasian and 1 as Asian American 2) Years in education ranged between 2 and 22 years 3) Every participant was employed in the same school district 4) 11 participants identified as classroom teachers, 4 as principal and 1 as a district social studies supervisor and 5) Educational levels ranged from completed bachelor's degree to completed educational specialist degree in administration.

Data Analysis

Each of the interviews was reviewed by the researcher immediately following transcription to determine accuracy and to begin the open coding process. The researcher looked for similarities and differences among participant experiences, understanding, actions, interactions, and outcomes related to their answers to the interview questions. As a part of the method of constantly comparing, temporary labels were given to data segments that appeared to have similarities. As those segments were continuously repeated in participant's responses broad categories and related sub-categories began to emerge. The categories and sub-categories were shaped in terms of their properties (i.e. attributes) and dimensions (i.e. range of characteristics). The axial coding process included the integration of the researcher's reflective memos and supported hypotheses regarding how the categories and subcategories related to one another. For this study, the categories were organized in a sequence that captures the conditions, context, and outcomes related to the phenomenon of teacher autonomy. Participant's responses helped me to understand, describe and explore their lived experience with teacher 'curricular' autonomy. I looked for places that corresponded to my research aims.

The chapter is organized into five sections that describe five categories developed through the phenomenological explication of data procedure and a final section detailing additional findings. The first section, *Professional Development*, describes the experiences that participants' had with professional development in the area of social studies instruction/programming.

Section 2, *Curriculum Implementation*, covers the participants' feelings on how and when social studies is to be taught in their school/district and its aftereffects.

Section 3, *Role of Social Studies*, illustrates the level of importance/purpose placed upon the teaching of social studies and/or motivating factors that influence the educators to want to teach the content area.

Section 4, *Testing and Teaching*, exemplifies participants' beliefs about why social studies may not be taught as frequently as other content areas.

Section 5, *Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction*, expresses the participants' understanding of autonomy and the level to which they have autonomy in the area of social studies instruction. This is the nature of its existence in their current professional life.

Finally, section 6, *Additional Findings*, entails the participants' reports of instructional time given to social studies within the time period of this study. The reports also reflected number of instructional minutes given to a state mandated test content area as well.

Table 3
Categories and Subcategories

Category	Subcategory
Professional Development	
	Limited/No Teacher Training
Curriculum Implementation	
	Scripted/Outdated Curriculum
	Students-Restricted Knowledge
	Content Integration
Role of Social Studies	
	Developing Citizens
	Social Studies is Important
	Want to Teach
Testing and Teaching	
	Administrative Restriction
	Tested Content Areas More Important
Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction	
	Administrative Support
	Own my Schedule
	HOW to teach more important than WHAT

Professional Development

This category details the participants' experiences with professional development provided in the area of social studies instruction/programming, experiences may include those that may have happened outside of the district that they are currently working within.

Limited/No Teacher Training

Consistently, participants described the experiences they have had with social studies professional development as limited or nonexistent. Sally talked about her experience with social studies professional development, only being in the field of education 2 years now. "I have never received a PD in district or in house that has mentioned social studies instruction. To be frank, this year in particular seems like social studies has left the building" (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, February).

Trina, having been in education for 6 years, declared adamantly, “I’ve had no PD in social studies since graduating with my bachelor’s degree. I’ve never received social studies PD in my teaching career. While Allie, in her 9 years in the district, pointed out the lack of professional development opportunities provided even though she has worked at two different schools in the district.

I haven’t had a lot of professional development period. A lot of the professional development I’ve done has been science. I’ve spent probably the last 4 years or so doing different science workshops. I’ve done reading workshops. I haven’t had one social studies one. Not one related to social studies (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, February).

Elise, an educator of 22 years, Ashley (18 years), Breann (16 years), Tiffany (16 years) and Sam, an educator of 13 years, expressed a similar sentiment when asked about their professional development experiences.

None, because the focus has always been on ELA (English Language Arts). I can’t remember any. If I’m not remembering something, that’s on me but I honestly can’t remember having a social studies PD for quite some time. We just acquired a new social studies series this year and I have yet to receive any PD for that program (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, February).

No. Never, I’ve never had professional development for social studies (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

No. Math, reading and science, that’s it (excited) (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

No. Nothing direct. The only professional development that I can remember is when it was time to pick a new book to do curriculum, we went and we previewed what McGraw-Hill brought and what other companies brought. Then they gave us a book and that was it (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

I cannot recall. Honestly, I was trying to think, I can't recall a time when I just focused on social studies. Science, math, reading, computer, the whole bit. And in 13 years, I don't recall one just on history or social studies (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February.)

Two educators, Amanda and Kathy, mentioned the limited social studies training that they have received.

Not since, whoa, I want to say almost ten years. It's been a very long time since we've actually done something with social studies (A. Sullivan, personal communication, 2014, February). Yeah, we did. We first-we touted that too. If we got it in '03, it was the '04 versions. I know it's still down there, our world, our community, different grade levels had different things but we had tons. They taught us how to use those Foldables, they went through just like a reading curriculum and said: this is how you would teach every single little thing. It was amazing, it was great, I was excited because the kids actually were excited. We did have quite a bit, then. Now, since then, there's been nothing. There was then! When we had a brand new series and all that (excited) (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February).

In addition, the educational administrators, as a collective, concurred that social studies professional development is not provided in their district. One administrator,

Tammie, has received social studies professional development (personally) due to her furthering her education in a doctoral program focused on Character Education and School Governance. Though she, nor the district that she works in, has provided this professional development for the teachers in her building.

This section described the participants' experiences with being provided professional development in the content area of social studies-and detailed the feelings that may have resulted from the lack there of. The inadequate preparation provided to teach social studies in some way can be an affirmation that the level of importance placed on social studies is not very high.

Curriculum Implementation

This section reports on the participant experiences within the area of curriculum implementation. Curriculum usually refers to the skills and knowledge students are expected to learn. This includes the learning standards and/or objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the projects/assignments given to students (along with the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course) and the other methods, tests and assessments used to evaluate student learning. Successful implementation of any curriculum, program, or instructional model requires a strategy, planning and staff development. The previous section discussed the level of staff/professional development provided in the area of social studies instruction amongst the participants. The following sub-categories contain descriptions of the strategies and/or types of planning that all of the participants have used while providing social studies instruction to their students. There are also reflections on how this relates to where they are in their instructional practices today.

Scripted/Outdated Curriculum

Scripted curriculum can be defined as a “prepackaged” curriculum that stereotypically requires teachers to not only follow a particular sequence of pre-prepared lessons, but to actually read aloud from a teaching script in class. Outdated curriculum, in schools, could be any curriculum that is not revised on a yearly basis. The purpose of school district curriculum is to guide the instruction of classroom teachers and provide a pathway for them to prepare students to be college and career ready. Teachers are asked on a yearly basis to create their lesson plans based on the district curriculum, which should be aligned with current state standards. The participants were generally divided in reports related to the use of curriculum. Ashley reflected on the fact that her district has changed reading, math and science programs so much that is difficult to keep up with social studies.

We’ve changed so many books, we’ve changed math, we’ve changed reading-to-where we don’t even have to think anymore. When you change a lot of things, it makes it really hard to really get a chance to teach social studies. The books are so old (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

Ashley also reported that her school has books but she pulls her own information from the internet resources that teachers can access. She stated that the maps at her school were horrible and “old”. Trina commented that their curriculum was “old and outdated”. Sam had more of a concern.

Just in the last few years, we’ve moved to the trend of scripted curriculum, scripted reading, and scripted math. Following those steps, and even with math in particular now, that’s not the way I feel it works best for my kids. Even 3 or 4

years ago, I felt there was more decision-making power. Now, there is none in social studies (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February).

One participant, Sally, admitted that her students were unsure of what social studies is. She also disclosed that this is because she has clearly established that for HERSELF. Her students ask why they don't do social studies and she tells them that she chooses to work on their character instead (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, February). While a majority of administrators did not mention the school district's curriculum for social studies, one administrator confirmed that the curriculum in the district is outdated and needs revision.

So we are forming those groups now, we are trying to build the social studies department back up, and I think since 2004, I think that was the last day for the curriculum done in the district. 2004, something like that, it was approved by the board. Each year, I have to say, I'm not going too far back, each year the district has written curriculum. I don't know if it has reached the point for the board approval, so they have been working on it, I know 2008 or 2009, I think---- currently now I'm starting it back up again. So we've been working on it at least three times this year so far. But I think 2004 was the last date it was approved by the board (N. Washington, personal communication. 2014, February).

What's most surprising about the reports regarding scripted/outdated curriculum is that only a small number of the participants mentioned the fact that the district social studies curriculum, and the programs that were chosen to teach it, were out of date (neither has been updated for at least 10 years). Having current, relevant and research based programs to teach social studies (with its current events, historical facts,

primary/secondary sources, technology, etc.) would seem to be very important to the effectiveness of teaching the content. If the district has not provided an updated curriculum, aligned to current state standards, students/teachers will continue teach/be taught content that is not current and/or relevant. In turn, causing both the teacher and students to have restricted knowledge in the areas of social studies instruction and content. The following section details the feelings communicated within the participants' responses regarding this topic.

Students' Restricted Knowledge

Four of the participants expressed a concern regarding the knowledge base of the students being restricted due to lack of curriculum implementation. Missy asserted, "Common core testing isn't going to be just reading and math anymore. Science and social studies are going to come too, and our kids aren't going to do good on it because our kids don't have that background knowledge" (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February). Meanwhile, Breann expressed a different concern related to the everyday life of the student.

I think it's a disservice. When you are in third grade and you tell the kids that they live in the United States, and they don't realize that where they live is a city and Missouri is a state, and the United States is a country and they have no clue. They don't understand taxes and how your taxes pay for the school. They had no clue, even pulling up a map, you can tell that some of them had probably never seen a world map. They asked questions like why is the United State so small? Not understanding that his is a model, a small scale of something bigger. They asked, what is Iceland and Greenland? Is it here? Can I drive there? They have no

concept of any of that, and that just doesn't make a whole child (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

Additionally, Tiffany and Nick shared the same view as Missy. Although one is that of a teacher and the other, that of an administrator.

What I find is they don't know very much about it (social studies), they don't have a strong background. It is not a continuum, like it's not something that has been scaffolded, so when you are teaching map skills to third graders that teacher has to start from the very beginning of that skill. No one, it doesn't seem as if they have been taught in kindergarten or first or second about a key, about a scale, about any, they don't seem to have, or bring a lot of knowledge about it with them at all. Even if, it is not just that part of it, ask a student about a plateau, ask them about, it, even north, west, south and east, ask them. None of that, they are under-educated, that's a huge part of it. There is minimal social studies taught (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

Social studies are mainly done at the secondary level in the district, and that's the sixth through twelfth, there-dispersed among the elementary schools, it's not uniformly taught at the elementary level, so I did hear it's taught at the fourth grade, with Missouri history, found that our yesterday. So where we are—that says a lot at this point it's really not emphasized at the elementary level. But sixth thru twelfth, let's start at the middle school, by the time the student arrives at the middle school sixth grade level, the social studies skills are very low, so the teachers are really having to go back to the very basics of social studies for the student's basic history knowledge, basic information about their state, the

country, the capitals of each state, etc. Just basic knowledge, and I didn't realize that until this year. Also, in terms of geography, just basic information about the seven continents, the oceans, all bodies of water, everything. So by the time they reach eighth grade they have gained a minimum amount of information for social studies, so when our students reach high school, ninth grade, they have minimum informational knowledge. They do gain more because high school is specifically content driven, by subject area, so the teachers have more time to teach the students the information. But they keep having to go back further and further to provide background knowledge for what they should already know (N. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

Although restricted knowledge of students was not mentioned in the other participant responses, half of the remaining 12 participant's responses included a reference to History being taught in their classroom as social studies. The content area of social studies encompasses seven disciplines (history, economics, civics/government, geography, sociology, anthropology, psychology). If history is the only discipline of social studies that is being taught, consistently or intermittently, it is no surprise that the students' level of knowledge may be restricted. Effective instruction requires that the teachers' content knowledge base be sound and proficient. Although the participants' will to impart social studies content may be there, the way to provide effective instruction in their content area may be unclear. However, while trying to provide effective instruction, a majority of the participants' mentioned that instructional strategy of content integration was suggested and/or mandated for them. The following section features a sub-category that depicts the participant's experiences with implementing the strategy of content

integration in an effort to provide effective social studies instruction.

Content Integration

Three of the teacher participants did not reference integration of social studies into any other content area that they taught. Two of the four for mentioned participants teach social studies as a separate content area while the remaining two said nothing at all about how they include social studies instruction into their day. However, they did mention that it is necessary for them to think about how they could make time for the content area. Comparatively, the remaining nine participants mentioned that they attempt to integrate social studies content into another content area. Missy, Tiffany, Amanda, Ashley, Sam, Kathy and Allie indicated that they utilize their reading instructional time to integrate social studies content. Missy reported that her integration efforts are not voluntary.

We're told on our daily schedule to include social studies in your communication arts (reading, writing and language arts) block, but to me, how are you going to learn how to read a map when you're supposed to be doing communication arts skills or specific content skills in social studies that need to be hands on? Latitude and longitude, you can't sit there and learn that by reading a book. You have to actually do it, and making maps and reading maps and practicing with that (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February).

Tiffany asserts that she is new to the process of content integration. "I've learned that in order to get your social studies content in, you use communication arts. But that has been in the last two years that I have even heard about it or heard it given as an option. But we haven't been shown how to do that. I have been a teacher for 16 years

now. That says a lot” (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February). Although Amanda has been teaching just as long as Tiffany, she has a different approach. “I get social studies in within my reading lab, what I do is whatever story that I’m focused on I try to pull things that relate to that, then I know I will cover social studies. That’s how I do it” (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February). Ashley believes that social studies and reading seamlessly fit together.

I never really thought about it. Seriously, reading and math, you’re teaching across the disciplines. Social studies is just reading, but it has a twist on it, you’re reading about history. I give reading passages to my students, and we talk about fiction and non-fiction. A reading passage might be about American history, they’re always getting some social studies, it just looks like we’re doing reading. I never really thought about an emphasis on just social studies, not being on the front with reading and math. I think with elementary, if we can really teach them those core skills in reading-social studies is reading, and once you teach them the core of how to comprehend and understand, when they get to social studies, it shouldn’t be that much of a problem. I know it gets different when you get to high school, you really have to know about your history and you get tested on it. I know for me in social studies, I really teach my students how to create outlines so they can see what they’re learning and I combine that with reading comprehension (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

Sam’s approach is similar but he has different feelings about the level of implementation.

It kind of has to be embedded or incorporated into reading. A lot of the passages that they’re going to be reading on the test are going to be non-fiction passages

and things of that nature in general, and you have to know how to attack those in a different manner. That's history and social studies, so if the kids have that foundation then they have that prior knowledge even before they go into the test. I try to pull as much as I can, social studies non-fiction texts to use, but I just don't feel we're hitting it like we used to a few years ago. I enjoyed it then (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February).

Kathy's method for integrating social studies is a bit different than her colleagues.

I bring it up if we are reading non-fiction stories, and so we talk about that time, there's a little history in it but there's not a lot. Then we-you know, there's a story about China, so we talked about China at that time. Hopefully I can pull something else in because even the readworks.org and the Triumph website, there is a lot of content based reading on there. And MyOn (another website) too, where you can get-they read a cause and effect and it was called Giant Panda, Shrinking Forest and they loved it. We did it whole group and that was our story. That they could do and take the quiz on their own, and then I could get the comprehension on that. It has history, it has science, it has that stuff in it and so does the Readworks (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February).

Finally, Allie ties in social studies with current events.

Social studies is not taught a lot. I hit it pretty much with the morning work. I will do like that Tween Tribune at least 3 times a week, I'll do that. That's where I'm really kind of using a lot of the social studies because it naturally comes up. As they write their summary, they've got to tell me who it is about, what it is about, and where it is. Every time we're talking about where, we always relate

back to the calendar, so we're getting in and learning about the regions and we always tie in, talking about winter or weather related thing. We'll talk about why is it cold there, why is this happening-and then we also tie in the actual story, so we kinda talk about just human interaction. That's how I'm kinda getting my social studies in (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, February).

Trina and Breann described their social studies instructional time as being separate from other content areas that they taught.

Outside of our reading time, we were studying maps and after introducing all of the components of a map the students were required to create their own country. They were expected to design a map of their country with various map parts. They had to have landfills, a key, lines of latitude and longitude, cardinal directions, etc. (T. Hamilton, personal communication. 2014, February).

It's separate, once I get it going. If it's something that can follow-up, I would make that one of the ten-minute math centers. If we're working on goods and services, one of the math centers would be to separate goods and services once I have taught it. But I do take the time to, okay, we're going to do JUST social studies, this is it. I TRY to integrate social studies to get more bang for my buck but math takes its place (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

All of the administrator participants, when asked about social studies instruction in their building, made mention of this section's topic. Rebecca declared, "Social Studies instruction is integrated with other subjects" (R. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February). Connie reported, "It is supposed to be integrated with communication arts. I just don't think that we have done the job well enough on that integration effort" (C.

Smith, personal communication. 2014, February). Tammie indicated, “When teachers incorporate social studies with other content, students are exposed to varied concepts in social studies. Social studies has to be embedded within other content areas for grades 3-5 due to high stakes testing, so sometimes that instruction is not present” (T. Thies, personal communication. 2014, February). Sheila affirmed, “Most of the social studies instruction is done through integration with other subjects. Although it’s important, because of the emphasis placed on English Language Arts, Math and Science, less has been on Social Studies. That’s why the subject is integrated as much as possible” (S. Vale, personal communication. 2014, February). Finally, Nick has the most to say regarding the topic of content integration.

We have been focusing on close reading in social studies. Those ELA common core strategies that will support the social studies content. English is so broad, broad spectrum, therefore you are everywhere and all over the place. But social studies is a little bit more refined and narrowed to specific things that a student would need to know to be successful in social studies. So, yes we are focused on those ELA common core that are strategies for reading. Like primary, secondary sources, which is also a part of social studies, along with close reading, how to use the text, text features, etc. Those are some of the things that we are focusing on, but the big one for the district is close reading within the social studies content. And that’s been for the last two years. I think that at this point the curriculum would have to be stand alone, and then as we finalize or refine it there would be that integration because that is a big thing. Even with common core, the integration and how to do it effectively would be the issue. We would have to

have a constructivist and/or problem based model to it (N. Washington, personal communication. 2014, February).

The previous section presented sub-categories that organized the participant descriptions of factors influencing curriculum implementation in the area of social studies instruction. Factors included the use of scripted or outdated curriculum in order to provide effective instruction, the restricted knowledge that results because of the use of this type of curriculum and the effort to implement the integration of social studies content with other content areas. The subsequent section explores the participant's thoughts and feelings regarding the role that social studies has within their instructional life and the lives of their students.

Role of Social Studies

The feedback provided by the participants, in relation to the role of social studies in their classroom, is an interesting understanding generated from the study when associated with the identification of the purpose for schooling and the social studies. This was highlighted in the studies reviewed in *Chapter 2*. Participants described a variety of insights that influence their instructional decision making. The elements that appear to have the greatest effect on the participants are described in the following sub-categories and include narratives related to the feeling that social studies are important, social studies helps to develop well rounded citizens and teachers want to teach social studies-they and the students enjoy it.

Social Studies is Important

All of the teacher, and one of the administrator participant expressed feelings about the importance of (need for) social studies instruction in their classrooms or

schools. Missy, Kathy, and Allie all commented on how social studies could provide just basic knowledge that students need to have about their surroundings (the world they live in). Allie feels strongly, “I think social studies should always be taught because social studies is all around us. Everything we do has to do with social studies. Students need to know that” (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, February).

Everything is focused on reading and math. Yes, that’s important, but when a child doesn’t know the direction a street goes, when they can’t tell you where they live, when they can’t tell you the history behind the civil war or slavery, just because you talk about it one month in February, because the school wants to put on a performance or force people to do an activity for it. They are missing a lot. They don’t know a lot. One of the biggest things that I always try to start the year with, because we have a little more leeway is even being able to get them to tell where they live. They cannot differentiate between continent, country, state or city. They don’t know the difference between them (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February).

I think they need some social studies, they got to know the difference between city, county, state, country, continent-all of that. So at the beginning of the year, I did a whole unit where we zoomed in on Google Earth, zoomed out to the county, state, and went out to the country. Unfortunately I don’t have enough time to do it all the time, but we did do it-and we had maps. We learned continents, oceans and in fourth grade we have to do Missouri. They don’t realize when they are going to another county or even state, like just over to Illinois. I fully believe they need it. It doesn’t have to be a ton, but they need social studies. (K. Osby,

personal communication. 2014, February) Social studies is important, but until it is tested, I'm afraid students will be missing out (looking upset) (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, October).

Amanda, Sam, Ashley, Sally, Trina, Breann and Elise voiced the level of importance within the context of instructional time. Trina expressed, "My students have very limited exposure to the subject. They only seem to see social studies as history." (T. Hamilton, personal communication. 2014, February) Sam stated, "I feel social studies is very important. At the beginning of the year, I had it on my schedule. I was at least trying to squeeze some of that in." (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February) Ashley reiterated, "I really wish I could get social studies in more, I like social studies. I really think it's important to build that foundation. I don't get it in as much as I'd like, but I want to do more social studies" (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February). Sally commented, "Because I do believe social studies is critical, I tried my best to incorporate it. I think understanding our history to change our future is key (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, October). And Elise summed it up by saying, "I think social studies is important. Just got to find a way to make time for it as well" (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, February).

I just think that social studies are important and the kids do need it, but the time is so limited that you just don't really get to do what you should do as far as social studies. Probably if I just had my class to teach, it would be a different story. I would probably be able to squeeze it in because then I don't have that extra reading group, I don't-you know, that ELA time takes up a big chunk of my day. So like I said, I'm just trying to squeeze and pull and do what I can to get some

social studies in with the kids but it's just not happening, and not all the time (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

I think it's a disservice. We just need more of it. Math tends to go over, so like twice a week, I don't do math centers so I can teach social studies to validate that I'm teaching it because they need it. But with the big push on math centers it might get cut. It's in my schedule everyday but I don't get to it every day. I really think we spend too much time on math and we spend too much time on reading. They need all of it and I believe that when the school was more successful, we taught everything (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, February).

Finally, Tiffany summed it up for everyone by stating, "I think the lack of social studies lessons aid in the increasing the level of ignorance in the lives of this generation's learners. They have no idea who they are or where they came from, even where they live. It's sad" (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

Only one administrator, Connie, articulated her outlook on the importance of social studies being taught in classrooms in her building.

I'm not really sure why social studies was put on the backburner; I don't really understand the rationale behind it. I think that social studies is important. Social studies encompass a lot of things and I think it should be tailored to who their students are and what they are interested in. We haven't done a very good job of that. I think that students have a hard time with that as well, especially when you talk about teachers who don't really know or understand what's important to the students that they teach-or the, you know, the environment where they live, what their cultures are....and it's difficult for them to do. I'm not saying that it can't be

done because it can, it's just going to take a lot of work and a lot of thought put into doing it, but I think it's important but we just haven't gotten to that point yet (C. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

Although the remaining administrator participants did not disclose a belief that social studies instruction in the classroom was important, they did express their certainty that the teaching of social studies would help to develop a more well-rounded citizen. The following section features responses centered around the topic of social studies instruction and its ability to create the foundation for students to come to be functional and active citizens in their world.

Developing Citizens

Participants mostly described the teaching of social studies as an opportunity for students to learn about how to effectively function in the world around them. For instance, Missy and Tiffany offered their thoughts on the development of their students.

I think that even though, yes, the testing is important, I don't think we are creating good, educated citizens. They are not becoming well-rounded individuals. They're missing the citizen part. They are not understanding why we do things the way we do. Social studies isn't just the history part, it's also that citizenship part and they're not kind to each other. They're not good citizens, they're not about helping each other. There's not much community (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February). Our students only know the here and now, not the reasons behind why things are the way that they are. Map reading has gone by the wayside because of technology, yet students are asked to read maps on standardized tests. Part of the pride of being an American is lost because

our students don't understand how our country was built (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, October).

When you ask a child about black history month, or black history, and all they know is Dr. Martin Luther King, it's ridiculous. When you ask a child about American presidents, they MAY know the one on the dollar bill, they MAY know about Abraham Lincoln but they don't know anything else. They don't know why we were in the First or Second World War: they don't know about the revolutionary war, ask a child about what the 4th of July is about. So it is an impact on us hugely, I think that our children are so shrewdly retarded, when I say retarded I mean it in a literal sense, they are behind, they do not know or have a connection with how America became America or why it functions the way it functions. So if we are supposed to be producing socially capable citizens into the world, who don't have any idea about judicial system, how to change it, how to participate in it, who don't have any idea about how these things work, how can we help them to become effective members of society if they don't have any idea about it? They don't know anything about it. Well, you can talk to someone, talk to a GROWN person about the Electoral College, and see what THEY know about it (laughs) (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

Amanda, Breann and Sally summed it up for the classroom teacher participants with their thoughts. "For them to be in the real world, they need that social studies instruction" (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February). "We need to create whole children. I teach it because it's best for the children" (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February). "I think this is the least I could do. Originally, I pushed

through lessons because I needed to cover the material. Now I try to be more cognizant to what my students need as they develop into professional citizens” (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, February).

Two administrator participants, Tammie and Sheila shared their views of social studies instruction and its impact on the students in their buildings. “Social studies should be taught because of the need to inform students on how to become good citizens, versus teaching because of a test” (T. Thies, personal communication. 2014, February). “I believe we have to make all subjects make sense to students. The more we can help them make connections to their real life, the better, and not only prepare them for tests” (S. Vale, personal communication. 2014, February).

The following section details specific examples of teacher’s and administrator’s assertions about wanting to teach social studies. The comments mainly focus on the areas of teacher and student interest.

Want to Teach -Student-Teacher Enjoyment

The teacher’s instructional decision-making in a classroom is very important. WHAT a teacher teaches is determined by the state standards but HOW and WHEN a teacher teaches it is his/her choice (even though a school/district will TRY to determine this as well). When students enjoy what a teacher teaches, usually that instructor will feel more comfortable with learning the content themselves (if necessary) and/or presenting it to the students for learning. All of the classroom teacher participants communicated that they wanted to teach social studies, in some form or fashion, in their classroom. Missy, Tiffany, Kathy, Allie and Ashley commented about their student’s interest in the subject.

They cannot differentiate between continent, country, state, and city. They don’t

know the difference between them. When they have the opportunity to learn about it, they actually want to learn about it. They care about it; they're interested in it. They just don't always have the opportunity to explore it (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February).

The teachers who have found it to be important were the teachers who taught it. I tried to get it in but honestly I didn't get it in every day. I alternated it depending on my grade level I'm teaching at the time. Sometimes I could do every other day science and social studies, sometimes I would do this week science and this week social studies. Depending on what I was trying to teach, I was trying. But I know that when we are turning our lesson plans in it wasn't mandatory to have a social studies or a science lesson plan (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

I feel like if nothing else the school is a community, and then they live in a community and that's why with them, showing them-like I showed them my house. I showed them how I cross the river, I showed them my route to school. They really enjoy stuff like that and with technology being STEM, I feel like it goes right with it. I was amazing, it was great, I was excited because the kids actually were excited (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February).

In '08 we were departmentalized, I did the social studies. WE had so much fun in my class, just the different things that we would do. I miss teaching it. I try to sneak in as much as possible, just little things here and there. I think it needs to be a part of the daily curriculum for these kids. Testing won't just continue to be

reading, math and science (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February).

The students enjoyed learning about the branches of government and acting out various positions during debates (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, October).

The kids enjoyed it because I made it real to them. The kids knew: is this a mirror, or is this a window? They understood that when it was a window, we had to understand what other people are going through. They really enjoy making the interactive foldables that we create. It's a chance for us to bring in new things. It helps them to remember it more (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

Elise summarized her experience with her students by saying, "My students enjoy social studies concepts when we do them" (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, November).

While student interest in learning social studies is significant, teacher interest in teaching the subject is essential as well. For example, Missy, Kathy, Sam, Allie, Ashley, Trina, Breann and Sally mentioned their level of interest in the content area.

I know that they need the history but I'm really into maps and stuff like that, so I think that's part of the reason I teach it but I feel like they need that. That's one of the big ones that I totally dig because I'm like...they don't even know WHERE they live! No one told me I couldn't teach it! I'd love to pull groups and teach social studies, even if it's in May after testing. I at least want to do something but I just feel like they're not getting what they need-I mean, how do you live in a society and not know any history or any geography? You don't have to know it all

(K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February).

For me, I don't like not getting a chance to teach social studies because it has always been my favorite. I love history, and I think when you learn history there's so much more that you can pull into it. Personally, I would really love to be able to teach it as a separate subject. I would be very upset to find that my daughter's school is not teaching social studies. For me, that's a big deal. That's why I do try to at least do as much as I can in reading, even if we are just reading something on somebody in history or about the great depression or whatever. Honestly, I'd even consider just going to middle school or something and just doing that as a subject (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February).

Social studies is not taught a lot. I get it in pretty much with the morning work. I will do the Tween Tribune at least 3 times a week, Social studies naturally comes up. Everything we do has to do with social studies. That's how I get it in (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, October).

I like social studies because it's part of our history and shows where we come from. It's not just about us. I teach our social studies like this: I tell the children that when we learn about things that are just like us, we are looking into a mirror. When we talk about social studies about other people's lives and things they've been through, then that is a window. We're peeping into somebody else's life, their window. Social studies is very important because we need to know about those mirrors and we need to know about those windows. Yes, I teach social studies in my classroom. Not as much as I would like to because we are

transitioning, we have a lot of things going on (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

I personally enjoy social studies, but I don't see a real connection between social studies and our current high stakes testing. Social studies is definitely present in my classroom. We learn via hands on exposure, not simply through the use of practice sheets. I think it's evident in my class because I enjoy it personally (T. Hamilton, personal communication. 2014, October).

I like teaching goods and services, and the branches of government. I like teaching that, but with the big push on math and math centers, it gets cut. No one is saying teach this, this, and this. I teach it because they need to know it. Honestly, if I didn't teach it, I don't think anyone would say anything. But I teach it because it's best for the children (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

When I think of my students and what they need, I don't think so much of the American Revolution and settlers moving west. I think understanding our history to change our future is key. When thinking of all of the behavior problems and life altering changes my kids face, I know that I need to "theoretically" set time aside each week to slow down a lesson for teachable moments or to pull a child aside to give him/her the tools to solve their own problem. I think that this is the least I could do (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, October).

Meanwhile, Amanda communicated her interest in teaching social studies as a concern.

Well, I think that we don't-I don't think they get enough social studies, I'm going to be honest with you. Some of it is because of what we have to test. I want to teach it but I have to kind of focus in and hone in on the skills that I know that these children really, really need as far as ELA or math. Sometimes social studies is kind of pushed to the side because I don't see it as important at the time. I try to teach it with ELA. I'm not given a directive to create social studies lesson plan (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

In contrast with the remarks given by the classroom teacher participants, the administrator commentaries were not as detailed. Three of the five administrators, Connie, Tammie and Nick, provided feedback in line with this topic. Connie spoke from her personal experience in another district, as well as the current one.

I think that I have not looked at a social studies curriculum in a long time, but I do believe that there were so many things that have been left out or so many things that have been misrepresented over the years. I know that those things are changing but we just have to do better job of what we decide that we are going to teach our kids. I think once we do that, once we have everybody involved, things will be better and social studies will be a big part of what it is we are going to do (C. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

Social studies should be taught because of the need to inform students versus teaching because of a test. I would like teachers to teach social studies but it doesn't seem important at the district level. Social studies time is the first to go when ELA or math needs to be taught (T. Thies, personal communication. 2014,

October).

You know where the state or the district is, and the two critical areas are English (ELA) and mathematics, so that tells you right then and there the level of importance on social studies. Where we are, with the—in terms of being unaccredited, and trying to reach at least provisional...we're really focusing on those two content areas, but yet and still as a district level employee, I'm really pushing for some time with social studies. It kind of helps to pull the total picture for students. I'm working with an organization to pilot a couple of programs next year in social studies at the elementary level (N. Washington, personal communication. 2014, February).

As stated above, the state of a school district (state accreditation) can put pressure on it to perform in the areas that will bring it more points towards accreditation. When certain content areas are weighted more heavily than others, in attaining points, this causes some dissonance with instructional priorities in schools/districts, as stated in the review of literature in Chapter 2. The following section will address the issue of testing and conflicts that it may cause when determining the instructional priorities (specifically with content being taught) in a low performing district. Two subcategories, administrative restriction and the importance of tested subjects being taught, will be addressed.

Testing and Teaching

Administrative Restriction

All of the classroom teacher participants presented similar experiences in regards

to social studies instruction being restricted by either the district or school level administration, either verbally or non-verbally. Missy, Tiffany, Ashley and Breann's comments focused on the issue of scheduling/lesson planning.

We're shown on our daily schedule, we have a daily schedule and it's blocked out with communication arts, math and science. But we are told to include social studies in our communication arts block, but to me, how are you going to learn how to read a map when you're supposed to be doing communication arts skills or specific content skills in social studies that need to be done hands on? We are required to have grades in the system for social studies and on the report card for it. But we don't actually teach it (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February).

I know it's not inspected, I know that for many years that the focus has been on communication arts and math and then you got to social studies and science, but most of the times those were the subjects that were excluded and it wasn't mandatory. The teachers who have found it to be important were the teachers who taught it. I was trying to teach it, but I know when we are turning our lesson plans in it wasn't mandatory to have a social studies or science lesson planned (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

Even looking up at my schedule, I had to take it off of my scheduled instructional blocks. I was taking a little time off the math and squeezing it in. I was asked to adjust that. On my lesson plans there is no social studies or anything like that. We are supposed to be getting a new lesson plan form. But there is not social studies. That's not technically getting the required minutes in by the state, if you

know what I mean, and I worry about the minutes (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February).

We will plan the lessons, and we don't talk about how successful our social studies lessons are as much as we do math and reading. It's never been one of those things that was paced on the forefront. It's like always we always talk about math and reading. Wow, I have never even thought about that (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

I have never had a schedule that I could create. With communication arts already being there, I like for my math to be uninterrupted and then science and social studies get thrown in. I hate to say it like that but it's true. Social studies is twice a week, if that much. It's the big push for math and my social studies is right after math. Math tends to go over into that time (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

Amanda, Kathy, Sam and Allie did not highlight that of administration restricting instructional time, but they did mention the fact that instruction in this content area is not pushed at all.

I think teachers look at it like: it it's not necessity, they don't do it. If it's not something that the principal is saying that you need to do, teachers just don't do it. The 3rd through 5th grade, we are the tested grades so we're gonna look at what you focus on for that test (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

But what can I do, and it's actually something now we've been told we don't have to use (social studies books) (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February).

Eventually I was told that there wasn't time for social studies (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, November).

There's not very much freedom as far as covering as much as I would really like to cover and all of that before, social studies was more pushed before. We actually had a set social studies time, we followed a logical pattern in terms of talking about events. In the last couple of years, the emphasis has been on math and reading. We teach more reading skills during social studies, less content (S. Howard, personal communication. 2014, February).

We don't even have textbooks that relate to it. Whatever is being taught is whatever the teacher wants to do, how they fit it in. We don't have a specific block of time that we do social studies right now. When we were departmentalized, you did have a block where you could put in social studies. Part of what happened was they came up with this set reading time, you have to have 120 minutes of reading, or 190 minutes-whatever it is. That's what knocked out social studies, because until they said you have to spend this much time reading, you could easily put social studies in there (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, February). Our school does not have a social studies curriculum, so I have to come up with ways to teach it (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, November).

As the years went on, the administrator has said don't worry about social studies. If you teach math and reading all day, that's be great. At one point, they said don't worry about science, then when science became tested it came back.... I

remember when social studies was a tested area, but when they dropped social studies it was like the district dropped it too. No, I'm not told to do social studies but you have to do it! It's on the report card. How are you going to validate a grade if you're not teaching it? I have not been told, THIS YEAR, NOT to do it but I'm TOLD to do math centers. So then where do I pull that time from? Take a guess. You just can't find time to do the things that you know are best for children. It's unfortunate, it really is (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

Trina simply stated that in her classroom, "The curriculum is old and out dated and social studies is rushed and given little attention" (T. Hamilton, personal communication. 2014, October).

Exempting ANY content area from being taught is a disservice to students' level of knowledge attainment in those "left out" subjects. However, when states are able to pick and choose the content area scores that make the difference in receiving accreditation, what are low performing districts to do? Next, participants reflect on the level of importance placed on those subjects in their schools that are tested, in relation to social studies instruction in their classroom.

Importance of Tested Content Areas

Several participants referred to social studies as being put on the "back burner" or "back seat" in their schools due to it not being tested on the state assessment.

It's not pushed. Obviously because it's not tested, as we all know. I don't think anyone is really teaching it. Well, that's.... I mean, I hate that we teach to tests.

That's my deepest feeling right there. I hate that. I mean seriously, there'sand

because social studies isn't on it, then we don't teach that. I don't think that's right. They need everything. Even my friends in other districts, yeah they take the same state test, but they rotate between science and social studies. It's required. But yea, I think it's horrible. I get it because of all the testing and the requirements to meet, I get that, I just think they should have some social studies instruction (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February).

I know it's probably not the right thing to do, but since there's so much pressure to make sure that you're doing well, you're going to focus in on those things that you know that you have to hit and you're going to spend as much time on that as possible. I feel like my time is limited, so what gets put on the backburner? You know social studies is not going to be tested. I try to focus in on what I know is going to...the skillset they need in order to do well on the test (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

I just find myself going way back, just teaching them things that I think they should know but with high-stakes testing, social studies is on the back-burner which is not good (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February).

I know social studies is put on the back burner for grades 3-5 due to testing. From what I can see, social studies is not taught intentionally; there is no specific sequence/objectives/scope that have been addressed in a similar light compared to other subjects. These tests have made teachers accountable for every subject besides social studies. As a new teacher especially, it sends a message that social studies is not important (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, May).

Because we were struggling in the other content areas, social studies really went into the back seat because we were trying to focus on communication arts, we were trying to figure that out. So social studies did not get the attention it needed (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, February). Social studies is not a major focus of instruction in my school. If social studies were a tested area, I think it would receive more attention. I would like to teach it more consistently, but unfortunately, with so much to do in the area of ELA, there is little time left. It is nothing different from previous school years. It is necessary to find materials because the provided materials don't always give the students enough practice (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, November).

I think that if we don't teach social studies then the same things are going to happen that we're seeing in science. I know that we're talking a lot about social studies, but for years' social studies and science have been slighted and now that science has been added to the test, we see that it hasn't been taught as much either. Students aren't performing well. If they ever add social studies, maybe teachers will start teaching and I think that the impact it is having on our kids is ridiculous in my opinion (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February).

There is minimal social studies taught. Of the 4 major content areas, social studies receive the least attention. I don't believe that it will be emphasized until it is on the high stakes test (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, November).

You know, it's unfortunate but yes, testing has affected my teaching social studies. Because it puts all my emphasis on teaching reading and math, making sure they have that so that they will be reading and I know a lot of people throw

around teaching to the test. I don't believe that I teach to the test, however I do think that I make sure that the skills needed for the test are there, but I do try to teach across disciplines—our reading has social studies and science in it (A. Williams, personal communication. 2014, February).

All of the administrator participants chimed in on this topic as well.

Administrative restriction and instruction in the tested content areas were prevalent in their responses as well. Rebecca indicated, "Social studies does not appear to be a major priority in our school. I feel that the focus of social studies instruction NOT happening rests on the tested grades" (R. Hill, personal communication. 2014, July). Sheila stressed, "Although it's important, because of the emphasis placed on English language arts, math and Science, less has been on social studies" (S. Vale, personal communication. 2014, February). Tammie contended, "Due to the high stakes test, social studies has to be embedded within other content areas, so sometimes, instruction is not present for grades 3-5. It is not stressed at this, or the district, level" (T. Thies, personal communication. 2014, February). Connie reports, "The importance is virtually at the bottom. At the top would be communication arts, math, science and then I would say social studies. Social studies has virtually not been discussed, especially I would say on the elementary level. I know it's been discussed in middle school and high school because social studies is tested in those grades. Because it's not tested in elementary schools, nobody talks about it" (C. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February). Nick, a district level administrator, affirmed the accounts of the building level administrator participants.

And so social studies has very little importance, but yet it is still important because it does affect the overall skill level of a student. Being able to synthesize

information needs to be done in math, English, and it all rolls into social studies. In my opinion, I would say the first thing is the state of the district at this point. It's been here for a number of years, and where it currently is there needs to be a push for ELA and mathematics. But we have to get our yearly average progress scores up, and since the area has very incremental gains or no gains in those two areas, and by some buildings being higher than others, especially at the elementary level, it's take the attention away from social studies. The focus needs to be those two content areas since they have been calculated with the AYP, since we are unaccredited, ELA and math steal the focus (N. Washington, personal communication. 2014, February).

When examined as a collective, all of the participants had strong feelings regarding the restriction of social studies instructional time. It was perceived by these participants that instructional time in social studies was limited due to the administration's (whether district or school level) restriction of the instructional focus and/or the state assessment's focus on the other three content areas (ELA, Mathematics and Science).

Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction

This category provides a descriptive account of how the participants perceive their level of instructional autonomy in the area of social studies. A number of participants believed that their instructional autonomy included being provided administrative support (a sense of their administrator trusting their instructional decision-making), creating their own instructional schedule and/or were fine with being directed as to WHAT to teach students, but not HOW to teach students.

Administrative Support

The instructional support that a school administrator provides to their staff could make or break a school environment. Not only do administrators have to be instructional leaders, they also have to support teachers in the areas of student behavior/discipline, parent engagement/communication and with any personal matters that may arise which could affect instruction in their classroom. Administrators, today, have a host of duties that they have to attend to. The instruction that takes place in the classroom, however, should be first and foremost. In high needs/low performing schools, an effective administrator is absolutely necessary. Teachers need a sense of trust from their administrator that they are competent and capable instructors. The following accounts from four of the participants demonstrate this statement. Missy had a recent event that she could remember.

In math, about two months ago our goal was to focus on adding and subtracting money. As we started, I noticed that my kids could not subtract across zeroes. I stopped the lesson and went all the way back to basic subtraction, and we went through, starting with the number 20 and then we went to 100 and practiced doing the zeroes because they did not have the skills to make change. I was being observed when that happened. She (my administrator) was ok with that. She just asked why I made that decision. I explained to her, from what I was observing the kids doing as I was walking around and just through some of the question they asked that they weren't ready for that next step. And she received that well. (M. Carter, personal communication, 2014, February) I felt like I was able to make the best decisions regarding my students. It like I was trusted and that I am capable

of making decisions based on data. (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, November)

Tiffany recollected an instance in her previous teaching experience as well. She appeared to be very proud of her situation.

I remember one time I was teaching, I was trying to teach students about black history, black history month, I think it was a third grade class and it was a lot to cover. We know that black history is massive and this year I was able to write a play. We studied a few characters, we studied a few concepts and then we discussed things such as civil right movements, what were civil rights, and civil rights up to date. The class and I were able to write a play and the students were able to perform the play. I had autonomy to go cross-curricula in our writing with communication arts and inter-twined our concepts and ideas from our social studies lessons in that huge, long lesson, it was more of a unit (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, February). It felt great! I was able to make decisions according to the immediate needs and skill levels of the students I serviced (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, November).

Kathy has experienced instructional autonomy not just in the walls of her classroom, but it is effecting her colleague's classrooms as well. She taught communication arts and social studies to the entire fourth grade (two classrooms).

Like right now, if I wasn't with you, I would be going to Baker's class and pulling a few kids out and saying to those students that we need to work on this. I asked Ms. Smith (principal) and she said it was ok, but I was going to do it no matter what she said. That kind of thing wasn't something I had to do, but it was

something I felt needed to be done so I just took it upon myself to try (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, February). I loved have the autonomy to teach the map unit at the beginning of the year. It felt like I had the student's best interests at heart (K. Osby, personal communication. 2014, November).

Allie experienced support in somewhat of a different way, "I am allowed to access my students to offer new technology based ideas to my students. I feel fantastic" (A. Roberts, personal communication. 2014, October). Meanwhile, Ashley remembers a time when she experienced the ultimate in administrative support.

I'm going to have to say I had a principal who was very supportive and he understood I was passionate about what I did, and he was like, "I want you to get children to learn. I've seen you in your environment, I know what you can do because you're going to take the time to make sure you have the right materials and information to make sure the kids can learn." That principal trusted me and he gave me full autonomy in my classroom. I decided everything and I think it made a difference. That year, every child in my classroom scored proficient or advanced on the MAP test.

As noted, a range of participants confirmed that administrative support was paramount to the feeling of instructional autonomy. The experience of having that feeling made the participants excited and invigorated to teach.

What, but NOT HOW to Teach

The teacher participants accepted the directives that certain standards/skills were to be taught. They were not as receptive, however, to being told how those

skills/standards were to be taught. This category surfaced as an outcome related to the participants' understanding of their "curricular" autonomy. This was conceptualized in terms of teacher's appreciation for being told WHAT to teach, but frustration when not given the autonomy to choose HOW to teach based on student needs. Six of the nine teacher participants expressed their thoughts on the topic. Tiffany stated, "We are given skills to teach-how we teach and implement the skills is totally up to us" (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, November). Trina reiterated the same sentiment by affirming "I have autonomy in pretty much all of my teaching. Considering that what I teach is outlined and there's no changing it but how I teach it is where the autonomy comes in" (T. Hamilton, personal communication. 2014, June). Amanda, Allie, Sally and Elise describe their experiences in a little more detail.

I think I kind of experience autonomy all of the time with my students because I have such a variety of students. I guess you would say a lot of learning styles in there that sometimes I have to just constantly rethink what I'm doing and make that choice whether or not I'm going to do it in a certain way. I have to constantly change what I'm doing with them because sometimes, like, the stories that are within here are the things that they're asking me to do with my students, my students can't do. So I go back and I'll kinda change things around and then just teach it in a way that I feel that they'll be comfortable with or that they will understand (A. Smith, personal communication. 2014, February).

Well, like in reading I have a lot of autonomy. I can determine how I want to teach the class. We've got the skills that I know I need to hit: main idea, drawing conclusions, all that kind of stuff. How I do it, I think I'm doing it a bit

differently than other people. I will use the textbook but we use a lot of things off the internet: for example, we'll use Tween Tribune, which is an online newspaper. They're pulling up articles and they're reading about it, because to me that's reading and that's writing. Then they have to summarize it too. I don't necessarily use the book every single day but they're doing that, so I have a lot of autonomy (T. Hamilton, personal communication. 2014, February).

I am given a set of guidelines as in: we are focusing on "this" skill in reading, or we need to follow "this" model when instructing. There are often district assessments that are meant to guide our instruction for each subject. With that said, many of the decisions are still up to me. Often I collaborate with my teammate, however, for the most part I still make final decisions on what to teach, when and how to teach it (S. Johnson, personal communication. 2014, May).

A situation that comes to mind best for me is my instruction when I was teaching in a sixth grade science classroom for 3-4 years. I was able to, I didn't have a curriculum, I pretty much created my own. I found materials wherever I could find materials and my principal was totally ok with it because we did not have a solid curriculum to teach at sixth grade. There were days where my room smelled awful, from the students doing PG tests or different things but yeah, that experience I had I really enjoyed it! Every year I would work to improve it, I would revamp it every year to try to make it as tight as possible in order to get them (students) where they needed to be. Anyway, I was just giving them what I though they needed (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, February). The only

autonomy I have experienced this year has been in supplemental materials that I choose to use (E. Lane, personal communication. 2014, November).

Finally, one of the four administrator participants commented on the level of instructional

autonomy in her building. Tammie asserted, “I have not had the opportunity to experience autonomy in instructional decision making due to the curriculum department setting standards as to what teachers should teach and when” (T. Thies, personal communication. 2014, February).

Owning Their Schedule

Three of the twelve classroom teacher participants mentioned that owning/creating their schedule was a significant part of feeling “curricular” autonomy. Tiffany, Breann and Missy expressed their thoughts, not necessarily similarly, on this topic.

It feels and felt great! I was able to make decisions according to the immediate needs and skill levels of the students that I serviced. I could change my schedule at any point during the year, based on instructional needs. (T. Gines, personal communication. 2014, November)

I have never been able to make my own schedule. Like with my current principal, she gave us our reading and math block, and everything else you could just kind of fit in when you had the time. Just to be given a blank schedule and just teach this, this, and this-I’ve never had that. We have always been told what our schedule should look like. (B. Thomas, personal communication. 2014, February)

There will be some times where if I know principals are out that I'll do a social studies lesson. It's not on my schedule but I feel autonomous at THOSE times.

(M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, February)

After moving to a new school Missy experienced a different type of classroom autonomy, it was mandated. "At this new school, social studies lesson plans are required. We have to have a 30-45-minute block a day, so students receive the instruction that they need" (M. Carter, personal communication. 2014, November).

This section encapsulated the participants' reports related to the characteristics that they accept as true to having "curricular" or instructional autonomy. While others did not comment on their feeling regarding autonomy, these participants' believed that in some way, shape or form, they do have autonomy in the area of instruction in their classroom. Finally, one administrator participant believed that there was no autonomy in the area of guiding instruction for her school.

Additional Understandings

All of the participants were asked, at the beginning of the study, to keep a self-reported checklist (Appendix E) of daily social studies instruction in their classrooms. This document was requested in order to show alignment, or disconnection, between the participants' experiences/perceptions regarding their autonomy to teach social studies and the reality of what actually happens in their classrooms on a daily basis. The checklist notes the number of instructional minutes given to the content areas of social studies and communication arts (ELA). Communication arts (ELA) was chosen to highlight the level of importance (number of instructional minutes given to) that may be placed on a content area that is state tested, in an elementary classroom, versus a content area that is not.

Seven of the eleven classroom teacher participants submitted their checklists before their second interview took place. Six participants logged 67 total instructional days on their checklists. One participant logged a total of 46 days. This is not uncommon to have this many instructional days in a 4 to 5-month period due to teacher sick days, staff professional development, early release, holidays and/or half days in which the students are not in attendance and instruction is not taking place. A typical elementary school instructional day lasts for about 7 hours. Included in that 7 hours of instruction, students have breakfast (25-30 minutes), lunch (25-30 minutes-including recess) and special area classes (Art, Music, PE, Computer Lab, etc.-30-50 minutes). The elementary school educator is also required, by law, to have lunch (30 minutes) and a planning time (at least 30-50 minutes). That's at least two hours of the instructional day that is exhausted. Not to mention other interruptions in the day that may take place such as; student's behavior issues, assemblies, restroom breaks, etc. In essence, an elementary school educator MAY have 4-5 hours for actual content area instruction. That is an estimated 240 to 300 minutes of actual content area instruction in a school day. The state of Missouri requires 150 minutes of reading/language arts (ELA), 60 minutes of math, 30 minutes of social studies and 30 minutes of science instruction daily. With 240-300 minutes of actual instructional time a day, these requirements can easily pose a scheduling challenge for any school administrator/teacher. The following are highlights from the reports provided by classroom teacher participants on instructional time given to the content area of reading/language arts (ELA) and social studies.

Instructional Time

All participants consistently logged at least 60 minutes daily for reading/ language arts (ELA) instruction in their classrooms. The range was from 60 minutes to 240 minutes in one day of instruction. The accumulated range of time given to reading/language arts (ELA) was 4,140 to 11,980 minutes.

Although social studies instruction was logged as taking place on all participant checklists as well, the contrast comes in the areas of number of instructional minutes given to the content area and number of days that social studies instruction actually took place. The range of instructional time given was from 15 minutes to a maximum of 60 minutes on any given day. The participants did not teach social studies daily. The frequency of social studies instruction was highly inconsistent. For example, one participant taught social studies on 3 days out of 46 instructional days total. Overall, logging just 100 minutes of social studies instructional time in 46 days. In ELA however, this teacher logged 4,140 instructional minutes. Meanwhile, a colleague in the same school taught social studies 23 out of 67 instructional days. Logging a total of 755 minutes of social studies instructional time. In ELA, however, this teacher logged 6,030 instructional minutes. The total number of minutes provided for social studies, across all participants, ranged from 90 to 755 minutes within a 46 to 67- instructional day period. Essentially, this means that out of an estimated 13,800 to 20,100 instructional minutes, during a 46 to 67 instructional day period, an estimated 1% to 4% of an instructional day MAY have included social studies content area instruction.

Conclusion

This chapter presented several categories that organized participants' responses to

questions attempting to reveal the meaning of teacher autonomy and perceptions of the role of social studies, for teachers in a low performing elementary school in the state of Missouri. Over the course of multiple interviews, participants provided information that was later analyzed through the process of phenomenological analysis and assembled into five categories with their interrelated sub-categories. *Professional Development* provided a description of the participants' breadth of social studies content knowledge offered during his/her tenure in their current school district. *Curriculum Implementation* detailed factors that influence the participants' implementation of social studies instruction. *Role of Social Studies* reviewed the participants' multiple perceptions of why social studies should, and needs to, be taught. *Freedom and Testing* provided participants' insights related to their instructional autonomy and mandated state testing. *Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction* described the confluence of characteristics of teacher autonomy. The final section, *Additional Findings*, provided a short synopsis of the classroom teacher participants' self-reported checklists, reporting total number of instructional minutes for social studies vs. communication arts (ELA) during a six-month period. The intent of this section was to show a correspondence between participant responses in the previous sections and how much time was actually spent on social studies instruction throughout the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the impact of high stakes testing on social studies teaching when it is not tested by the state. The focus is on the elementary teachers, teacher “curricular” autonomy (instructional decision making), within the context of social studies teaching. Studies have documented the conflict that many teachers experience with teaching what’s tested versus what is not. Wills and Sandholtz (2009) found that a schools need to improve student scores on state tests led to increased instruction time in tested areas but decreased class time in all other areas. Administrators generally designate the content areas that are tested as nonnegotiable subjects to be covered during the day (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). A survey of teachers in states with high stakes testing found that 41% of teachers felt significant enough pressure to raise test scores that they focused the majority of their time upon teaching toward the test (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003). The pressure and stress surrounding these tests were viewed as constant (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000) and strong enough to change pedagogy (Abrams et al., 2003; Koretz et al., 1996).

A number of academic publications have focused on the absence of instruction in non-tested content areas. However, there remains a lack of scholarly studies that examine the multiple factors that may motivate a teacher in a suburban low performing suburban school, with urban demographics, to drift away from teaching content that is required by the state to be taught but is not tested. This investigation has attempted to expand the academic discourse on teacher autonomy, within the context of social studies (non-tested content area) instruction, and the role it plays in the lives of teachers in this type of

school. The selection protocol for this study was limited to teachers, administrators and district administrators in a suburban low performing, urban demographic elementary school, in one school district. This methodological decision was rooted in an argument that high stakes testing pressures and student's low academic performance are vital components in the experience of the lack of teacher "curricular" autonomy (Wills & Sandholtz, 2009).

The research questions that organized this inquiry were designed to discover how teachers in this category of schools describe curricular autonomy in their everyday school experience, illuminate the perceptions that they have regarding the role social studies instruction should have in their student's lives, and provide an avenue for open dialogue regarding the impact of high stakes testing on their teaching of social studies content. The significance of this research is rooted in the profession's ethical commitment to "meet the needs of every child who passes through our classroom door" (Eisenbach, 2012) and a growing agreement that high stakes testing has caused a marginalization of the teaching of social studies (Center of Educational Policy, 2007, 2008; Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Fitchett, Heafner, & Lampert, 2012; Gradwell, 2006; Grant, 2003; Lintner, 2006).

Teachers in the above-mentioned schools felt that they experienced "curricular" autonomy when they were provided with administrative support, could create "own" their schedule and were told WHAT to teach but not HOW to teach. The essential categories individually offer a small glimpse into the experience teacher "curricular" autonomy. However, to comprehend the nuances of the lived experience they must be interpreted together. The phenomenological researcher acknowledges that the "whole might be quite

different than the sum of its parts” (Omery, 1983). While there is a sequential flow in the way the researcher presented the categories, they are intertwined and in motion. Each theme can be understood at a moment in the teacher “curricular” autonomy experience and then be brought back into the whole as a new development or challenge is presented.

Discussion of Understandings

In chapter 4, the results of the investigation were organized into six sections that feature categories and interrelated sub-categories inductively developed through the phenomenological data analysis procedure. Each of the categories and subcategories were supported by at least 8 participant reports, or 1/2 of the participant pool. The purpose of this section is to review the results described in Chapter 4 and discuss them in comparison with research reviewed in *Chapter 2 Literature Review*.

The first category, *Professional Development*, described the experiences that participants’ have had with professional development in the area of social studies instruction/programming. Participants reported that they have received very limited or no professional development in how to teach, and what content is to be taught at their grade level, in social studies. An unexpected result emerged with the expressionless display of a majority of the participants while being interviewed. The scarcity of social studies professional development didn’t appear to be a huge concern for them. However, with educating the students in the environment that they teach, it was realized that the lack of professional development may have contributed to their teaching effectiveness in this area.

Previous research supports this study’s discovery that effective professional development leads to reform and improvement of practice. The United States

Department of Education (2009) cites seven characteristics that contribute to high quality teaching, stating that participating in professional development focused on content and curriculum ranks second only to teacher cognitive skills (Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). The author's research found a significant correlation between the lack of social studies professional development and the teaching of social studies; but the relationship was not causal. In other words, having a deficit in social studies content professional development does not make a teacher unable to teach social studies. However, not being provided any direction in what to teach, how to teach and/or whether to teach the subject matter *can* deter a teacher from providing instruction in this content area. Some elementary teachers, as they anticipate teaching social studies, become fearful that their absence of knowledge will be exposed. Under those circumstances, as reported by Shulman (1986), such teachers used to resort to textbook-based instruction. Now they skip the topic altogether.

Elementary teachers need to be reminded that they are not supposed to be an expert in all of the content areas that they teach. However, a significant reason why they may feel so inadequate is because of the quality of their university experiences (Passe, 2006) and the relative lack of training in social studies disciplines (Onosko, 1990; Spoehr & Spoehr, 1994). In a brief review of elementary teacher education programs, it was revealed that social science prerequisites are minimal (Passe, 2006). The required courses usually focus on history. There are minimal opportunities for serious inquiry, discussion or emotional expression. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that elementary teachers feel unprepared for teaching a social studies curriculum that emphasizes economics, geography, and culture at both the local and the state levels.

Subsequently at upper elementary levels, when political science enters, the situation worsens (Passe, 2006). This seemingly dismal situation further establishes the need for ongoing and valuable professional development during a teacher's tenure in the classroom.

Richardson (2003) declares that research-based professional development exhibits a number of characteristics. It should: (1) be schoolwide; (2) be long-term with follow up (3) encourage collegiality; (4) foster agreement among participants on goals and vision; (5) have a supportive administration; (6) have access to adequate funds for materials, outside speakers, substitute teachers, and so on; (7) develop buy-in among participants; (8) acknowledge participants' existing beliefs and practices; and (9) make use of an outside facilitator/staff developer. (p.401)

Finally, it is stated that effective professional development must attempt to change school structures and culture, molding both into collaborative learning organizations that will support teacher change. Without such structural changes, teachers will be unable to sustain transformed teaching practices (Valli & Stout, 2004). Thus, perpetuating the fore mentioned lack of social studies instruction in classrooms.

The second category, *Curriculum Implementation*, covers the participants' feelings on how and when social studies is to be taught in their school/district and its aftereffects. One-fourth of the participants reported the use of a scripted and/or outdated curriculum and spoke about the concern of restricted social studies knowledge for their students. While more than half of the participants chimed in on the topic of the content integration that they *believe* is taking place in their classrooms. Multiple studies have explored these interrelated topics.

Dee et al. (2010) and Krieg (2011) revealed that teachers reallocated teaching time to a “narrowed” focus on tested skills and content. The phrase “narrowing of curriculum” has been used to communicate the idea that testing pressures associated with the “No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLB; U.S. Congress, 2001) have increased time devoted to reading and math at the expense of other subjects. NCLB policies have unintentionally encouraged the narrow teaching of tested subjects and skills, especially in low performing schools. One way that instruction has been narrowed is by the introduction of measures to “dummy proof” teaching, due to the amount of turnover that happens amongst the teaching staff in these schools. Mandating items, such as scripted curricula, appeared to be one way to encourage developmentally inappropriate practices in order to prepare for the “test” (Karp, 2004). These scripted “teacher proof” programs/curriculum were an attempt to increase teacher effectiveness, thereby student achievement. Although the level of regimentation is not a new phenomenon in poor urban schools (Talbert & Ennis, 1990), the degree of prescription seems to have reached unprecedented levels. Across the country it has been noted, because social studies are not included in the testing agenda in districts and state standardized tests until eighth grade, elementary teachers are choosing to spend time teaching other skills that will boost test scores. With rigid pacing and structured, sometimes scripted, programs teachers report they have little or no time to teach social studies (Burstein, et al., 2006; Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006; Lintner, 2006; McGuire, 2007).

With the limited time that teachers perceive to have to teach social studies, the students are losing out. Their knowledge base in the content area of social studies is being restricted. Pascopella (2004) asserts, “What little social studies is taught usually

consists of “laundry lists”-vocabulary words, dates and people’s names, educators say, which is just plain boring” (p. 49). In relation to this study, 1/4 of the classroom teacher participants had negative feelings about the deficiency of social studies instruction and knowledge being provided to their students. Too often, the social studies curriculum dissolves into disconnected bits of information, and memorization of facts is the norm (McGuire, 2007). Social studies texts are nonfiction texts. Knowing how to access this type of text is an important skill for students to have. While accessing this type of text students practice inferring meanings, making connections and recognizing perspective. These are critically important skills that help with making personal meaning and understanding powerful ideas. Practicing these skills help when interacting with fiction texts and life in general. Delpit (2006) makes the case that children of poverty, who often view schoolwork as unrelated to real life, must have learning experiences that are personally meaningful. In the end, educators fear youngsters are growing up with little or no knowledge of their own and their neighbors’ histories, ironically, even when the nation has been at its most vulnerable given the fears of terrorism (Pascopella, 2004).

In response to the restriction of social studies knowledge, more than half of the total participants in this study asserted that in order to teach social studies it was being integrated with communication arts (English Language Arts) content. In a study conducted by Rock, et al. (2004) it was found that 74.1 % of 320 (K-5) teachers, representing 60 counties (urban and rural areas) in North Carolina schools, embraced the concept of integration to provide social studies instruction during designated time for tested curricula. These teachers were not only able to provide stand-alone time but they also integrated social studies into the language arts/reading (ELA) curriculum. During

the study, a combination of integration and stand-alone methods were found to be used more in grades 3-5. Twenty-three percent of the elementary teachers in that study taught social studies daily. More surprisingly, although there was a high percentage of responses stating that integration was taking place, teachers did not state that they were provided with professional development on the topic.

Social studies is not taught at all as a separate subject, in many classrooms in this study. It is integrated into the literacy curriculum during the reading and writing activities. This integrated approach usually does not systematically address the purposes and goals (social knowledge, civic efficacy) traditionally associated with social studies (Alleman & Brophy, 1993, 1994). There has been an influx of alternative children's literature, websites and unconventional instructional materials being introduced for use as the basis for activities during social studies instruction. The issue comes in when primary teachers do not possess a clear enough grasp of the content of social studies to enable them to utilize the resources effectively. Yet integration does support progress toward literacy goals, with the frequent reading of nonfiction text. However, when considering the social studies perspective, social education goals are not being fulfilled using a coherent and structured curriculum. Curricular integration is a time-honored tradition in elementary schools (Knudsen, 1937), however the principal researcher in this study was not able to locate any recent studies on the topic of mandated integrated instruction noting systematic training/professional development for teachers. MacCurtain, et al.'s (2001) study suggests that teachers committed to social studies goals continue to integrate curriculum in ways that honor social studies aims and purposes. While Rock, et al. (2004) cautions that too few elementary teachers share these commitments.

Unfortunately, this study's interview data does not tell us much about the teacher participants' thinking on the definition of curriculum integration and what effective integration looks like. Therefore, teacher and administrator participants in this study may assert that students learn social studies as they read literature with a social studies theme, but the actual content may be disjointed and based on reading choices rather than social studies goals or aims. In a study conducted by Alleman & Brophy (1991) it was found that attempts at curriculum integration resulted in content distortion.

For example, a fourth-grade manual suggested assigning students to write research papers on coal. Instructions emphasized teaching the mechanics of doing the investigation and writing the paper. There was little mention of social education goals or major social studies understandings such as "humans have unlimited wants and limited resources" or policy issues such as conservation of natural resources or development of energy alternatives. With the task narrowly conceived and the focus on research and report writing, it is unlikely that the 25 or so individual reports will yield enough variety to allow students to benefit from one another's work. Consequently, the social education value of this assignment will be minimal and its cost-effectiveness will be diluted further because of the considerable time required to obtain and read content sources, copy or paraphrase data, and make presentations to the class (p. 5).

What is the result if this is the norm in elementary classrooms? Ultimately, this will lead to students not developing a base of understanding of concepts needed for middle and high school social studies classes. Resulting in students that leave high school not knowing how to function as productive and democratic citizens.

The third category, *Role of Social Studies*, illustrates the level of importance/purpose placed upon the teaching of social studies and/or motivating factors that influence the educators to want to teach the content area. More than half of the participants (both teacher and administrator) felt that the teaching of social studies content is important, highlighting its impact on developing competent and effective citizens. In addition, almost all of the participants expressed an interest in wanting to teach social studies, either due to their own interest in the content or the students' level of interest.

In a report from the Carnegie Corporation, *The Civic Mission of Schools*, it is suggested “that students start to develop social responsibility and interest in politics before the age of nine. The way they are taught about social issues, ethics, and institutions in elementary school matters a great deal for their civic development” (p.12). For the schools highlighted in this study, this is paramount. In order for students to embrace the ideals and participate in American democracy this does not need to be set aside in order to provide an education in mathematics and literacy. These goals need to work together. Social studies serve as the purpose for developing mathematical and literacy skills. To understand how the nation was founded is insufficient. Knowing what it means to live in an interdependent world (that your actions affect the world) and democratic society (what actions we can take to make a difference) are other critical components to educating students in social studies. As stated in *Chapter 2, Literature Review*, during the 20th century the basis for teaching social studies was to make sure that everyone understood what it meant to be an American. To instill American rights, ideals and responsibilities. If we don't teach this in elementary grades we will have a level of

ignorance as to why, in America, we do things the way that we do. Social science and history provide a foundation for students to connect past, present and future. Pace (2007) mentions,

Studies point to a glaring gap in civic knowledge based on test scores correlated with socioeconomic background and race or ethnicity. While ineffective school practices may fail to address the current realities of students, especially students of color in economically disadvantaged circumstances, throwing out social studies is certain to exacerbate the biggest evil in our education system-inequality. (p.27)

In a study performed with North Carolina teachers, where social studies are not tested, the perceived role of social studies education in elementary schooling was to develop the abilities of students to understand their heritage, culture and beyond. The group also discussed the understanding of the United States in world affairs and the need for citizenship education in the early years (Burroughs, Groce & Webeck, 2005). Some extra comments included the sentiments of social studies helping to teach life skills and good character. Also included was fostering a respect for diversity and providing a foundation for social studies instruction in higher grades. Meier (2004) also expressed concern regarding the lack of building citizenship at that elementary level:

....in the growing disconnect between school and community and its impact on children's intellectual, social and moral development. Citizenship requires a recognition of what it means to be a member of something-and we've forgotten that kids today have precious little experience being members of anything beyond their immediate family and their self-chosen peer group. (p. 68)

This sentiment is exactly why participants in this study want to teach social

studies. Their personal interest level and the interest level of the students were also a driving force for providing instruction in this content area. Even though the time may have been limited.

Research confirms that many teachers struggle in the area of motivating students to learn. This is especially prevalent in social studies classrooms in which students perceive social studies as boring (Schug, Todd, & Berry, 1984; Shaughnessy & Haladyana, 1985). It's no wonder that in the age of high stakes testing, teachers tend to rely on the lecture-textbook model in order to cover content. Coverage, not depth of concepts, appears to be the main method for teaching social studies. Much of the research in the area of student interest and social studies education is centered on secondary (high school) education. Bollinger and Warren (2007) outlined more recent systemic influences in education that may be affecting student views about the content area. They found that the recent push for success on standardized tests has altered pedagogy from exploring depth of knowledge, to widening the breadth of knowledge. This change in focus appears to have shifted teaching strategies from dynamic to inactive. In doing so, this has decreased relevance for students. Students who feel the information is not relevant or engaging are less interested and therefore learn less (Bollinger & Warren, 2007). Similarly, in Australia, Harrison (2012) studied curricula and commented on the state of social studies education there. Harrison's critique of Australia's history curriculum was that it did not address the question of "why teach history". This led to a decontextualized, boring curriculum. It appears that American schools are facing the same issue (Bollinger, 2007). It would be logical to say that the situation worsens when the subject is not taught because it is not tested. Exposure to the content consistently, and

in an engaging manner, makes a difference as well. Students and teachers need to enjoy learning and teaching the subject.

Interestingly, there are underlying psychological benefits to fostering enjoyment in the classroom. Anderson, Hirsh, and Rowe (2007) found that when participants were experiencing a positive affect (defined as a happy mood in their study), noticeable changes in attention occurred, which affected perception and cognition. Subjects noticed an increase in visual field perception – allowing them to internalize more information from the wider ranges of their existing visual field. The researchers extrapolated that finding into a theory that positive emotions allow students to broaden their thought processes and more effectively engage in activities that require global thinking. Interest has the power to transform struggling performers, and boost high achievers to a new level. In a later study, Paul (2013) found that interest cognitively engages students and statistically fosters learning. Interest could be seen as —a psychological state of engagement, experienced in the moment. It could also be a predisposition to engage repeatedly in particular ideas, events, or objects over time (Paul, 2014). Similarly, Alice, Ashby, Gregory, and Turken (1999) suggested that people who have positive emotions about learning gain the capability to classify material they are given in a more flexible manner. They are also able to see situations in more creative ways. When enjoyment of a task rises, students' ability to think globally and creatively about the task they have been given also rises. Social studies is an academic area that requires students to participate in global thinking; to be able to arrive at knowledgeable and sensible conclusions about events, people, or trends in the world. Students who enjoy the lesson (and thus, experience a higher positive affect as Anderson, Hirsh, and Rowe [2007] would describe)

would be more likely to enthusiastically and competently engage in global thinking perspectives.

Ryan and Wilson (2013) explored the effects of student-teacher rapport in the classroom. One of their findings was that a positive rapport was directly related to the amount of information students perceived that they learned. The research further commented that teachers who were seen as doing what they can to make the class more engaging had generally high rapports with students. In turn, students enjoyed being in class with teachers who they noticed were making an effort to make class fun for them. Almost all (14 out of the 16) of the participants in this study wanted to teach social studies, either due to their personal interest or student interest. Whether or not student engagement and enjoyment were high during social studies instruction was not addressed in this study. Based on overall responses in this study, these teachers wanted to provide meaningful social studies instruction to their students and wanted them to be productive/successful citizens.

In Section 4, *Testing and Teaching*, participants' responses expressed beliefs about why social studies may not be taught as frequently as other content areas. Similar to Section 3, data collected showed that almost all of the participants believed that administrative restrictions (13 of 16) and tested content areas being emphasized as more important (15 of 16) were the main reasons why they were not teaching social studies as frequently as they would like. Due to the breadth of research on these two interrelated topics, and the literature previously reviewed in *Chapter 2* of this study, the researcher will focus on some of the most current research found on these two topics. In alignment with this study, a study performed by Fitchett, Heafner & Lambert (2014) found that state

testing policy was a significant predictor of elementary teachers reported time spent on social studies instruction. The marginalization of social studies within elementary school curriculum has been surveyed and studied from various quantitative (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Heafner, Libscomb, & Rock, 2006; Leming, Ellington, & Schug, 2006b; Rock et al., 2006; VanFossen, 2005) and qualitative aspects (Au, 2009; Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Sierrere, & Stewart, 2008; Wills, 2007). In a bulk of the research elementary social studies, and its prioritization in the curriculum, was dismal. The participants in my study worked in a low performing school district with urban demographics. Due to this framework, and its AYP status, teachers tended to allot preparation for instruction and class time to content that is directly tied to student performance on the state assessment. Several researchers found that teachers working in low socioeconomic (high needs) schools and classrooms spend minimal time on social studies; fearing that their students need greater remediation time in tested subjects like math and ELA (Levine, et al., 2008; Pace, 2008, 2011; Wills & Sandholtz, 2009). While conversely, teachers in more affluent environments feel more comfortable exploring in-depth social studies instruction due to a perceived inevitability of high scores on tested subjects (Pace, 2011). Additionally, differences in instructional time given to social studies are associated with school socioeconomic status and ethnicity, whereby students of color receive more remedial time on tested subjects and significantly less time studying non-tested content (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Linver, & Hoffereth, 2003).

Administrative pressure can contribute to this feeling as well. Most of the participants (13 out of 16) in this study (including administrators referencing district administration) felt that administrative restriction, or lackadaisical behavior, towards the

teaching of social studies contributed to the lack of social studies instruction in their classroom. This echoes the sentiments of a first and second year teacher in a study conducted by Burstein & Hutton (2008) who wanted, “Support from the principal! I think if she found out how much time we spend on social studies; she would get upset.” “Having support is having people realize that history is just as important as another subject. History and science seem to keep being put on the back burners of learning” (p.100). Anderson (2014) discovered that despite clear curricular mandates (with administrative input), most elementary teachers in his study (total of 46) still spent very little time on social studies instruction. Meanwhile, some teachers spent considerably more time on the subject. Although between state variations, by testing mandates, can account for a difference in time spent teaching social studies, within-state variation is less clear. Interestingly, 46 elementary teachers in his study (all from the same state and following the same curriculum/testing policies) demonstrated considerably different amounts of instructional time on social studies. The main difference, being identified, was the level of trust and decision-making power afforded to the teachers by the school principal despite state mandates.

Conflicting studies have been conducted generating findings that the lack of social studies instruction is not due to state testing or administrative restriction. There are archetypes of bold or “*maverick*” teaching (Brophy, 2003; Gerwin, 2004; Gradwell, 2006; Grant, 2003, 2007; Holloway & Chiodo, 2009; van Hover, 2006) that would indicate that some teachers offset the implied prescriptive demands of state curricula and still present vigorous social studies instruction in their classrooms. In relation to this study, the context of these investigations pose a problem. Given that most of these

studies were predominantly performed using a small sample of participants in states *that test* social studies (Au, 2007, 2009). A recurring theme amongst the bold or “*maverick*” teachers is that these educators believed that they had a certain amount of pedagogical freedom *in spite of* a mandated test (Brophy, 1993; Gradwell, 2006; Grant, 2003, 2006; van Hover, 2006). The concept of *ambitious* teaching finds its roots in Brophy’s (1993) research on elementary teachers who exhibited autonomous social studies pedagogical practices. This leads into the last category generated by the results of this study, *Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction*.

Section 5, *Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction*, expresses the participants’ understanding of their autonomy and the level to which they feel they have autonomy in the area of social studies instruction. This is the nature of its existence in their current professional life.

According to Anderson (2014), no teachers are completely free to choose what, when and how to teach, nor are any teachers completely restricted to acting and uttering according to a prescribed script. Negotiating these two conflicts impacts the degree to which elementary students are taught social studies. Research suggests that, for the most part, teachers value their autonomy (Cohen, et al, 2009; Day and Smethem, 2009; Evan, 2010; Ingersoll & Alsalam, 2007; Jackson, 1990; Johnson, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Schwartz, 1991). Decision making, based on their expertise, serves a vital purpose within this framework. Along these lines, one-half of the participants in this study expressed that they felt autonomy when being told WHAT to teach, but did not feel autonomous when being told HOW to teach their students. Administrative support was also an influence in the feeling of autonomy for one-third of the participants. Finally, one-fourth of the

participants mentioned that they felt autonomy when being able to create their own instructional schedule. The research on the risks to teacher autonomy emerged in the late 1980s with the standards reforms that followed *A Nation at Risk* (Archbald & Porter, 1994). There are a variety of definitions for teacher autonomy, including: “The capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one’s own teaching” (Aoki, 2002, p.19), “The teacher’s capacity to engage in self-directed teaching” (Little, 1995, p. 176), and “The right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control” (Benson, 2000, p. 111). For the purpose of this study teacher “curricular” autonomy is defined as the teacher’s perception of whether he/she has freedom from outside control when making important instructional decisions based on student needs.

The current state of classrooms denotes that state and national standards determine what is taught, or is supposed to be taught. Anderson (2014) claims teacher compliance regarding what and when to teach is now an accepted loss of autonomy in the profession. Resistance to outside influences determining what schools should teach and how students are assessed are generally accepted without opposition. Curricular prescription, or “expectations or requirements regarding content, pedagogy, and assessments”, as stated by Kauffman (2005) is in contrast to teacher autonomy. It defines parameters for the work of teachers, in all areas (what to teach, how to teach and how to assess what was taught). Thereby creating an instructional environment that is intensified. As curricular and methodological pressures become intensified, teachers feel less autonomous (Fitchett, et al., 2012). In alignment with this study, Anderson’s study (2014) found that none of the teachers felt constrained by the directive regarding what

they were expected to teach and when. However, where the curricular prescription involved *how* they were supposed to teach, he began to see tension. In low performing, low socioeconomic schools state mandates (prescriptive curricula, pacing guides, assessments, etc.), due to assessment scores, are at the forefront of school operations. These consequences, usually negative, have produced a range of research which has shown that teachers often do what is necessary to avoid such consequences. This includes, but is not limited to, teaching to the test to comply with the desired outcomes or performance measures. This results in teachers responding more to achieving the stated outcome than to taking any risks with teaching styles that may not generate high test scores. In doing so, teacher autonomy is reduced.

In this study, administrative support was found to be important to one-third of the participants. With this, the value of teachers owning, or creating, their instructional schedule was highlighted by 14 of the participants. It was noted that trust in their level of professional expertise and freedom to make instructional decisions about what is best for students was a prevailing impression expressed by the participants. Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2010) discussed the role of professional autonomy as enhancing, rather than undermining, teacher responsibility by situating educators as the primary authors of their own success or failure.

At the classroom and school levels, meaningful teacher autonomy must be supported at the level of school systems and social structures. Leadership practices in a school have tremendous influence in this area. Research suggests that limited faculty input at one's school is associated with higher degrees of teacher turnover across a wide variety of the nation's schools (Ingersoll, 2001; Ingersoll & May, 2011). This has

historically been a characteristic of schools like the ones highlighted in this study. Oliva (1984) recognized the importance of trust within supervision by noting that for supervision to be successful, teachers must feel that the supervisor is there to serve them and help them become more effective teachers. For many students and teachers in schools, life is very unpredictable. This develops into stress in their classrooms. Covey (1991) confirms that by assuming that others want and intend to do their best as they see it, each member of the supervisory team can exert a powerful influence and bring about the best in others. Providing teachers with support creates a climate of trust (McBride & Skau, 1995). Establishing trust when working with teachers helps them gain access to their own resources, confidence, knowledge, empathy and personal self-esteem (Costa, 1984). This results in a sense of empowerment that fosters a feeling of ownership for their actions and the consequences that may result because of them. Marks and Louis (1999) discussed empowerment in terms of participatory decision making by remarking, “Genuine participatory decision-making can enhance worker’s knowledge, reduce their isolation, imbue them with a sense of the whole and ultimately transform the workplace” (p. 247). In many environments, empowered individuals appear to be more motivated and seek to improve their knowledge base and/or abilities. Shared leadership is the essence of this form of empowerment. Anderson (2014) suggests, to stop the marginalization of social studies, a directive approach with the schedule (by designating social studies time) could be taken along with a facilitative/participative approach with how the curriculum might be taught.

Much of the research reviewed for this study was aligned with the assertion of Daly (2009) that when principals are trusting, empowering, and participative, teachers

feel less threatened by the external threats (such as NCLB). Deciding what gets taught, as well as when and how it gets taught, can be complex, and principals are integral to this process (Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009). Given the mandates placed on low performing, urban demographic schools. This type of leadership can be challenging. Nonetheless, as a result of this study, it appears to be necessary for the effective and suitable time allotment granted to the teaching of social studies.

Implications

Chapter Two cited many studies that documented the marginalization of social studies due to state assessments and its effects on teacher autonomy. Crocco & Costigan (2007) interviewed more than 200 New York teachers who reported that testing and curricular mandates negatively impacted their teaching, particularly their autonomy. Au (2007) analyzed forty-nine qualitative studies on the impact of high-stakes testing on curriculum and found that thirty-four (69 percent) reported curricular narrowing. In addition, thirty-two (65 percent) of the teachers reported that their teaching became more targeted as a result of high-stakes testing. More than any other point in history, today's teachers feel more pressure to cover the curriculum (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). As a result, in states that test social studies at the elementary level the pressure to cover the elementary social studies curriculum is greater. This demonstrates an alignment with research declaring that on average, teachers spend more instructional time on tested subjects than on non-tested subjects (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Fitchett et al., 2002; Thieman et al., 2012; Wills, 2007). This study focused on exploring teacher "curricular" autonomy within the context of social studies teaching. Participants provided their perspectives regarding the meaning of teacher autonomy, the role of social studies in their

classrooms and the impact of the state assessment on the teaching of social studies (it is not tested in their state).

Implications for educational research

The detailed description of autonomy and its meaning to teachers in a suburban low performing, urban demographic, school was a contribution of this study. The researcher failed to find research conducted in these types of schools on the topics of teacher autonomy and social studies instruction combined. Previous investigations on the topic of social studies education, in high poverty (low socioeconomic) schools, have been conducted (Pace, 2008; Wills, 2007; VanFossen, 2005; Thornton, 1992). The most recent research found on the topic of teacher autonomy, that appeared to be the closely aligned to this study, was completed by the National Center for Education Statistics during the 2011-2012 school year. NCES looked at reports of classroom autonomy (across the country) in 2003-04, 2007-08, and 2011-12. From 2003 to 2012, there were significant statistical declines in teacher autonomy. The report indicated teachers feeling less control on every measure over time. Autonomy was measured using six questions that ask about teachers' control over everything from textbooks to student discipline. Urban schools (31 percent in 2012) and higher poverty schools (33 percent in 2012), both of which had lower autonomy across all years, saw similar decreases in autonomy compared to schools in other locales or serving fewer poor students. In addition, more elementary school teachers than high school teachers expressed lower autonomy (31 percent versus 19 percent in 2012), but the changes over time were about the same.

The detailed phenomenological interview procedure (with the collection of relevant documents) employed in this investigation established a context for development

of a definition of teacher “curricular” autonomy for teachers in a suburban low performing, urban demographic elementary school. Particular attention was paid to the impact of state assessments (the subject is not tested) on their teaching and the role that they feel the teaching of social studies plays in their classroom. Furthermore, this is one of the only studies to focus solely on this kind of school, situated in a suburban area of Missouri. This methodological decision was geared to address the challenges encountered by the teachers working in this environment. The understandings provided by the phenomenological interview protocol is a meaningful, and distinctive, contribution of this study to the existing literature on the topic of teacher “curricular” autonomy. Primarily due to the study’s context of the suburban low performing, urban demographic school.

The identification and description of the multiple factors contributing to the perception of autonomy, the role of social studies instruction and the impact of state assessments detailed in the sections *Curriculum Implementation, Freedom and Testing, Role of Social Studies* and *Autonomy in Social Studies Instruction* are additions to the current research on these topics. As previously discussed, the majority of past studies have addressed the lack of social studies instruction not producing productive citizens and how testing has affected teacher’s autonomy (instructional decision making). A substantive understanding of this study is that professional development in this content area is very close to non-existent. Practically changing the old adage “What’s not tested, is not taught” to “What’s not TAUGHT (to teachers), is not TAUGHT (to students)”. Impending research ought to specifically investigate the existing teacher’s feelings regarding professional development and the social studies programming of future educators.

This study also generated data documenting that leaders (Principals) are deficient in being professionally developed/trained in the area of social studies education. This is alarming. Previous studies have described what effective leaders do but none have described, in detail, the school principal's views on social studies education and its importance in this type of school. Given the atmosphere that these educators work in, with its many societal (demographic) challenges, the training of our current and future leaders appears to be a need as well. Moreover, additional research is needed to further explore the effects of social studies not being taught in these types of schools, versus schools in which social studies IS taught on the elementary level. Measures could include perceptions of student discipline, cultural awareness, student views on social studies instruction and student level of motivation to learn social studies.

This next section will discuss the implications for practice and training of preservice/practicing teachers, as well as administrators, in the area of social studies instruction.

Implications for educator practice and training

Autonomy. Lack of teacher autonomy has been noted as one of the main reasons that teachers today leave the profession, especially those in high need/low socioeconomic (low performing) schools. Acquiring teachers' support for initiatives and programs is an important strategy for retaining teachers. In high-poverty schools, teachers willingly grant their principals the power they need to lead school improvement—but only if they perceive that the principal will involve them as partners in the change process and listen to their ideas (Bryk et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2013; Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011). In the same way teachers who experience autonomy and discretion in a range of decisions are

less likely to feel discouraged, more likely to put forth their best effort, and consider teaching for the long-term (Rosenholtz, 1989; Weiss, 1999). The fore mentioned “problematic power relations” (Achinstein & Ogawa, 2011, p. 72), which are common in high-poverty schools, (Darling-Hammond, 2001; Bryk et al., 2010) often drive teachers to leave the school environment and/or the profession altogether. Although shared governance is important to teachers in all schools, it may be particularly important for minority teachers. In a study investigating the minority teacher shortage, Ingersoll and May (2011) support that, on average, more minority teachers leave the profession each year than join it. The most common explanations for leaving involved feeling dissatisfied about the level of influence teachers had, the lack of collective decision-making, similarly, the small degree of autonomy they were able to employ within their classroom. As a result of this study, teachers and administrators (school and district level) may have greater understanding of the importance of creating and fostering their colleagues’, and their own, autonomy in their roles as educators.

Principals and district administrators have a broader context to work within on a daily basis. However, teachers are the most important determining factor of student achievement in the school. The meaningful implication of this study is that the highest number of teacher participants felt autonomy when provided administrative support, and trust, while making instructional decisions. Principals and district administrators may utilize the results of this study to better understand the extreme value of “curricular autonomy” to teachers, primarily in schools like the ones in this study. Cultivating an environment of trust and empowerment in this type of school environment should be a priority. Recent research has emphasized the magnitude to which this level of

empowerment (building teacher leadership) can move or improve a school (New Leaders, 2015; Farris-Berg, Dirkswager & Jung, 2012; Mitgang, 2013). Hall and Hord (1987) claimed that a priority for school principals is to understand the practices and behaviors of their teachers. Teacher autonomy appeared to be an important element of successful schools (Blasé & Kirby, 2009; Stockard & Lehman, 2004). Hyslop-Margison & Sears (2005) further discuss that collegial collaboration is critical to the development of self-imposed accountability and professional autonomy. In response, Hargreaves (2003) calls for the creation of “professional learning communities” to improve collaboration. This would place a spotlight on teachers working together and demand the work focus on improving teaching and learning. The data generated from this process can be used as a basis, and evidence, for informing classroom improvement and solving school-wide issues.

The results of this investigation may motivate, district/school administrators and state education board members to take a closer look at the mandates placed on these already struggling schools. Hopefully, they will examine how they might help, rather than hinder, their progress. Exploring the WHY, in conjunction with the school administrator and teachers (not looking at JUST test scores), as to lack of school/district progress would be recommended. Could it be possible that these schools were successful before the mandates were put in place? Teacher decision making power was most likely not at issue at that time. The issues of socioeconomic status and community engagement need to be explored and remediated. Meanwhile, district/school level administrators need to work alongside teachers, not above them, in the cultivation of teacher autonomy. The challenge is how to foster teacher autonomy while competing with external forces.

Educators have access to additional research that supports the use of the Data Team Process, Collaborative Leadership, PLCs (Professional Learning Communities) and the Finland model of education as potential enhancements to how to develop teacher autonomy. This investigation helped to develop categories supporting outcomes related to the promotion of teacher autonomy, that could largely benefit educators and policy makers.

Social studies education. A teacher expressed the sentiment that it was “our job-a moral obligation” to teach to all the content standards, not only the ones that were tested by the state (Hutton & Burstein, 2008, p. 103). Meanwhile another teacher commented, “When it comes down to it, how much do they even remember for the test? It is just random facts, but social studies teaches them life skills.” (Hutton & Burstein, 2008, p. 103) These statements prove that the development of students, as productive citizens/people, is at the forefront of the WHY teachers want to teach social studies. Studies have shown that students in low performing, low socioeconomic schools disproportionately experience a “squeeze” on social studies resulting in an educational inequity in a so-called attempt to “narrow the achievement gap” (Von Zastrow & Janc, 2004; Grant, 1996; Wills, 2007; Pace, 2008; Newmann, 1990; Thornton, 1992; VanFossen, 2005; Wills & Sandholtz; 2009). Teachers in these schools operate under/within conditions that create unequal opportunities for the teaching and learning of social studies. Fitchett (2010) took note of the least qualified social studies teachers (as determined by academic degree in social studies-related fields and licensure) taught in significantly lower socio-economic environments than more qualified teachers. This means that the students most at-risk for learning often receive inadequate instruction

compared to their wealthier counterparts. Thus, students in these populations lose out on the opportunities afforded to students who attend a more affluent school. As discussed in *Chapter 2 Literature Review* social studies does not *just* encompass the history of our country, which is what most people believe. The NCSS (2010) framework consists of ten themes. The organization believes that effective social studies programs include experiences that provide for the study of:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Places, and Environments
- Individual Development and Identity
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Global Connections
- Civic Ideals and Practices

The identification and description of the role of social studies in the elementary classrooms/schools in this study draw attention to the realities of the struggle teachers and administrators experience when prioritizing instructional time in their classrooms/schools. A majority of past research studies have addressed this conflict between wanting to teach social studies and its importance level in relation to developing productive citizens (positively contributing to society). An essential finding in this study is that professional development, or training, in the content area of social studies was

very near to non-existent. With the number of participants in this study being in the field of education an average of 15 years, this data is highly meaningful. These are not new teachers trying to figure out their place and their way around a classroom. All of these educators are “seasoned” in how to juggle the many hats that they have to wear on a daily basis, and they still struggled with prioritizing instructional content. Classroom management may more often be the domain in which teachers can feel freedom, but administrators exert substantial authority over the areas of curriculum, school finance, and professional development (Gawlik, 2005). Fitchett, Heafner & Lambert (2014) reported, teacher autonomy, as a significant predictor, suggests that elementary practitioners who are provided training and opportunity to explore their profession without the constraints of intensification (due to external forces) are more likely to teach social studies.

Various social studies activists have put forth a number of thoughts about how to contend with the concern of marginalization. Some have proposed that more importance on social studies during teacher preparation might result in more classroom time when those candidates become full-time teachers (Anderson, 2011; Passe, 2006; Thornton, 2001; Yon & Passe, 1990). A social studies methods course is usually a requirement for pre-service teachers in an elementary certification program. Promoting this type of love of social studies amongst teacher candidates is aligned with the thought that giving teachers autonomy is the key to increasing the depth and regularity that social studies is taught at the elementary level (Fitchett et al., 2012). This recommendation greatly depends on having teachers who value social studies and will, in turn, make it a priority.

Additionally, who is teaching the social studies methods courses? Surprisingly, in a large number of programs it is not a social studies specialist. In a survey conducted for the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) of the National Council for the Social Studies in 1998 it was revealed that half of the professors teaching social studies methods did not identify themselves as specialists. Some identified as generalists, some had their core training in reading/language arts, and most had never heard of CUFA or TRSE (Theory and Research in Social Education) (Passe, 2006). Small colleges that can't afford specialists in each subject area may assign this task to a social science professor. These professors can be effective methods instructors due to their level of content knowledge, unfortunately they may not be well versed in the range of social sciences included in social studies. Nevertheless, elementary social studies teacher preparation presents another challenge. Many social science faculty members, most likely, would not have the knowledge or experience needed to teach this content. A methods professor who has never taught at the elementary level cannot be expected to deliver the kind of training necessary for preservice primary teachers. Nor can we expect the diverse perspectives needed from professors who have experience limited to the intermediate or secondary grades. All of the content of the methods courses, along with their required internships/mentorships, need to be differentiated accordingly. The effective teaching of early elementary social studies will not just happen. Many of the classroom teacher participants in this study stated that they attempted to integrate social studies into their ELA instructional time. Have they been professionally developed in content integration as well? If the significance of elementary social studies education is to change, then the educators of the teachers who have the responsibility for teaching the

children will be a crucial influence. The future administrators of these preservice teachers have an obligation to continue this process.

Initial certification of an elementary teacher only begins the progression. New knowledge in the social sciences, current issues, controversial issues, history and evolving social conditions requires the constant thoughtfulness of teachers/administrators. Continual professional development should be shaped and controlled by the constantly evolving research related to teaching methodologies, child development, learning principles and new technological developments that may be used in social studies instruction (NCSS, 1988). The practicing elementary teachers need more history-specific and extensive professional development opportunities in order to grow their pedagogical and historical knowledge (VanSledright, Reddy & Walsh, 2012). Attending to the nature of supporting materials (primary sources, witness/survivor accounts, history-specific reading guides, investigation templates) for effective instruction would follow. Although effective instruction of social studies is necessary, what is needed far more urgently is an understanding of *why* social studies teachers teach the *way* that they do. Textbooks should not be the main source of instruction in the area of social studies. They are typically outdated and not appealing to students. Without a thorough consideration of the teacher's role as "curricular" decision maker and the school, professional and societal contexts in which teachers' work, the addition of courses or professional development is not likely to result in better engagement in civic education or historical content.

In *Chapter 2 Literature Review* multicultural education was highlighted. A recommendation for teacher and administrator practice would be a very closely related

pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching. The use of culturally responsive teaching may enhance the level of engagement in the classroom by being based in recognizing and accepting cultural differences. This pedagogy is grounded in equality and fairness. Culturally responsive education accepts and recognizes that cultural differences influence modifications necessary in effective classroom instruction. This is accomplished by varying teaching styles, collaborating with students, and utilizing flexible grouping, in order to create a more supportive learning climate. Culturally responsive pedagogy reiterates the multiculturalism model but on a larger scale. As stated by Bode & Nieto (2010), “The organization and structures of schools often are contrary to the needs of students, the values of their communities, and even to one of the major articulated purposes of schooling-to provide equal educational opportunities for all students” (p.139). Culturally responsive education encompasses all levels of the academic arena, including administrative practices. In contrast, multiculturalism focuses on the classroom practices.

A culturally responsive administrative style emphasizes the importance of the implementation of policies, procedures and curriculum that address the needs of the diverse learners in their charge, using socioeconomic status, cultural, and linguistic factors to help reach and teach students (Ford & Kea, 2009). We must first understand student’s values in order to help them be successful. By understanding, the values held by varying cultures, educators will be more capable of providing learning opportunities that are matched not only to students’ academic goals, but to their intrinsic motivations as well. Ortiz (2012) states, “Only when we understand children in every facet of their lives, academically and non-academically, can we meet their needs” (p.16).

Studies have shown that the numbers of minority teachers are declining while the numbers of minority children in schools are growing. In schools of high need this serves as a major concern. Given the diverse environment that they work in, these teachers need to have another level of cultural awareness. A multicultural/culturally responsive approach to education addresses the importance of students' prior experiences and backgrounds, including socialization practices, and cultural knowledge (Ortiz, 2012). While many educational institutions stress "multiculturalism" and refer to its correlation with student success, modern education often approaches cultural diversity with a blind eye. Taking the "blind" approach refers to providing instruction and discipline as if culture makes no difference. This takes away from student identity. As a replacement for celebrating students, diverse students' culture and experiences are demeaned and marginalized. Student behavior is misinterpreted, reprimanded and inaccurately reinforced when culture is not considered. This is a reason for student failure. Ford & Kea (2009) stated that:

Teachers who are culturally competent recognize that behavior is socially constructed...one teacher may view a student's open and direct expression of his opinion as appropriately assertive, proactive self-advocacy; and another teacher may view the same behaviors as aggressive, inappropriate, disrespectful, or confrontational (p.12).

Shocking numbers of culturally diverse students are often misunderstood, and suffer academically, socially and behaviorally. "The most frequently cited indicator of inequitable outcomes experienced by African-American and Hispanic learners is the disproportionate rate at which those learners, especially males, are referred and placed in

special and remedial classes” (Townsend, p. 728, 2002). Students of color receive harsher and more disciplinary referrals, are more often placed in classroom environments that implement direct and controlling supervision, and in many cases receive instruction that is less than thought-provoking or challenging (Gay, 2002, p. 618). Disciplinary issues turn into referrals. In the end, referrals then lead to behavioral and academic evaluations that, predictably, end in classification and labeling. Within the last few decades, there have been several fields or areas identified as integral features facets in the multicultural movement. Banks (2008) states that these key components include: content integration, equity pedagogy, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, and empowering school culture and social structure (p.34). Infusing an understanding of students’ prior knowledge in order to establish strong connections with new learning and concepts is one of the main goals of culturally responsive pedagogy and the curriculum. When the aforementioned components are extant during instruction, student learning becomes an interactive process with the pupil at the center of it.

This type of teaching is in alignment with the classroom teacher participant’s comments in this study. The mention of the behavior issues that are encountered in their classrooms may be a byproduct of this type of teaching *not* taking place in their classrooms or in the school. It would be recommended that an exploration of this form of instruction/administration style, in low performing, urban demographic schools be performed. Educators and administrators have access to additional resources, provided by the state, such as EdPlus (Provides professional development for CharacterPLUS and Culturally Responsive Teaching), L.A.C.E. (Leadership Academy in Character

Education-University of Missouri-St. Louis), and the NEA (National Education Association).

Implications for Policy

This study generated data that described perceptions of teacher “curricular” autonomy in social studies teaching in relation to it not being assessed by the state. These understandings add to the academic discourse in a new way. Previous studies have described the “squeeze” on social studies in diverse populations in urban areas. Whereas, this study has been conducted in a suburban area of Missouri, within a school district that has urban demographics. The term urban school, for many, conjures up an image of a dilapidated school in a poor inner-city neighborhood inhabited with African American or Hispanic children. By definition, of course, urban schools are situated in large central cities not in suburban neighborhoods. Although these communities are often distinguished by high rates of poverty (low socioeconomic status), poverty and its accompanying mindset are not unique to urban areas. Quandt (2015) reported that so far this century, more than two-thirds of the poverty increase occurred in households located in the suburbs. Notably, in 2013, suburban poverty levels surpassed those of urban areas: 56 percent of people living in poverty in major metro areas lived in the suburbs. In many cases suburban communities, along with their schools, are not equipped to handle their growing poverty rates. It has been mentioned that the communities themselves may lack the structure, safety net supports and/or resources to address the needs of a growing poor population. Particularly, the lack of social services and transportation. This can make it harder for these residents to access the kind of opportunities that would help them get out of poverty. Ultimately, children from these families end up in their community

(suburban) elementary school. Thereby, presenting a districtwide and state task of educating students and parents with differing mindsets and fiscal challenges. The teacher and administrator participants in this study work in a school district such as this. This topic is something that can be explored during social studies instruction in their classrooms. The initial training of the educator (pre-service) in curriculum and instruction comes first.

Teacher Licensure. A rethinking of how elementary teachers are licensed is necessary. Recent educational studies have drawn attention to the Finland model of teacher preparation. In Finland, teaching is one of the most admired professions (Helsingin Sanomat, 2004). In turn, becoming a primary teacher in Finland is a very competitive endeavor. It's not enough to complete high school and pass a rigorous examination, successful candidates must also have excellent (as well as the highest) interpersonal skills. Finland chooses one out of every 10 applicants that apply to become primary teachers (Hammond & Rothman, 2011). There are two phases to the selection process for primary school education, as noted by Sahlberg (2010):

First, a group of candidates is selected based on matriculation examination results, the high school diploma issued by the school, and relevant records of out of school accomplishments. In the second phase: 1. Candidates complete a written exam on assigned books on pedagogy. 2. Candidates engage in an observed clinical activity replicating school situations, where social interaction and communication skills come into play. 3. Top candidates are interviewed and asked to explain why they have decided to become teachers. These highly capable

candidates complete a rigorous teacher education program at government expense. (p.2)

What is valued more than salaries are such factors as professional autonomy in schools, high social prestige, the attitude of teaching as a service to society and contributing to the public good (Hammond & Rothman, 2011). Teaching is viewed as a career equivalent to other professions where people rely on scientific knowledge and work independently using skills that they gained through their university studies. As in the United States, Finland primary school teachers major in education while the upper grade teachers concentrate their studies in a particular subject. The teacher education curriculum in Finland requires primary school teacher candidates to complete a major in educational sciences and choose a (focused) minor studies of subjects included in their National Framework Curriculum for basic schools. This type of system would allow for a deepening of content knowledge in a content area such as social studies.

All of the Finnish universities have their own teacher education strategies and curricula that are nationally coordinated to ensure coherence. This is a noted difference than the state in which this study was conducted, where primary teachers receive a variety of methods courses covering four contents areas. For the Finnish educators there are then two types of practicum experiences that look similar to, but slightly different than, the United States. The first, according to Sahlberg (2010), occurs in small group classes and seminars in the Department of Education. During this time students' practice basic teaching skills in front of their peers. These kinds of classes take place at the University level in the United States and may or may not include teaching simulations in front of your peers. The second Finnish practicum experience happens predominantly in

Teacher Training Schools primarily governed by the universities. These schools have similar curricula and practices as normal public schools. This is considered to be the main teaching practice. Primary school teacher education students devote roughly 15 percent of their intended study time to practicing their teaching in schools. It is a wonder if the teachers in this study had student teaching experiences of this extent.

The Finnish schools that are chosen for practice teaching experiences have supervising teachers that have to prove that they are competent to work with student teachers. Higher requirements for professional staff in that school are imposed. These schools also have teachers who are well-prepared in teacher professional development, assessment strategies and supervision. Those school principals choose which teachers, according to their evaluation, are competent to host a student teacher. Finnish teacher education appears to provide their future educators with a powerful foundation of curriculum knowledge, planning skills and assessment. Due to this depth of training and development, during the course of Finland's education reforms, teachers have demanded more autonomy and responsibility for curriculum and student assessment (Aho et al., 2006). This professional autonomy and authority that teachers have is an important factor in explaining why so many young people consider teaching as their most admired future job.

The education designers in Finland insist that testing should not drive practice in schools. This is in stark contrast to the way the United States educational system operates. In Finland, teaching, learning and curriculum are advocated to be at the core of teaching. Student assessment is embedded in the teaching and learning process in Finland. Ultimately, it used to improve both students' and teachers' work throughout the

academic year. The responsibility of determining students' academic success is the responsibility of the school, not the external assessors. One drawback noted by Finns is that grading of students, within determining academic success, may be varied. In response to this, they insist that the problems often associated with standardized testing conducted externally—teaching to the test, narrowing of the curriculum, and unhealthy competition among schools—can be more problematic than the recognized, and possible, variability in grading practices (Sahlberg, 2010). However, to deter the amount of inconsistency, teachers must design and conduct appropriate curriculum-based assessments to document student progress, classroom assessment and school-based evaluation (sounds similar to Professional Learning Communities in the United States). These are important parts of professional development and teacher education.

Finnish teachers' work consists primarily of classroom teaching. Currently, teacher's working time in Finland consists of preparation for class, classroom teaching, and two hours a week planning school work with colleagues. From an international perspective, teachers in many other nations devote more time to teaching than these teachers. For instance, a typical middle school teacher in Finland teaches less than 600 hours annually, resulting in about four 45-minute lessons a day. In the United States, however, a teacher at the same level devotes 1,080 hours to teaching over 180 school days (OECD, 2008). Even though it is voluntary, an essential part of Finnish teachers' work is devoted to the school as a whole, the improvement of classroom practice, and work within the community. Due to the fact that Finnish teachers take on the weighty responsibility of experimentation with and improvement of teaching methods, some of

the most important aspects of their work is conducted outside of classrooms (professional development, curriculum/assessment development and community involvement).

Although the training of Finland's teachers does not determine the type of school that they will work in, it does appear to give them a recipe for success in effective classroom instruction. As one of the leaders in educational performance today Finland does not attribute its success to any one thing but most analysts note that excellent teachers play a critical role. Their teachers' capacities to work collaboratively in professional communities and to teach in classrooms has systematically been cultivated through academic teacher education. Additionally, rather than just a technical or scripted implementation of externally mandated standards and tests, teacher's work is a respected and independent profession (Stewart, 2011). Teachers' well-built confidence and readiness create the conditions for the professional autonomy that make teaching a valued career-despite the salary (Schleicher & Stewart, 2008). The U.S. could benefit from looking at this model of teacher education.

Litigation. The results of this investigation indicate that the teaching of social studies in suburban low performing, urban demographic schools, is impacted by state assessments despite the level of "curricular" autonomy that a classroom teacher feels. Past studies have been conducted on this topic and the results are in alignment with this study. Thus, the call for a policy change needs to be intensified from the school district level to the state level. The call for states to enforce the standard course of study for social studies is imperative. There are official documents for each state that describe the social studies curriculum in detail. If these standards are being ignored, publishing them makes no sense. State leaders should be called to task on their management of the

curriculum (Passe, 2006). In this vain, the strategy of using a state law litigation might prove more effective. The courts of the U.S. have repeatedly observed education as the “foundation of good citizenship”. This thought leaves the door open for a Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Equal Protection Clause) revision, for social studies instruction to be mandated in public schools. This amendment prohibits states from denying any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. In other words, the laws of the state must treat an individual in the same manner as others in similar conditions or circumstances. In relation to this study, academically struggling schools/districts that serve predominantly African-American, Hispanic, or lower-income students who fail to make adequate progress towards math and reading proficiency, tend to increase instruction time allotted to those subjects and de-emphasize other subjects. Because these schools or districts feel pressure to de-emphasize civic education, a judicial order may be necessary to force an increase in social studies instruction in states that have not already adopted a civic origin of education.

The American courts have an extensive history of determining the scope of students’ educational rights and schools’ or districts’ obligations to students, as noted in *Chapter 2 Literature Review*. A Fourteenth Amendment federal claim arguing that social studies cutbacks infringe upon a constitutionally protected minimum “quantum” (or significance) of education may succeed. This claim would have to show that framers of the constitution attached civic meaning to education. Under the Equal Protection Clause, however, students deprived of social studies could claim that education is not being provided on equal terms. On the state constitutional level, as long as some public schools in the state offer social studies, and others are denied civic education, the state could then

be seen as operating an unequal educational system by allowing districts to make those types of decisions. Many state education provisions can be interpreted to require social studies instruction. By claiming that the state's academic standards for students are the legislative definition of "education" in the state constitution, a court could theoretically require social studies instruction. Participants in this study mentioned that the state of Missouri has social studies standards for learning, along with a weekly required number of minutes that the content area should be taught (Appendix D). Districts have access to this information for planning and scheduling purposes. The number of minutes may be documented on a schedule (and grades may be required for the content area) but instruction may not be implemented in the classroom. In *Brown vs. the Board of Education, U.S. 483 (1954)* the court's conception of public education playing a vital role in citizenship training was crucial. In this case, the language about education's role in a "democratic society" suggests that an insufficient education provided black students an unstable "foundation of good citizenship" in the end. Segregated schools were found to be unconstitutional partly because black students were systematically caused civic damage. The NCLB Act (2001) required that students in each "major racial and ethnic group" make adequate early progress in reading and math. Schools began to adjust their data and their instruction to ensure that they hit their targets for the school year. According to the Associated Press (2006), nearly two million minority students' scores were not counted for the purposes of NCLB because of a "loophole" that allows individual states to exempt racial subgroups that are not "statistically significant". Where does this leave schools/districts that are predominantly African American, Hispanic, or minority diverse but, low income and struggling with the previously mentioned poverty

issues? They can't exempt their whole population. Therefore, it is not impossible that some schools or districts might use race to determine the students that receive social studies vs. students who receive remedial math and reading *in place of* social studies instruction. The use of race in a judicial claim would not be unconstitutional, hopefully it would trigger some scrutiny of the denial of civic education on the basis of race. This causes a systematic denial of opportunity to participate adequately in American civic life or democracy. This outcome provides grounds for potential lawsuits on the behalf of students who have been denied formal instruction in civics, government, and history-the subjects that most closely correlate to citizenship.

The definition of an adequate basic education is remains uncertain. Although, in *San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez* the U.S. Supreme Court, in 1973, held that education is not a "fundamental right" under the U.S. Constitution. No court has actually ruled on whether there is a protected level of significant education. Likewise, to date, no state court has constitutionalized their state educational standards.

The outcomes of this study might motivate state representatives to become more acquainted with the demands that are placed on schools (in prioritization of instruction) due to their state assessment policies, mandates and implementation. In the process of attempting to improve student achievement, school districts and their employees are being professionally restrained, underdeveloped and devalued. In a TALIS survey (2013), findings showed U.S. teachers were largely satisfied with their jobs and school. In contrast, they felt that society did not value them (publicly reported test scores contributed to this). They wanted more (and better quality of) opportunities to collaborate and build relationships during professional development. Finally, they valued

decision making for their school. These outcomes are in alignment with the findings from this study.

Future research ought to specifically investigate the levels of satisfaction in the area of social studies teaching and learning in suburban low performing, urban demographic schools. It should also determine the factors that relate to the expressed levels. The more data to support the impact of state assessments and mandates on these already struggling schools, the more relevant that support for these schools is needed. Particularly in the areas of autonomy, professional development and collaborative leadership. Finally, a larger investigation on the feelings of the quality of social studies pre-service training (and subsequent professional development) of teachers and practicing administrators in these types of schools would be invited. Nearly half of children in the US live in low socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, poverty has a different look. The students that are most likely at risk provide teachers, in suburban AND urban areas, new challenges in addition to external mandates (Kneebone, 2013). The thoughts of educators, on the topic of how this effects instruction in their classroom, would be pertinent. Especially as more schools take in students of this demographic and are required to excel in academics despite external forces. As seen in this study, all of the topics recommended for future research can contribute to the level of teacher “curricular” autonomy in a school/classroom.

Limitations

Several limitations of the study are acknowledged. The project began with the goal to create a level of trustworthiness through the implementation of the interview protocol (Appendix C), field notes (possibly from observations as well), a self-reported

checklist and collected curriculum documents (i.e. district social studies curriculum, lesson plans, data team notes, etc.) in the construction of analytical categories and sub-categories, and the bracketing of the researcher's biases related to participant reports. Although all of these were integrated in the study, the field notes were obtained from interviews in noting participant mannerisms or extra data provided after the interview. The collected curriculum documents consisted of a limited number of lesson plans and district curriculum due to time constraints. Also, in the process of the study the district suffered some state sanctions whereby some participants, including the researcher, elected to leave and obtain employment in other districts. There may, however, have been additional strategies that could have been useful in this endeavor.

One strategy that may have benefited the study's credibility is the researcher providing member checks with the use of the self-reported checklist and validation of study results (Merriam, 2009). The times noted by the participants may have included minutes where they integrated social studies content/instruction with ELA instruction. Also, an outline of *Chapter Four* could have been sent to five or six of the participants to determine its accuracy. Due to the time constraints related to location of the participants after job movements and the project's deadline, this strategy was not incorporated into the methodological procedure.

Challenges with the phenomenological in-depth interview procedure emerged as well, during the course of this study. The initial procedure in *Chapter Three* (pgs. 47-60) established a two interview protocol, before and after observations, which was ultimately unsuccessful. Participants agreed to take part in two interviews and observations over a 6-month period but 5 reported lack of time as the reason for not completing the second

interview. In the process of trying to get in contact with participants, the length of the study was extended to 10 months due to summer break. In addition, observations were found not to be necessary in the data collection process in order to achieve saturation. All but 5 participants were interviewed twice with the total sum of interviews equaling 27. The lack of accordance with the original interview protocol, although a challenge, did not appear to have a negative impact on either the participants or the results. The second interview incorporated the same questions from the first interview.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the impact of high stakes testing on social studies teaching when it is not tested by the state. Sixteen participants from several schools in a suburban low performing, urban demographic school district provided narrative reports on the impact of testing on their “curricular” autonomy in the area social studies teaching. The narratives were organized into conceptual categories and sub-categories that classified their 1) experiences with professional development 2) feelings about curriculum implementation and its aftereffects 3) the level of importance/purpose placed upon the teaching of social studies and/or motivating factors that influence the educators to want to teach the content area 4) beliefs about why social studies may/may not be taught as frequently as other content areas and 5) understanding of autonomy and the level to which they have autonomy in the area of social studies instruction. The final section reported instructional time given to social studies within the time period of this study, as recorded by the classroom teacher participants.

There were a number of acknowledged limitations of the study. First, the researcher was not able to employ all of the initial data collection techniques due to movement of participants and the researcher. In addition, the project did not integrate the methodological approaches that may have strengthened its trust worthiness, including the incorporation of participant validation and additional data collection check-ins.

Several implications of the study were presented. First and foremost, the investigation revealed that social studies instruction has been marginalized due to state assessments in other content areas. Further, the study organized participant's responses into categories and sub-categories that informed the readers about the struggles of "curricular" prioritization and teacher "curricular" autonomy in a particular type of school.

The understandings generated from the study are important in that they provide a description of teacher "curricular" autonomy. The profession's recognition of the educational inequity taking place, in relation to social studies instruction is solidified. Lastly, they may provide educational practitioners and state educational boards with a broader understanding, or awareness, of how state assessment is affecting the degree of civic understanding, democratic participation and character of students in certain types of schools/districts. This awareness may assist in policy changes at the district and state levels.

Future directions for research were identified. Prospective studies might specifically explore at the lived experience of teachers in low performing, urban demographic suburban schools and districts. The areas of teacher autonomy (within job satisfaction) and social studies instruction should be highlighted. A larger study delving

into the effects of pre-service training (and subsequent professional development) for teachers and practicing administrators in social studies was invited as well. Finally, although not mentioned previously, a probing into the attitudes and views of the role of social studies instruction, as determined by the students in low performing vs. high performing schools, may be important if schools or districts seek to pursue a change in state/district policy at a litigious level.

In summation, across the country civic protests and legal battles with law enforcement have occurred recently. One of the highest profile battles being forged in the state of Missouri (namely the Mike Brown issue in Ferguson, MO.). Students in this state need to know how to participate in the legal, democratic and civic process effectively. If they don't know their history/civil rights, how will they participate as productive democratic citizens in the future?

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Appendix A

Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities Teacher Autonomy and Its Effects on Social Studies Instructional Time

Participant _____ HSC Approval Number _____
Principal Investigator _____ PI's Phone Number _____

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by _____. The purpose of this research is to learn more about the teacher autonomy and its effects on social studies instructional time.
- 2) Your participation will involve
 - Two individual interviews with you
 - Collection of relevant curriculum documents (lesson plans)
 - Field notes
 - A Self-Report Checklist (record of whether social studies was taught)-completed daily
 - All interviews will take place at your school/office

Approximately 15 participants may be involved in this research.

- b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 60-90 minutes for each of the interviews. Lesson plans will be emailed weekly. The self-reported checklist will be collected bi-weekly. The lesson plans and checklist can be emailed directly to the principal investigator.
3. There are no anticipated risks to you associated with this research.
4. There will be a \$150 gift card compensation for your participation in this study. A \$50 gift card will be given within 7 days after the completion of the first interview. The second \$50 gift card will be granted within 7 days after the collection of checklists and lesson plans has concluded (over a period of 6 months). The final \$50 gift card will be given within 7 days after the completion of the second and final interview. Your participation will contribute to the knowledge about teacher autonomy and social studies education and may help educators across the country reflect upon their practice.
5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent for participation at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Should you choose to withdraw, you will NOT receive the compensation for the duties not completed for the time remaining in the study. You will not be penalized in any

other way. Verbal or email notification to the principal investigator will be accepted for withdrawal.

6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office. The data will only be able to be accessed by the principal investigator. Data may be used in subsequent studies conducted by the principal investigator only.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, at ***-***** or the Faculty Advisor, at ***-*****. You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at *****.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature
Date

Participant's Printed Name

Signature of Investigator or Designee
Date

Investigator/Designee Printed Name

Appendix B

Autonomy and Use of Instructional Time in Elementary School Social Studies Teacher Interview-Demographics

School System _____

Your race/ethnicity is: _____

Semester	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014
Grade Level	3 rd	4 th	5 th
Highest degree	_____		

Undergraduate
major _____

Graduate major (if applicable)

Licensed to teach

Licensure/certification path: (traditional, alternative, etc.)

Total teaching experience in years

What do you teach over 80% of the school day? (Check one)
 Self-contained (teach all subjects) Departmentalized (teach individualized curriculum)

If you checked departmentalized, please identify the content areas you teach

**Autonomy and Use of Instructional Time in Elementary School Social Studies
Administrator Interview-Demographics**

School System

Your race/ethnicity is:

Semester	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	Fall 2014
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Grade levels you supervise

Highest degree

Undergraduate
major

Graduate major (if applicable)

Licensed to teach

Licensure/certification path: (traditional, alternative, etc.)

Total teaching experience (in years)

Total administrator experience (in years)

Appendix C

Interview Protocol-Teacher

Study: Teacher Autonomy and Social Studies Instruction

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the impact of high stakes testing on social studies teaching when it is not tested by the state. The focus is on the elementary teachers, teacher autonomy (curricular/instructional decision making), within the context of social studies teaching. My goal is to investigate the impact of state mandated testing on teacher autonomy (it is the only content area not tested in Missouri) in a low performing (non-achieving AYP) elementary school within the context of social studies teaching. Participants will be asked to describe the experience of making instructional decisions regarding social studies instruction. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office. The interview will take 60 minutes.

Questions

1. Describe, as detailed as possible, a situation where you experienced autonomy in your instructional decision making.
2. Tell me some things about your students and social studies.
3. Tell me some things about your school and social studies instruction.
4. Tell me about your professional development experiences in the area of social studies.
5. What are your feelings about social studies instruction and high stakes testing?

Interview Protocol-Administrator

Study: Teacher Autonomy and Social Studies Instruction

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the impact of high stakes testing on social studies teaching when it is not tested by the state. The focus is on the elementary teachers, teacher autonomy (curricular/instructional decision making), within the context of social studies teaching. My goal is to investigate the impact of state mandated testing on teacher autonomy (it is the only content area not tested in Missouri) in a low performing (non-achieving AYP) elementary school within the context of social studies teaching. Participants will be asked to describe the experience of making instructional decisions regarding social studies instruction. In all cases, your identity will not be revealed. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office. The interview will take 60 minutes.

Questions

1. Tell me about your social studies instruction in your building/district.
2. Tell me about the level of importance of social studies instruction in your building/district.
3. Tell me about your district's professional development in the area of social studies.
4. What are your feelings about social studies instruction and high stakes testing?

Appendix D

Missouri School Improvement Program
RECOMMENDED MINUTES OF INSTRUCTION FOR ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS

Primary Grades (1-3)			Upper Elementary (4-6 including 7 & 8 if self-contained)	
Content Area	Daily	Weekly	Daily	Weekly
Developmental Reading	90 Min.	450 min.	60 min.	300 min.
Language Arts	60 min.	300 min.	60 min.	300 min.
Mathematics	60 min.	300 min.	60 min.	300 min.
Social Studies	30 min.	150 min.	40 min.	200 min.
Science	30 min.	150 min.	40 min.	200 min.
Physical Education	*15 min.	60 min.	*15 min.	60 min.
Art	**15 min.	60 min.	**15 min.	60 min.
Music	**15 min.	60 min.	**15 min.	60 min.
Health	15 min.	60 min.	15 min.	60 min.
Total	330 min.	1590 min.	320 min.	1540 min.

*It is recommended that this be scheduled and taught through two 30 minute periods per week. However, to meet the minimum requirement, districts must schedule and teach this for 50 minutes per week.

**It is recommended that this be scheduled and taught at least 60 minutes per week. However, to meet the minimum requirement, districts must schedule and teach this for 50 minutes per week.

It is assumed the normal six-hour day will provide for 360 minutes of instructional activities in which children are under the guidance and direction of teachers in the teaching process. The above recommendations provide 30 minutes for primary grades and 45 minutes for upper elementary grades that the teacher can schedule additional activities that are in the best interest of the youngsters. The school week should consist of 1800 minutes of instruction at both the primary and upper elementary grade levels. This allows approximately 200 minutes of instruction time per week to be used at the discretion of the teacher. It should be noted that in both the daily and weekly schedule that reading and language arts activities should be incorporated into other instructional areas.

*Retrieved from <https://dese.mo.gov/>

